



NGOCC

For Gender Development

REFLECTIONS BY THE NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS' COORDINATING COUNCIL (NGOCC) FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 2017

NGOCC JOINS THE REST OF THE COUNTRY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CHOLERA. OUR SYMPATHIES GO TO THE FAMILIES OF THOSE THAT LOST THEIR BELOVED ONES THROUGH THIS VERY UNFORTUNATE DISEASE. AT THE END OF THE DAY WE ARE ALL AFFECTED OR INFECTED BY THIS CHOLERA EPIDEMIC. WE THEREFORE URGE ZAMBIANS TO SUPPORT GOVERNMENT EFFORTS IN REEDING THE COUNTRY OF THE DEADLY DISEASE. WE ALL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN THIS ENDEAVOR!

NO DOUBT THAT 2017 WAS IN MANY RESPECTS AN EVENTFUL YEAR FOR MOST ZAMBIANS. COMING AFTER THE 2016 GENERAL ELECTIONS, THE YEAR 2017 WAS CHARACTERIZED BY HEIGHTENED POLITICAL TENSIONS THAT HAD THE POTENTIAL TO DIVIDE THE COUNTRY. ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC FRONT, ZAMBIA EXPERIENCED SUBSTANTIAL ECONOMIC SLUMP OCCASIONED BY THE UNSTABLE CURRENCY AND UNCLEAR GOVERNMENT POLICY. ZAMBIANS EXPERIENCED ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS, WHICH GAVE RISE TO THE HIGH COST OF LIVING HENCE IMPACTING NEGATIVELY ON MAJORITY HOUSEHOLDS AND MOSTLY ON THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF THESE HOUSEHOLDS.

BELOW ARE SOME REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE YEAR 2017;

1. THE GENDER AGENDA

ENDING ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IS NOT ONLY A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT, BUT IS ALSO CRITICAL TO ACCELERATING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. IT IS UNDISPUTABLE THAT WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY REMAIN A PRIORITY TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE

DEVELOPMENT. IT IS PROVEN THAT EMPOWERING WOMEN AND GIRLS HAS A MULTIPLIER EFFECT AND HELPS DRIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

ZAMBIA IS SIGNATORY TO AND HAS RATIFIED A NUMBER OF KEY INSTRUMENTS ON GENDER JUSTICE, WHICH ARE MEANT TO GUIDE THE COUNTRY ON ATTAINING GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY. ZAMBIA IS ALSO A SIGNATORY TO THE SADC AND AFRICAN UNION GENDER PROTOCOLS. WHILE SOME EFFORTS HAVE BEEN PUT IN PLACE TO OPERATIONALIZE THESE COMMITMENTS THROUGH THE GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY ACT NO. 22 OF 2015, NGOCC REMAINS CONCERNED THAT THIS ACT REMAINS UNIMPLEMENTED. THIS IS MORE SO THAT ZAMBIA IS YET TO RATIFY THE REVISED SADC PROTOCOL ON GENDER.

OVER THE YEARS AND SPECIFICALLY IN 2017, THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING REMAINED LOW. WHILE COSMETIC APPOINTMENTS WERE MADE FOR WOMEN TO SERVE IN VARIOUS POSITIONS, MORE STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE GENDER EQUITY AND EQUALITY AT ALL DECISION MAKING POSITION LEVELS. DURING THE 2016 ELECTIONS, AT PARLIAMENTARY LEVEL: ONLY 26 FEMALES CANDIDATES WERE ELECTED AS MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OUT OF THE TOTAL OF 106 ELECTED CANDIDATES; THE PRESIDENT LATER NOMINATED TWO FEMALE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT BRINGING THE TOTAL OF FEMALE MPS IN THE HOUSE TO 29 (INCLUDING THE VICE PRESIDENT). AT COUNCIL LEVEL 132 FEMALES WERE ELECTED AS COUNCILLORS OUT OF THE TOTAL OF 425 FEMALES THAT CONTESTED. AT MAYORAL LEVEL 2 FEMALES. IN TERMS OF COUNCIL CHAIRPERSONS, 6 WOMEN WERE ELECTED FROM A TOTAL OF 37. NGOCC REMAINS HOPEFUL THAT AS THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE REVIEWING THE 2016 AMENDED CONSTITUTION, THE ASPECT OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION WILL BE RECONSIDERED. WE ALSO HOPE THAT PARLIAMENT WILL TAKE ON BOARD OUR RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE POLITICAL PARTY BILL THAT ARE MEANT TO ENHANCE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AT LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENTARY LEVELS.

2. POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

BY AND LARGE, THE HAPPENINGS OF THE 2016 ELECTIONS CONTINUED TO HAUNT THE COUNTRY IN 2017. THE YEAR WAS CHARACTERIZED BY HEIGHTENED TENSIONS THAT WERE FUELED BY THE DISPUTED 2016 ELECTION RESULTS THAT SAW THE RE-ELECTION OF PRESIDENT EDGAR CHAGWA LUNGU AND THE

PATRIOTIC FRONT (PF) PARTY INTO GOVERNMENT. THIS CULMINATED INTO THE ARREST OF THE MAIN OPPOSITION LEADER MR. HAKAINDE HICHILEMA ON A CHARGE OF TREASON DISPUTING THE PRESIDENTIAL RESULTS. MR. HICHILEMA WAS LATER RELEASED ON A NOLLE PROSEQUI. DURING HIS INCARCERATION, THE COUNTRY WITNESSED SOME DIALOGUE INTERVENTIONS INITIATED BY THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS, THE COMMONWEALTH, AMONG OTHERS. NGOCC, THEREFORE, URGES THE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP, ESPECIALLY PRESIDENT LUNGU AND THE UPND TO RECOMMIT THEMSELVES TO THIS DIALOGUE PROCESS. GOING INTO 2018, THE COUNTRY NEEDS HEALING AND TRUE RECONCILIATION. POLITICAL PLAYERS WILL NEED TO ENGAGE AND SPEAK TO EACH OTHER WITH CIVILITY AND IN A LANGUAGE THAT IS NURTURING FOR NATION BUILDING. OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE IS THE NEED FOR IMMEDIATE REFORMS IN ZAMBIA'S ELECTORAL PROCESS. LEFT IN ITS CURRENT FORM, THE ELECTORAL PROCESS WILL FOREVER REMAIN A SOURCE OF CONFLICT AFTER EVERY ELECTION.

3. CONSTITUTION MAKING AND NATIONAL REFERENDUM

IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE YEAR 2017 CLOSED WITHOUT ANY FUNDAMENTAL REFORMS TO THE 2016 AMENDED CONSTITUTION. THE HURRIED MANNER THAT THE 2016 CONSTITUTION WAS AMENDED THROUGH PARLIAMENT, IN TOTAL DISREGARD OF THE POPULAR WISH OF ZAMBIANS FOR A NATIONAL REFERENDUM, HAS CREATED SERIOUS LACUNAS IN OUR SUPREME LAW. IT WAS OUR DESIRE THAT IN 2017, THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE SHOULD HAVE PROVIDED A CLEAR ROAD MAP AS TO HOW THE COUNTRY SHOULD HAVE DEALT WITH THE EXISTING LACUNAS IN THE CONSTITUTION.

SOME OF THE CHALLENGES THE COUNTRY FACES TODAY ARE LARGELY AS A RESULT OF THE FAULTY CONSTITUTION THAT OUGHT TO BE THE SUPREME LAW OF OUR COUNTRY. NGOCC THEREFORE CALLS UPON THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, TO PRIORITIZE THE CONSTITUTION MAKING PROCESS IN 2018.

AS A FOCAL POINT OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT, WE ARE SAD THAT THE GOVERNMENT REMAINS UNCOMMITTED TO ENSURING THE INCLUSION OF THE EXPANDED BILL OF RIGHTS IN THE CONSTITUTION, WHICH IS KEY FOR ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN. WE DEMAND THAT THE GOVERNMENT IMMEDIATELY FACILITATES FOR A BROAD BASED CONSULTATION

IN THE HOLDING OF THE STAND-ALONE NATIONAL REFERENDUM, AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THE PRONOUNCEMENTS IN 2017 BY THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE, HON. GIVEN LUBINDA.

4. AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

THE 2016 AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT HAS AGAIN REVEALED AN INCREASE IN MISAPPLIED PUBLIC FUNDS FROM WHAT WAS REPORTED IN 2015. THE REPORT INDICATES THAT K162, 095, 699=00 WAS MISAPPLIED COMPARED TO K28, 153, 997=00 IN 2015 (80% IN INCREASE MISAPPLICATION). IT IS SADDENING THAT THE LAW ENFORCERS ARE DRAGGING THEIR FEET IN ENSURING THAT THE MENTIONED PERPETRATORS ARE BROUGHT TO BOOK, ESPECIALLY THAT SOME OFFICERS WHO ARE AT THE CENTRE OF THIS PLUNDER OF PUBLIC RESOURCES, ARE NOT APPEARING FOR THE FIRST TIME.

UNDER ARTICLE 250 (E) OF CONSTITUTION OF ZAMBIA (2016 AMENDMENT) WHICH STATES THAT *"THE AUDITOR-GENERAL SHALL RECOMMEND TO THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS OR A LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY ANY MATTER WITHIN THE COMPETENCE OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL, THAT MAY REQUIRE TO BE PROSECUTED"*. THE AUDITOR GENERAL IS GIVEN POWERS TO RECOMMEND PROSECUTION OF SUCH OFFICERS AS THESE INVOLVED IN THE BLATANT ABUSE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES.

FURTHERMORE, GOVERNMENT SPENT A WHOPPING 42 MILLION UNITED STATES DOLLARS ON 42 FIRE TRUCKS IN CIRCUMSTANCES THAT REMAIN VERY SUSPICIOUS, MORE SO THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO POLITICAL WILL TO INVESTIGATE THE MATTER WITH THE SERIOUSNESS IT DESERVES.

NGOCC DEMANDS ACCOUNTABILITY FROM THE PATRIOTIC FRONT (PF) GOVERNMENT. IT IS NGOCC'S CONSIDERED VIEW THAT THE RESOURCES BEING MISAPPLIED AND ABUSED COULD HAVE BEEN USED IN IMPROVING SOCIAL SERVICE PROVISION THAT HAS UNFORTUNATELY FALLEN ON WOMEN AS CARERS IN HOUSEHOLDS. THE CURRENT MAGNITUDE OF THE CHOLERA OUTBREAK IS ONE SUCH PUBLIC EVENTUALITY THAT COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED WITH ADEQUATE ATTENTION TO PUBLIC ACCESS TO CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES.

5. GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

THE SOARING CASES OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE CONTINUE TO BEAR A FEMININE FACE DESPITE THE ENACTMENT OF THE ANTI GBV ACT NO.1 OF 2011. CHILD MARRIAGES ARE ONE MANIFESTATION OF GBV THAT HAS REFUSED TO GO AWAY, NOT BECAUSE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE, BUT BECAUSE OF MANY FACTORS AND TOP AMONG THEM IS THE SLOW OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE AFOREMENTIONED ACT AS WELL AS THE INACCESSIBILITY OF EDUCATION FACILITIES AND SERVICES TO KEEP GIRLS IN SCHOOL.

THERE IS NEED FOR SOCIETY AS A WHOLE TO JOIN HANDS TO FIGHT GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN ALL ITS FORMS. IT IS SAD THAT ON A DAILY BASIS, CASES OF GBV ARE REPLETE IN OUR NATIONAL PRESS. ACCORDING TO THE ZAMBIA POLICE VICTIM SUPPORT UNIT, THERE WAS AN INCREASE IN GBV CASES REPORTED IN 2017 TO 5, 096 FROM 4, 235 THAT WERE REPORTED IN 2016.

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF GBV CASES REPORTED COUNTRYWIDE FROM THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2017 WAS 16, 090 CASES COMPARED TO 13, 092 CASES IN 2016 DURING THE SAME PERIOD GIVING AN INCREASE OF 2, 998 CASES OR 18.6% INCREASE. A STATED MOST OF THESE GBV CASES WERE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS. THEREFORE, GBV IS INCREASINGLY BECOMING A NATIONAL CRISIS THAT NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED. NGOCC, AS THE FOCAL POINT OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT, WILL CONTINUE TO ADVOCATE FOR THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE 2011 ANTI GBV ACT.

6. SOCIAL PROTECTION

THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS FOR FAMILIES AND FOR ZAMBIA AS A WHOLE AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN CANNOT BE OVEREMPHASIZED. ENSURING THAT WOMEN FARMERS HAVE EQUAL ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES ENHANCES WOMEN'S INCOMES AND STATUS, AND HAS A POSITIVE IMPACT ON A COUNTRY'S AGRICULTURAL SECTORS AND FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY. THE UN'S FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION INDICATE THAT, IF WOMEN HAD THE SAME ACCESS TO PRODUCTIVE RESOURCES AS THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS, THEY COULD INCREASE YIELDS ON THEIR FARMS BY 20-30%. THAT COULD RAISE TOTAL AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES BY 2.5-4.0% PER ANNUM AND REDUCE THE NUMBER OF HUNGRY

PEOPLE IN THE WORLD BY TWELVE TO SEVENTEEN PER CENT. ZAMBIA IS A 3RD HUNGRIEST COUNTRY IN AFRICA!

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, IT IS NGOCC'S CONSIDERED VIEW THAT SOCIAL FUNDS SUCH AS SOCIAL CASH TRANSFERS NEED TO BENEFIT MORE WOMEN AS THE POOR OF THE POOREST IN RURAL AREAS.

7. FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME

THE DISTRIBUTION OF FARMER INPUT SUPPORT REMAINED SHAMBOLIC IN 2017. THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE ON THIS PARTICULAR SCORE UNDERPERFORMED AND HAS PUT THE COUNTRY'S FOOD SECURITY AT RISK. THE INPUTS WERE DISTRIBUTED LATE TO FARMERS, WHILE THE LAST (2016/17) MAIZE MARKETING PRICE DISADVANTAGED THE FARMERS. IT IS NOT IN DISPUTE THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE PEASANT FARMERS THAT DEPEND ON THE FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAM ARE WOMEN WHO REMAIN POORLY TARGETED IN MANY INSTANCES.

AS A COUNTRY WE MUST THEREFORE BE PREPARED TO FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE POOR INPUT DISTRIBUTION IN THE 2017/18 FARMING SEASON. GOING FORWARD WE APPEAL TO THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE TO ENSURE THAT MORE COMPETENT PEOPLE AND RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS ARE ADEQUATELY CONSULTED IN ORDER TO FIND A LASTING SOLUTION TO THE CHALLENGES BEING FACED BY THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE ESPECIALLY REGARDING THE E-VOUCHER SYSTEM. IT IS IMPRUDENT TO EXPECT THAT THE COUNTRY WILL DIVERSIFY TO AGRICULTURE WITH THE KIND OF POOR MANAGEMENT BY THE MINISTRY.

FARMER INPUT SUPPORT PROGRAMME NEED TO BE GENDER SENSITIVE AND RESPONSIVE AND SHOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO POLITICAL INSTABILITY THAT ONLY LEADS TO DISADVANTAGING WOMEN.

8. CORRUPTION

2017 WAS CHARACTERIZED BY INCREASED REPORTS OF ALLEGED CORRUPTION IN GOVERNMENT BY SENIOR OFFICIALS. A SENIOR CABINET MINISTER RESIGNED FROM GOVERNMENT CITING CORRUPTION. IT

IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE ANTI CORRUPTION COMMISSION (ACC) REMAINED MORIBUND IN 2017. GOING FORWARD, WE EXPECT THE ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMISSION TO BE MORE PROACTIVE IN INVESTIGATING THE REPORTED CASES OF CORRUPTION ESPECIALLY BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AT ALL LEVELS. IT IS SAD THAT THIS GOVERNMENT IS FAST BECOMING SYNONYMOUS WITH CORRUPTION AND QUESTIONABLE PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT ASPECTS, GOING BY THE REVELATIONS OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S 2015 AND 2016 REPORTS.

9. PRESS FREEDOM AND THE MEDIA

A FREE PRESS IS CRITICAL TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF ANY COUNTRY ESPECIALLY IN PROMOTING THE DEMOCRATIC DISPENSATION. IT IS SAD THAT IN 2017, THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUED TO MUZZLE THE MEDIA, ESPECIALLY THE INDEPENDENT MEDIA. THE SUSPICIOUS CLOSURE OF THE POST NEWSPAPER AND VINDICTIVENESS TOWARDS OTHER PRIVATE MEDIA BY PRESIDENT LUNGU'S ADMINISTRATION WILL FOREVER REMAIN AN INDICTMENT ON THE PATRIOTIC FRONT GOVERNMENT.

10. CONCLUSION

ZAMBIAN WOMEN, MEN AND CHILDREN DESERVE BETTER SERVICES. ZAMBIA HAS SUBSTANTIAL RESOURCES THAT IF WELL HARNESSED AND MANAGED COULD REDUCE THE HIGH POVERTY LEVELS CURRENTLY PREVAILING IN THE COUNTRY WHICH BEAR A FEMALE FACE. THOSE ENTRUSTED WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COUNTRY NEED TO BE PRUDENT IN THE MANAGEMENT OF OUR RESOURCES. THEY ALSO NEED TO RE-DISTRIBUTE THESE RESOURCES EQUALLY AND FAIRLY FOR ALL CITIZENS TO BENEFIT REGARDLESS OF THEIR SEX AND THEIR POLITICAL AFFILIATION. ZAMBIA BELONGS TO ALL THE CITIZENS AND EVERY ZAMBIAN IS ENTITLED TO A BETTER LIFE.

DELIVERED ON BEHALF OF THE NETWORK BY THE BOARD CHAIRPERSON – MS SARA H. LONGWE