

Peoples' Interests Must be Priority in National Development - JCTR advises

“Government needs to become more committed to infrastructure development and re-align its priorities and policies towards national needs if it has to deliver on its promise of poverty reduction,” says Mr. Andrew Banda, Programme Assistant for Debt, Aid and Trade Program at the Jesuit Center for Theological Reflection (JCTR).

In the same vain Privilege Haangandu, Program Officer – Debt Policy says that with the current trend of continued non-implementation and postponement of development programmes, the Vision 2030 and National Development Plans will barely be met. This comes in view of the the Zambian Government signing a US\$ 6 million loan in 2007 with the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) to co-fund the project to rehabilitate forty feeder roads on the Copperbelt, and it's continued delay in implementation.

“It is imperative that Government streamlines implementation of developmental programmes especially when dealing with debt resources as this has serious fiscal consequences”, observes Mr. Banda. “Socio-economic injustice will continue to be perpetuated among the poor if basic infrastructure is not developed. We saw this when we monitored the BADEA loan contracted by government for feeder roads in Copperbelt Province. This is also a trend evident in the JCTR monthly *Basic Needs Basket* which reveals that the cost of living is always closely related to the availability and state of infrastructure facilities,” he further adds.

JCTR in conjunction with Jubilee Ndola challenges the Government to hasten the implementation of various infrastructure development projects which will enable the country meet Vision 2030. The organisation reminds Government that a good starting point is the development of infrastructure which will act as an anchor to the development of industries and help in alleviating poverty levels in the country. The JCTR urges Government that if transparency and accountability have to be ensured, participation of local communities has to be encouraged. This is in order to ensure that resources allocated for development benefit the intended recipients.

“Delaying infrastructure development must not be an option because of the many pressing needs of the country. Government needs to place more commitment on timely implementation process and fulfill its pledge and promise of poverty reduction through equitable economic growth”, concludes Mr. Banda.

This is why the JCTR in collaboration with Jubilee Ndola has taken initiative to share the findings of the \$6 million BADEA loan for feeder roads in the Copperbelt Province at a Public Forum in the Mulungushi International Conference Centre on Thursday, November 26, 2009.