



**For Immediate Release**

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### **ZNWL PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE 2017 NATIONAL BUDGET**

On 11<sup>th</sup> November 2016, Zambia's Finance Minister, Mr. Felix Mutati, delivered to the National Assembly the 2017 budget. The Zambia National Women's Lobby (ZNWL) in fulfilling its mandate of promoting the welfare of women, presents the following preliminary analysis of the 2017 budget.

The ZNWL notes that the 2017 budget has been tailored to economic recovery which will spur into motion both positive and negative effects. However, the ZNWL's primary concern is how the anticipated measures for economic recovery will affect the women of Zambia who form the largest segment of the population and also account for the largest number of financially vulnerable citizens.

We have taken note of the number of socio economic programmes that the Government has introduced meant to support the vulnerable among the citizenry like the women, youth and differently -abled. We single out the following:

#### **I. Increased support to the Agriculture Sector**

Enhanced support to the agriculture sector is commendable as a successful agriculture sector will reduce dependence on the mining sector. The programmes outlined for the agriculture sector if properly implemented have the potential of making agriculture the biggest contributor to the nation's GDP.

The programme will further benefit the women who are the majority of small scale farmers in Zambia. The Government should put in place measures that will ensure that vulnerable groups like women benefit from this programme.

## **II. Industrialization through support for Local SMEs**

Government's involvement in the market through support to local Small to Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) is long overdue. Most industrious nations such as China are successful largely because of the heavy influence of the government in ensuring the success of local businesses.

We hope that the many women involved in the SMEs in Zambia will benefit fully from this programme. Some of the examples of SMEs where women are actively involved in Zambia include cross border business, market trading, grocery shops.

## **III. Higher Education Loan Schemes**

Continued and increased support to higher education through loan schemes is a welcome development. There is however need for the Government to put in place mechanisms to ensure that the most vulnerable students, especially women from rural areas, benefit from this programme.

## **IV. Increase in cancer treatment centers**

The decision to introduce satellite cancer treatment centers is a commendable gesture especially that there has been an increase in the incidence of cancer and all such cases are referred to Lusaka for treatment.

Statistics have shown that women are the most affected in the country with various types of cancers which include breast cancer, cervical cancer, cancer of the uterus, etc. Having satellite cancer treatment centres will be beneficial to many rural women patients and will further facilitate early detection of cancer through screening services.

## **V. Introduction of sanitary towels in peri-urban and rural schools.**

We commend the government for introducing the distribution of sanitary towels in schools. This will go a long way in reducing the number of days that girls stay away from school due to menstruation. This is indeed a milestone in the attainment of equity

in our society. We urge the government to scale-up this programme to include community schools in urban areas.

## **VI. Women's Development Programme**

We commend the government for the increase in the number of beneficiaries to the Women Development Programme from 7000 to 30,000 and the inclusion of 14,000 girls. We implore the government to scale-up the programme from the current 16 districts to enable more women benefit from this programme.

The Women's Development programme is meant to ensure that disadvantaged women and girls participate in various development programmes meant for the Zambian citizenry like FISP, social cash transfer and education schemes. This is to ensure that vulnerable women and girls from rural areas and poor homes are not left out. The Women's Development programme will also include educational support to vulnerable girls from grade 7 to 12.

In conclusion, the ZNWL commends government for the above programmes meant to support citizens to become viable contributors to the creation of national wealth. We however implore Government to ensure that these programmes are not mismanaged but reach the intended beneficiaries, especially vulnerable groups like women, youth and people differently-abled people. We further urge Government to guard against unplanned expenditures and abuse as outlined in budget pillar number four which talks about restoring credibility of the budget. This is the only way that the national programmes for 2017 and beyond can be achieved.

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