

**Post net # 302**

**Private Bag E891**

**Lusaka**

**telephone: 290154**

**facsimile: 293489**

**email: [cspr@zamnet.zm](mailto:cspr@zamnet.zm)**

---

JUNE 9th, 2009

**STATEMENT BY CSPR**

**COUNTRY WIDE STRIKE OF HEALTH WORKERS AND TEACHERS**

Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) notes with sadness the current nation wide strike by health workers and teachers. The high incidence of strikes and other forms of work stoppages in Zambia today is a reflection on the performance and competence of the government who bear the responsibility of managing the affairs and resources of the country. The fact that the government appears to delay to firmly resolve the nationwide strike is an issue of concern for CSPR. Such practices do not foster the trust needed between the government, the social partners and civil society.

Strikes and work stoppages by the health workers in the country mostly affect the vulnerable poor which are most of the Zambian citizens who already cannot afford to access quality health care services. The health workers strike has not only led to widespread shortages of essential medical care but low worker productivity and death of patients in health institutions. For this same reason, CSPR has for a long time now been advising Government through budget statements to see the importance of improved personnel emoluments and allowances for social service providers. We would like to re-echo these statements and urge the Zambian government and leaders to quickly examine the budgetary impact of the health workers' demands and come up with long lasting solutions to ensure the workers' rights are being met. Part of the solution will lie in putting stringent mechanisms that will avoid misappropriation and misapplication of funds as recently witnessed with the purchase of 100 hearses and embezzlement of funds by workers in the Ministry of Health.

To this effect government and individuals entrusted with national resources should be transparent and accountable to the Zambian people and be able to manage resources in a prudent manner that will ensure efficient allocation of resources for economic and social development towards the attainment of the MDGs and Vision 2030.

Further, we at CSPR reaffirm that we do not approve of the proposed mobile hospitals as a solution to the challenges prevailing in the delivery of health care services to poor people particularly those in rural areas. The proposal of mobile hospital does not only seem to be expensive but it is also unsustainable and may end up being a waste of tax payer's money. We also strongly believe that resources targeted for these mobile hospitals should instead be used to solve and improve the current problems being faced in the health sector like poor working conditions and lack of infrastructure in most parts of the country. CSPR findings in North-western Province revealed an alarming state of the health system across all the districts visited. Mwinilunga district has no adequate medicines as well as staff to manage hospitals. Chavuma district which is the newest district in the province and the second poorest district in the country has no hospital, let alone a Good Health Clinic. Patients still have to travel to Zambezi which is 83km away. In Mufumbwe the district hospital is still under construction and only a health clinic is available. Lack of appropriate health facilities have lead to increased deaths especially among expecting mothers. This scenario is not different in most parts of the country and even worse in others.

In response to this, we call on government to consider the issue of developing and rehabilitating infrastructure as well as improving conditions for social service provider as paramount. We therefore expect subsequent budgets to reflect these issues and to treat the current nation wide strikes with the agency they deserve before more lives are lost.

**Nshindano Patrick Kryticous**

**Information Management and Networking Officer**