

Glimpses of Life in the Compounds of Lusaka - June, July and August 2007

Since 2005, the JCTR has conducted monthly interviews with approximately 7 “satellite homes” that live in the high-density, peri urban areas of Lusaka. Some of the families have participated in the research continuously since February 2005, others since February 2006 and the newest families since February 2007. The interviews are conducted in the first week of the month, with interviewees asked to recall how the living situation was in the previous month. Discussing issues very informally in the local language, the field researcher asks questions related to a number of topics: Family size, Family Health, Income, Expenditure, External Support, Food Consumption, Housing, Education, Perception of Poverty, Social / Economic / Political Perception and Savings / Investment. The research is mostly qualitative in nature though some quantitative figures are totaled to examine how a family is earning / spending money and how much food is consumed.

Following are some of the key issues that emerged during the interviews for June, July, and August:

Households Interviewed:

Over three months the JCTR conducted interviews with satellite households in John Howard, Matero, Chainda, Linda, Kanyama, Garden and Chipata compounds and with three random respondents:

- *Household of 4* (currently a household of 1) - A father and mother with two children (ages 2 and 4). The couple has not reconciled after a domestic dispute in April. The wife is still staying at her parents' place and the two children are with the husband's sister, while the father remains alone.
- *Household of 6* - A single mother keeping her 2 children and 3 dependents.
- *Household of 11* - A mother and father keeping their 9 grown children (now adults).
- *Household of 8* - A single woman keeping 7 others, including her late brother's wife, 5 children of her brother and her late sister's 1 child.
- *Household of 8* - A mother and father keeping their 3 grown children, 2 grandchildren and the 16-year old wife to one of the boys. The family is considering taking in a son-in-law who has been stigmatised and abandoned by his family due to illness. He is HIV-positive and suffers from TB.
- *Household of 7* - A recently re-married father staying with his new wife and now 5 children (1 son died in April 2007). In June the father went away on a business trip to Northern Province.
- *Random interview in June* - A blind couple with 4 children ages 6, 5, 3 and 2. The husband came from Northern Province to Lusaka to collect agricultural inputs from a relative who had promised to meet him at Inter-City bus station. Unfortunately, the relative never showed up to meet him and he remained at Inter-City for a month until he joined fellow blind men at Kamwala, where he met his wife. The couple stayed in an unfinished building in Kamwala for a number of years and this is where all of their children were born. The couple expressed ignorance of family planning and none of the four children are in school. After the Keep Zambia Clean Campaign was launched, the couple was forced to find a 1-roomed house to rent in one of the compounds at K20, 000 per month. On a typical day, the entire family begs in town from 9:00hrs until 18:30hrs.
- *Random Interview in July* - A man taking care of 7 siblings and his mother ever since the death of his father from TB. The relatives believe that the wife was responsible for his death and they grabbed all the property from her. The poor widow was left to take care of 8 children yet she had no job. As the first born, the man wanted to help the mother out. He has a certificate in purchasing and supply, but has never found employment. He survives by connecting sex workers to their clients at a fee, organising customers for some hardware shops at Cha Cha Cha Market (Town Centre) on commission and doing other illegal business dealings on Katondo Street.
- *Random interview in August* - A mother of 4 staying with her husband. She was forced to look for a job / piecework after her husband's business collapsed. The woman said it is very difficult and frustrating for women to look for employment / piecework because some employers and supervisors demand to have sex with her before she can be employed. On average she is paid K5, 000 to K15, 000 per day if she finds something to do. Her husband takes home between K1, 000 and K5, 000 each day, acquired either from piecework or as handouts from friends.

Health:

- *Flu is a common illness affecting households in the cold season:* In June, July and August, the most common illnesses experienced by the families include flu, malaria and diarrhoea: 6 households experienced flu in June and 1 in July. Flu affected more than 1 person in each of the affected households. Self-prescription and traditional herbs were used to treat flu. The private clinic owner in the study handled 5-8 flu cases per day in June and 4-5 cases per day in July. He observed that school-going children were exposed to the cold and therefore advised that school authorities should exercise leniency on children whose parents cannot afford to buy uniform sweaters, to be allowed to put on other warm clothes at school during the cold season.
- *Some families experience difficulties in accessing quality malaria treatment:* 4 households in June and 2 households in July experienced a case of malaria. In some cases the households used self-prescription of drugs for treatment, and in others the patients were seen at either a private or government clinic. In one instance, it was observed that the health officer diagnosed a patient with Malaria without using any tests and the patient failed to respond to malaria treatment.
- *Diarrhoea is becoming more common with the onset of hot weather on top of the poor water supply in compounds:* 3 households in July and 4 households in August suffered from diarrhoea. In most cases diarrhoea affected more than 1 person at a household (in 1 case the whole household of 7 was attacked). 2 households expressed doubt that water is being treated by the local Water Trust before supplied to their community. Traditional herbs and self-prescription were the most common treatments used.
- *Many households seek treatment from traditional healers:* A traditional healer in the study reported an increased number infant illness, including fever, flu, cough and general complaints. In August the traditional healer reported to have increased cases of herpes, especially in expectant mothers. In one incident the traditional healer was called to assist a pregnant mother who had been in labour at a government clinic for 3 days without delivering. He treated the woman using traditional herbs and within an hour she delivered a healthy baby.

Employment / Income:

In the compounds most family members earn income in the informal sector through either self-owned small businesses or scattered piece-works. The families earn income as follows:

- *Household of 4* - Household head (male) works as a bus conductor on a mini-bus. His normal daily pay in June and July ranged between K10, 000 and K15, 000. In June he did not work for a week because the bus he operates with was undergoing repairs, though in that period he managed to find 2 piece-works that earned him K10, 000. In August he switched to a new job and his daily wage dropped by 50% (now K5, 000 to K8, 000 per day).
- *House of 6* - Household head (female) is a government primary school teacher with a take home pay of K650, 000. The family also rents out 2 flats for a total of K400, 000 per month (though one of the tenants did not pay the rentals in June) and sells dressed chickens / sews school uniforms that earned her about K80, 000 in June, K100, 000 in July and K100, 000 in August. Her total estimated income was K890, 000 in June and K660, 000 in July. In August she did not receive her salary, however her tenant paid off arrears pushing her estimated income to K700, 000.
- *Household of 11* - Household head (female) is a marketeer selling kapenta, beans, groundnuts, vegetables and dried traditional vegetables. Her estimated daily sales ranged between K18, 000 and K40, 000 in June and K15, 000 to K30, 000 in July. However, she could not estimate her profit in any of the months.
- *Household of 8* - Household head (female) runs a hardware / grocery store with estimated daily sales ranging from K40, 000 to K80, 000 in June and K50, 000 to K150, 000 in July. She attributed the fall of sales in June to the late opening of the shop while she was sick. The family also rents 3 flats at a total of K360, 000 per month. However, she could not estimate her income / profit from the shop in any of the months but received K360, 000 from tenants for rentals.
- *Household of 8* - Household head (female) is a marketeer selling dried food items and greens. Her estimated daily sales ranged from K15, 000 to K40, 000 in June and K10, 000 to K30, 000 in July. However, she could not estimate her sales or profit in August. The husband earned a wage of K230, 000 in June and K200, 000 in August from his private jobs fixing tiles (nothing

earned in July due to an illness). The son sells cell phone accessories at COMESA and earned approximately K100, 000 in June and July and K150, 000 in August.

- *Household of 7* - Household head (male) is a bricklayer and repairer of battery chargers. He was contracted to renovate a school in Eastern Province. He sent back home K300, 000 in June and K500, 000 in July for upkeep. The wife sells cooked food items at home. Her daily sales ranged between K5, 000 and K 10, 000 in June and K5, 000 to K25, 000 in July. The family was not available for an interview in August.

Expenditure / Food Consumption:

The main expenditures for the families in June, July and August include food, sources of energy, groceries and health costs.

- *Many households in the compounds struggle to afford a balanced diet:* 5 of the 7 families managed to have only 2 meals each day and 2 families managed to have 3 meals each day, with the total monthly estimation of food costs ranging between K185, 000 and K500, 000.

Housing:

Household costs include rent (3 of the 7 households are renting), sources of energy (candles and charcoal for those without electricity), water (from community taps), etc.

- *Daily load- shedding raises extra costs for those households connected to ZESCO:* Households complained of long hours cut off from electricity in the peri-urban areas. Households incurred extra costs on alternative energy sources ranging from K30, 000 to K120, 000 each month.
- *Council to demolish houses:* Officials from the council inspected houses in the area where one of the interviewees resides. They declared that the houses are illegal and recommended for the demolition of the houses. However, the affected residents have launched their complaint to the local MP and have vowed to chase away any other council official that comes in the area.

Education:

Most parents reported good attendance of their children at school in June and July. Schools were closed in August.

Social / Economic / Political Perceptions:

- Families were reluctant to take their family members to the government clinic for treatment because of lack of drugs, long queues and slow service delivery. As one respondent indicated, "The government should consider improving the quality of health service delivery to the public because most people depend on government clinics for their health problems".
- Another responded had this to say about education: "I believe that if one person is educated, every one in the family will benefit."
- In relation to difficulties faced in saving money, respondents had these comments: "The government should empower its citizens either by creating jobs or lending them money at minimal interest rates to engage in meaningful business; it is difficult for one to save or invest any money in Zambia mainly because most of us earn just enough to run from hand to mouth." "It is difficult to save or invest money because of many financial demands at hand; besides that I have a low income."
- The traditional healer in the study has advocated for the government to promote traditional herbal medicine saying it is a cheapest way for Zambian citizens to stay healthy. He has further urged the government to lower the transportation cost if meaningful development is to take place in the country.

For more information:

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