



CIVIL SOCIETY FOR *POVERTY REDUCTION*

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Press Statement

Reaction to the article: "K900bn from 2007 budget not spent, reveals Chibiliti"

(The Post, Wednesday, January 2, 2008).

The revelation that government has failed to utilise K900billion kwacha in the 2007 budget makes very sad reading for the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR). This is more so in a country where more than half of its people live in poverty. As Mr. Evans Chibiliti, Secretary to the Treasury states, it means that most projects in the developmental sectors -which are the sectors that directly benefit the poor – have not been implemented. This is not a good sign especially that government had in 2007 endeavored to move towards improved service delivery.

The failure to utilise the K900billion towards the much needed social services threatens to throw Zambia backwards in achieving pro-poor national development through the Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP) and indeed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

- We restate our call to government to enhance utilisation capacity and strengthening the systems used by the implementing agencies. We need to be seen to be able to use the little money that we have for the benefit of the poor people. To this effect we call for government to expedite the approval of the Decentralisation Implementation Plan, as this will make implementation of programmes faster and effective.
- Now that the debate over the form of the NCC is over and they have commenced sitting, there is need to revisit the budgeting cycle through the constitution. The budget cycle should be set in a way that will be favorable to full and timely disbursement and utilisation of funds. This review should re-visit the release of funds and tender procedures that are currently in place. We further call upon the NCC to heed civil society's

call to ensure that the constitution takes the plight of the majority Zambians by prioritising pro-poor development through inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights in the new Bill of Rights. In addition, we reiterate our call for the constitution to consider ring fencing funds meant for social services under poverty reduction programs. For what would be the point of boasting economic emancipation when the inhabitants of the land themselves have nothing to show for it?

- If the failure to utilise the available funds had anything to do with late receipt of pledged funds by the funders, we appeal to the donor community to be in line with the Paris principle of alignment so that they move along with the national budget. Donors should also move towards encouraging government to be inwardly accountable (accountability to the Zambians) as opposed to outward accountability (accountability to the donors first).

Once more, we call upon government to rank poverty eradication first for Zambia as this is the best route to achieving success in the FNDP as well as making strides in achieving the MDGs.

Ivy Mutwale (Miss),
Acting Executive Director