



JESUIT CENTRE FOR THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

3813 Martin Mwamba Road, Olympia Park

P.O Box 37774, 10101 Lusaka, Zambia

Email: admin@jctr.org.zm

www.jctr.org.zm

Tel: +260 211 290410 | Fax: +260 211 290759

Press Statement

15th February, 2022

Accountability in the Delivery of the Free Education Policy Remains Critical

The Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), is elated by the government's commitment to implement the 'free education' policy direction through the 2022 National Budget. The goal of this policy is to make education more accessible and affordable in Zambia. This is a positive step toward the State fulfilling its commitment under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This commitment has been further solidified by the timely release of ZMW324 million in January as the 2022 first quarter operational support fund for public schools. These funds are aimed at facilitating the implementation of free education for all learners at early childhood, primary, and secondary education levels. JCTR urges the government to continue promoting pro-poor policies in social services delivery, beyond the focus of education.

However, as is always the case whenever new policies are being introduced, challenges are bound to arise. So far cases of theft of school funds, congestion of schools, corruption and abuse of authority have been recorded following the implementation of free education. Consideration of how learners are going to access and benefit from the free education policy is critical in guaranteeing that every child has access to education. Particularly, with congestion of schools comes unfavourable teacher to pupil ratios which manifest in a teacher's workload and how each teacher is available to offer services and care to the students. Given the role that quality education plays in the development of the country's economy and society, JCTR is thus concerned about the system's weaknesses, which can easily be misused or abused if not diligently safeguarded.

As a result, the Centre recommends that the government, through the Ministry of Education and through the law enforcement authorities such as Anti-Corruption Commission, puts in place effective systems to close corruption and inefficiency gaps that may arise with the delivery of free education. Anyone found wanting should be prosecuted through the right channels. In terms of improving social services delivery, the Centre calls upon all stakeholders to assist the government in ensuring that the free education policy achieves its intended objectives. We must all work together to combat corruption because corruption breaches human rights and denies ordinary citizens, especially the poor, access to social services.

In addition, JCTR would like to encourage ordinary citizens, especially parents and guardians, to report any corrupt practices or policy implementation challenges to the appropriate authorities. We believe that active citizen participation will help our country to attain high levels of accountability and transparency at all levels of governance and public resource management. This in turn will deliver greater human development outcomes. Together we can.

For further clarifications contact the Faith and Justice (F&J) Programme at the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR) on 0955295881 and 0954755319. Email: manager.fj@jctr.org.zm, media.information@jctr.org.zm and admin@jctr.org.zm, Martin

**Mwamba Road, Plot 3813 Martin Mwamba Road, Olympia Park – Lusaka. P. O. Box 37774
Lusaka – Zambia.**