

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE.

CARITAS ZAMBIA SOUNDS ALARM OVER RISING CHILD ABUSE: CRITICIZES "MODERN-DAY PARENTING" AND POLITICAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN.

LUSAKA | Friday 17th 2026

Caritas Zambia is deeply concerned about recent developments that continue to expose children to heightened risks of abuse, exploitation, and neglect. These incidents underscore the urgent need for stronger family responsibility, community vigilance, and government enforcement of child protection systems and laws. As a faith-based institution, we also believe in raising children as guided by the teaching of Jesus Christ as we reflect on some of the teachings from; Matthew 18:10; *"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven."* This is a clear reminder that children are precious before God, and harming them is a grave offense.

Therefore, we have observed with concern the few key incidences as follows:

1. Poor Parenting Practices

We have observed that some parents and guardians in the name of "modern-day parenting," have continued neglecting, harassing, or even defiling their children. Disturbing reports indicate that children have fled their homes and are sleeping on the streets to escape abuse. This reflects a breakdown in parental care and protection, leaving children vulnerable to further harm.

2. A case of the Copperbelt Twins

The shocking case of twins who travelled in the company of a fellow juvenile by themselves from the Copperbelt to Lusaka with the intent to sell their ovaries highlights grave weaknesses in both parenting and systemic safeguard measures that exist in our country. Such incidents further reveal gaps in parental guidance, community awareness, and institutional protection mechanisms that must be urgently addressed.

3. Children in Political Campaigns

We have also observed children being used in political campaign messages. The **Children's Code Act** clearly prohibits the exploitation of children for political purposes, recognising that such practices violate their rights and expose them to manipulation and subsequently harm. Therefore, we call upon all political actors (both ruling party and opposition) to respect the law and protect children from being used as tools in partisan activities.

4. Involvement of children in Illicit Activities

Children are increasingly being drawn into substance abuse, sex scandals, and other illicit activities. These behaviours not only endanger their health and dignity but also reflect gaps in parental supervision, youth engagement programmes, and community support systems.

Furthermore, beyond these cases, children in Zambia have also continued to face risks from poverty (widening inequalities), school dropouts, child labour, child marriages and exposure to harmful digital content among others. These challenges therefore demand coordinated action from families, communities, and government institutions.

THE WAY FORWARD- A NATIONAL COMMITMENT TO PROTECT EVERY CHILD

The recent incidents should not be viewed as isolated tragedies but as warning signs of a child protection system that requires renewed investment, stronger coordination and greater accountability. Zambia has made significant progress through **the Children's Code Act** and other legal frameworks, but laws alone cannot protect children unless they are effectively implemented and supported by strong families, vigilant communities and adequately resourced public institutions.

Caritas Zambia believes that the time has come to move beyond reacting to individual cases and instead strengthen prevention. Greater investment is needed in parenting education, psychosocial support, school-based child safeguarding, community child protection structures and public awareness programmes that empower children and families to recognise and report abuse, trafficking and exploitation before harm occurs.

Particular attention must be given to the growing threat of human trafficking, both within and across Zambia's borders. As trafficking methods become increasingly sophisticated, Government should strengthen collaboration among law enforcement agencies, immigration authorities, schools, churches, civil society organisations and local communities to detect, prevent and respond to trafficking in persons, especially children. Greater public awareness is equally needed to protect children from online recruitment, deception and other emerging forms of exploitation.

Protecting children also requires addressing the underlying drivers of vulnerability. Poverty, unemployment, family instability, substance abuse, school dropouts and widening social inequalities continue to expose many children to abuse and exploitation. Child protection must therefore be integrated into broader national development priorities, including education, healthcare, social protection, digital governance and economic empowerment of vulnerable households.

Ultimately, protecting children is not solely the responsibility of Government or parents. It is a shared national responsibility. Every citizen has a moral and civic duty to report abuse, reject harmful practices and help create communities where children are safe, respected and able to

realise their full potential. The safety and wellbeing of our children must remain a national priority that transcends politics, social status and personal interests.

CONCLUSION

Every child is a gift from God and a vital part of Zambia's future. The choices we make today in protecting our children will shape the kind of nation we become tomorrow. We therefore cannot afford to remain silent or indifferent while children continue to face abuse, exploitation, trafficking and neglect.

As a Christian nation, we are reminded in Psalm 82:3: "Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed." Likewise, Proverbs 22:6 reminds parents and guardians: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." These biblical teachings call upon each one of us to uphold the dignity, safety and wellbeing of every child.

Caritas Zambia therefore calls upon Government, families, faith communities, traditional leaders, civil society organisations, the private sector, the media and every citizen to renew our collective commitment to protecting children and ensuring that their rights are respected, promoted and fulfilled.

Together, through compassion, accountability and collective action, we can build a Zambia where every child grows up free from abuse, exploitation and trafficking, a Zambia where every child is protected, valued and given the opportunity to flourish in dignity, hope and peace.

God bless Zambia.



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