

# The JCTR's Basic Needs Basket (BNB)

An advocacy tool inspired by the Catholic Social  
Teaching for Social Justice

# What it is...( a description)

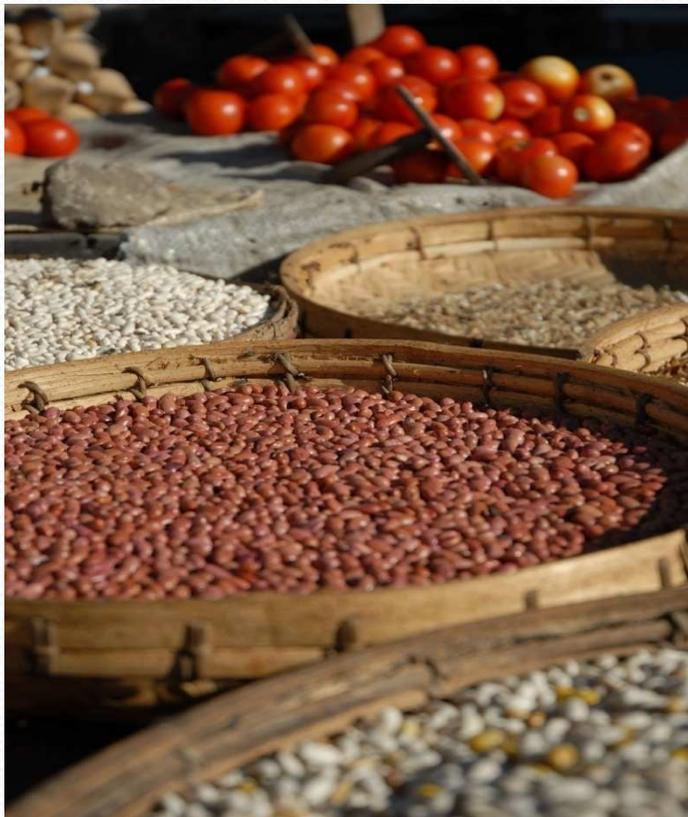
- A monthly survey that shows the bare minimum cost of living for an average family size in Zambia (believed to be six)
- Conducted in thirteen (13) towns across the country and six (6) rural areas
- Calculates the cost of food and non-food items
- Compares the cost of living to salaries of low income families
- Advocates for just wages mostly through wage negotiations by trade unions
- Advocates for fuller living conditions
- Employed in policy work, advocating for social justice and a dignified life for the poor

# Zambia: some facts and figures

- Population: 12 million
- Poverty levels still over 60%;
- 90% labour force either unemployed or in informal sector
- 45% of the children stunted; in the top ten malnourished countries
- BNB for March 2011 ZMK 3,008,800 equivalent to USD 638
- Average monthly wages for:  
teachers, (ZMK 1,300,300 per month; about USD 200); nurses (ZMK 1,300,000); secretary in government (ZMK 1,390,000)
- Clearly the current low income salaries inadequate for meeting basic needs
- Above facts suggests that the majority in Zambia are failing to live a dignified life

# Basic needs Basket and the Catholic Social Teaching

## *The Right to Food...*



*Pacem in Terris*: ‘right to bodily integrity...which include food...’

“The available data show that the nonfulfillment of the right to food is not only due to natural causes, but also and above all, to situations provoked by the conduct of men and women that lead to a general deterioration of social, economic and human standards.”

Benedict XVI,  
Message to FAO,  
October 2007

# RIGHT TO EMPLOYMENT

The demands of the common good on a national level ...employment of the greatest number of workers. MM, 79



Right to means necessary for the proper development of life ...*Pacem in Terris*...

# JUST WAGES



It [remuneration of work] must be determined in accordance with justice and equity, which means that workers *must be paid* a wage which allows them to live a truly human life and to fulfill the family obligations in a worthy manner. Mater et Magistra, 71



Justice and fairness demand that within the limits of the common good, wages too shall increase. MM, 112

# CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

## VALUES AND THE BASIC NEEDS

### BASKET

- Dignified life (human beings made in the image of God, Gen 1:27)
- Just wages, MM, 71; QA, 13
- Option for the poor, OA, 23; MM, 20;MM 71
- The right to food (PT, 26)
- Universal destination of earthly goods, MM, 43
- Improvement in the standard of living, MM, 160, 187

# Basic Needs Basket and Advocacy



Catholic Social teaching stresses the importance of integral human development as the goal and measure of human social life.

‘...authentic development [is]... the transition from less human conditions to those which are more human.’ PP, 20

The Basic Needs Basket contributes to a broader vision of progress of the human being in promoting and advocating the attainment of ‘fuller human conditions.’



# IMPACT OF THE BNB ADVOCACY

- Revision of the income tax threshold (tax free threshold, Zambian budget address, 2010)
- Input into the Government Salary review commission (Public Sector salaries being reviewed...JCTR input solicited, November 2010)
- Application into wage negotiation by Trade Unions (minimum wage to be tied to poverty datum line, in Zambia the Basic Needs Basket)
- Use in judicial processes (determination of obligatory child support)

# Conclusion

The BNB has become a very popular and useful tool:

- That gives a snapshot of socio-economic situation
- Highlights the gap between the cost of living and average low income salaries
- That can be employed in advocacy for change, social justice and the promotion of the dignity of the human being
- For evaluating government actions and hold government accountable to pro-poor priorities, policies and promises
- We have now trained CSOs and Justice and Peace groups in over 15 African Countries



Thank you!

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