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## **PRESS STATEMENT**

### **ZTP Calls for Deliberate Interventions and Transformed Economic Policies Targeting Women Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic**

**Lusaka, 29<sup>th</sup> June 2021:** As the covid19 public health pandemic risks maturing into an economic and social crisis, the impacts will be toughest on women. The pandemic has intensified the already existing gender inequalities and unmasked the weaknesses in Zambia's social and economic systems. Women, both in the short term and long term may face disproportionately greater financial challenges, job losses, challenges to access to sexual and reproductive health services and weakened social security protection. In addition, the deteriorating standards of living may further perpetuate gender-based violence. Unfortunately for Zambia, the pandemic has come at a time when the country is facing a serious macroeconomic downturn in light of the depreciating kwacha and pressing external debt obligations.

According to the world economic forum gender gap report, it will take 136 years to close the gender gap. This is an increase from 100 years that was reported before the pandemic begun. On the other hand, UN women revised poverty forecasts estimate that worldwide around 435 million women and girls will be living on less than \$1.90 a day (extreme poverty) by 2021, which includes 47 million specifically impoverished by the pandemic impact.

The Covid-19 pandemic has already demonstrated the importance of an effective social protection support system in Zambia. ZTP therefore calls for collective action among CSOs, the private sector and government to ensure that efforts made towards bridging the gender gap and providing social protection to women are not completely erased by the pandemic. Protecting the wellbeing of women will require deliberate

interventions and transformed economic policies that target women and support women-led businesses.

There is urgent need for rescue packages specifically aimed at providing social and economic support to women. There is further need to address the challenges that affect the effective provision of services under the various social protection schemes such as social cash transfers where late disbursement of funds to beneficiaries has been cited as a serious challenge, according to a recent case study by the Zambia Tax Platform.

We urge government and financial institutions to work together and consider grants and subsidized loans to women-owned business. The true depth of the impact of the pandemic on women and subsequent actions needed can only be understood better through research. ZTP therefore calls for more research to ensure that data on the gendered impacts of covid-19 is available for evidence-based interventions.



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