

12th July 2019

Press Statement

ActionAid's Expectations

ActionAid Zambia looks forward to the State of the Nation Address by the President of the Republic of Zambia this coming Friday 13th September 2019. We have high expectations in the state of the nation address by the Republican President. It is our expectation that a clear roadmap, the policy tone and direction on the major issues that the nation has been grappling with will be set.

Public Finance Management

The national budget requires a shared sense of purpose and ownership among the citizens through participation, however, there has been little or no citizenry participation due to lack of legal framework to guide the engagement with government on the budgeting process. After having said, we therefore call upon

Furthermore, Public Procurement accounts for more than 40 percent of the total Government expenditure, and it remains the most vulnerable to corruption and it contributes significantly to public finance leakages. There is need to review and repeal the Public Procurement Act No. 12 of 2008 to include legal provisions to address corruption, promote transparency and accountability in debt contraction and enforce the principle of value for money in public procurement for the public. Additionally, we demand that the Planning and Budget bill to be brought to parliament for enactment which we believe will also help to circumvent public finance leakages. Furthermore, government should enhance and promote the capacity of independent anti-corruption oversight institutions like FIC that have proved to be effective in fighting corruption and public finance leakages.

National Debt

With Zambia's external debt stock as at end June 2019 was US\$10.23 billion while domestic debt in terms of securities and bonds was at K60.3 billion translating the public debt to over 70% of the GDP as of June 2019. This has come amidst the nations credit downgrading from B- to CCC+ outlook by Standards and Poor's rating agency (SP), which affects Zambia's borrowing portfolio by placing Zambia as a very high risk in terms of investments. There is urgent need for the actualization and scaling up of austerity measures as we continue to negotiate for the IMF bailout package to arrest the investor's confidence which may have negative cascading effect on the economy. We recommend that the bailout package must be expediated before the economy is finally choked due to unsustainable debt levels. ActionAid Zambia also calls for accelerated structural transformation for Zambia's current economic model as a way of addressing the risk being posed by debt. As a manufacturing country, we will be able to observe the shocks of debt well.

Decentralization

The Local Government Charter must be prioritized to attain full devolution, hence, promoting and effectuating public service delivery at local level. The 7 NDP clearly stipulates the principle of leaving no one behind, hence full devolution will allow citizens at local level to participate in the

governance of Zambia. Which has been on the decline in terms of public participation. There is limited freedom of expression, association and assembly, that has been necessitated by the archaic Public Order Act as well as lack of tolerance by the government. The government must be tolerant to diverse views with respect to the rule of law and human rights principles by allowing various stakeholders to assemble and/or express their views on national issues without harassment as provided for in the republican constitution.

It has also been noted that youth representation in parliament is at 2%, and a very limited number of youth participation in lower level government structures such as Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and Zonal Development Committees. We expect that the President will speak to the development of deliberate policies and guidelines that will promote and enforce youth leadership.

Gender Responsiveness

In the last State of the Nation Address, the president alluded to the fact that GBV remains one of critical moral issues of our time and on June 21st, 2019 the International Labour Conference voted to adopt the new ILO Convention and Recommendation to end violence and harassment in the workplace. There is now need for ratification of this important instrument to effectively fight against GBV in the workplace. In addition, government should roll-out and establishment of the anti-GBV fast track courts in the remaining four (4) provinces and anti-GBV fund for effective implementation of this piece of legislation.

To further combat the issue of gender equality, the Equity and Equality Act No 22 of 2015 provides for the establishment of the Gender Equity and Equality Commission for functions and powers among others to stimulate production resources and development opportunities for all sexes. Four years on since its enactment, the commission remains to be established. We expect that the President will speak to government's plans on the enactment of the Commission and clear direction on how women will have access to 40 percent of the available land.

Climate Change and Food Security

For many years the issue of power deficit (electricity) has been the issue of concern, which is usually preceded by poor rainfall and/or droughts. With the global climate challenge there is urgent need to diversify power generation, given the cardinal role electricity plays in socio-economic development.

Due to the drought a total of 418,969 households are being affected with hunger and with this state of the nation, as ActionAid Zambia, we expect the President of the Republic of Zambia to declare this as a National Disaster. And an inquiry should be placed into the insurance company that was used last year (on FISP) and what happened to the compensation that was supposed to go to the farmers as stated in the contract that Farmers will be compensated in cases of loses incurred due to unfavourable weather pattern. Due to the disconnect between the policy and the implementation on economic diversification towards agriculture sector. We expect that the president will provide clarity and direction considering that climate change is posing threats on food security in the country.

Public Service Delivery

Due to the risks that the accumulated debt possesses on the 2020 national budget, it is our hope that in view of the debt servicing, services such as health, agriculture and education will not be comprised due to lack of funding.

Zambia is facing a danger of compromised education delivery due to the current underfunding to the education sector, which leaves district education offices lacking basic tools to conduct their duties such as monitoring to ensure compliance.

With the lack of adolescent sexual reproductive health services in Zambia, even though 29% of adolescent girls in Zambia become pregnant by the age of 19 years old. Adolescents aged 15 to 19 are sexually active and therefore face high risks in contracting STIs including HIV, which only 40% of the sexually active adolescents use condoms for protection against pregnancy and STIs. Zambia continues to record reduced HIV prevalence numbers, increased Antiretroviral Treatment (ART) and reduced child mortality rates, however the disease burden has mostly affected the youths who lack direct access to Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) services. There is need to increase funding to the health sector to support youth friendly services such as medical resources in remote rural areas and provision of adequate competent medical personnel and flow of information to the youth in those areas.

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