



**REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**

**REPORT**

**OF THE**

**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL  
SERVICES**

**ON THE**

**FOLLOW UP PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF  
THE SOCIAL CASH TRANSFER PROGRAMME IN ZAMBIA, 2018 TO 2023**

**FOR THE**

**FOURTH SESSION OF THE THIRTEENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

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## **FOREWORD**

Honourable Madam Speaker, the Committee on Health, Community Development and Social Services has the honour to present its Report on the Follow Up Performance Audit Report on the Implementation of the Social Cash Transfer Programme in Zambia, 2018 to 2023, for the Fourth Session of the Thirteenth National Assembly. The Committee was mandated to consider the Performance Audit Report in accordance with Standing Orders 206(e) and 207 (g) of the National Assembly Standing Orders, 2024.

In order to acquaint itself with the findings of the Audit Report, the Committee held ten meetings and sought both written and oral submissions from different stakeholders, the list of which is at Appendix II. The Committee's Report highlights, among others, purpose of the Audit, the findings, summary responses from the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, and the observations and recommendations made by the Committee.

Madam Speaker, the Committee is grateful to the stakeholders who tendered in both written and oral submissions. The Committee also wishes to thank you, for affording it the opportunity to scrutinise the Performance Audit Report. Further, appreciation is extended to the office of the Clerk of the National Assembly for the support and guidance rendered to the Committee throughout the deliberations.



Dr Christopher K Kalila, MP  
**CHAIRPERSON**

July, 2025  
**LUSAKA**

# CONTENTS

ACRONYMS.....	iii
1. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE.....	1
2. AUDITOR GENERAL’S COMMENTS .....	1
3. BACKGROUND .....	1
4. PURPOSE OF THE FOLLOW-UP AUDIT.....	2
5. METHODOLOGY.....	2
6. AUDIT SCOPE.....	2
7. POLICY FRAMEWORK .....	2
8. CONSIDERATION OF THE AUDIT REPORT BY THE COMMITTEE .....	3
8.1. Roll Out of the Social Cash Transfer Programme to Various Districts .....	3
8.2. Payment made to Ineligible Beneficiaries .....	4
8.3. Inclusion of Uncertified Beneficiaries on the Programme .....	5
8.4. Disbursement of Transfer Amounts: Ministry Headquarters to the District offices.....	6
8.5. Transfer Amounts not reviewed Annually .....	7
8.6. High Administration Costs.....	7
8.7. Measures to Improve Food Security for beneficiary Households .....	8
8.8. Cross-Cutting Findings.....	10
9. CONCLUSION .....	10
APPENDIX I - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OFFICIALS .....	12
APPENDIX II–LIST OF WITNESSES .....	13

## **ACRONYMS**

DMIS	Disability Management Information System
SCTP	Social Cash Transfer Programme
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCDSS	Ministry of Community Development and Social Services
8NDP	Eighth National Development Plan
ZamStat	Zambia Statistics Agency
ZAPD	Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities
ZDHS	Zambia Demographic and Health Survey
ZICTA	Zambia Information and Communication Technology Authority

## **1. COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee comprised Dr Christopher K Kalila, MP, (Chairperson); Mrs Marjorie Nakaponda, MP (Vice-Chairperson); Mr Paul Chala, MP; Mr Alex Katakwe, MP; Mr Heartson Mabeta, MP; Mr Monty Chinkuli, MP; Mr Joseph S Munsanje, MP; Mr Leevan Chibombwe, MP; Mr Masautso Tembo, MP; and Mr Miles B E Sampa, MP.

## **2. AUDITOR GENERAL'S COMMENTS**

The Auditor General informed the Committee that a Follow-Up Performance Audit on the Implementation of the Social Cash Transfer Programme (SCTP) for the period 2018 - 2023 was conducted at the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS). The Audit was carried out in line with *Article 250 of the Constitution, Chapter 1 of the Laws of Zambia, the Public Audit Act No. 8 of 1980, and the Public Finance Management Act No. 1 of 2018*. He explained that his Office was mandated to conduct performance audits on Ministries, Provinces, and Agencies (MPAs) to assess the extent to which Government operations were executed economically, efficiently, and effectively. He further stated that Audit findings were submitted simultaneously to the President and Parliament. He added that, the overarching objective of performance auditing was to promote good governance, enhance accountability and transparency, and improve the quality and effectiveness of public service delivery.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

The SCTP was a flagship initiative in Zambia's efforts to reduce poverty and vulnerability, implemented since 2003. It was primarily administered by the MCDSS, through the Department of Social Welfare, in line with the Social Assistance Pillar of the 2014 National Social Protection Policy.

In 2018, the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) conducted a Performance Audit on the implementation of the SCTP. In 2020, the Audit Report was submitted to the National Assembly and referred to the Committee on Health, Community Development and Social Services. The Audit identified several weaknesses in the Programme's implementation by MCDSS, including:

- i. incomplete roll-out of the SCTP to all districts;
- ii. payments made to ineligible beneficiaries;
- iii. inadequate documentation for disability status;
- iv. delays in disbursing funds from headquarters to district offices;
- v. failure to annually review transfer amounts; and
- vi. high administrative costs.

Despite the aforementioned weaknesses, the Government remained committed to strengthening the SCTP. As part of ongoing efforts to improve delivery, the OAG undertook a follow-up Performance Audit to assess whether the MCDSS had implemented the recommendations made by the Parliamentary Committee following the 2018 Audit.

#### **4. PURPOSE OF THE FOLLOW-UP AUDIT**

The purpose of the follow-up Audit was to assess whether appropriate actions had been taken by the MCDSS based on the findings and recommendations made in the 2018 Audit Report on the SCTP in Zambia. Specifically, the Report assessed:

- i. whether the Ministry had efficiently and effectively implemented the SCTP to reduce extreme poverty among beneficiary households based on the recommendations in the March, 2020 Parliamentary Committee Report; and
- ii. whether there was need to provide new recommendations considering recent developments in the social protection sector which included the introduction of the Zambia Integrated Social Protection Information System (ZISPIS) and the revised SCTP Guidelines of June, 2018.

#### **5. METHODOLOGY**

The Audit gathered data through interviews, document reviews, and physical inspections. These were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Due to fiscal constraints, the follow-up Audit was restricted to 10 out of 116 districts. While this may raise concerns about representation and accuracy, the findings were sufficiently supported by the broader Audit of 2018, thereby providing adequate context and complementing the earlier, more comprehensive assessment.

#### **6. AUDIT SCOPE**

The follow-up Audit covered the period 2018 to 2023. The main auditee was the MCDSS and included multi-diverse stakeholders, namely: Irish-Aid, Policy Monitoring Research Centre, Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD) and United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. The Action Taken Report dated 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2023 submitted by the Ministry was used as a basis for conducting the Audit.

#### **7. POLICY FRAMEWORK**

At international level, the SCTP contributed to Zambia's commitments under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 1, which aimed to end poverty in all its forms, and SDG 10, which promoted reduced inequalities. The SCTP was also aligned with the International Labour Organisation Recommendation No. 202 on national social protection floors, reinforcing Zambia's obligation to guarantee access to essential health care and basic income security for all.

Domestically, the Programme's delivery was guided by SCTP Guidelines, which outlined operational standards for targeting, eligibility, disbursement, and monitoring. The implementation and expansion of the SCTP were integrated into broader national development and social protection frameworks. Specifically, the Programme was aligned with both the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> National Development Plans (7NDP and 8NDP), particularly under Strategic Development Area 2 on Human Development. Notably, the 8NDP, under Development Outcome 4, highlighted the importance of reducing poverty, inequality and vulnerability, through inclusive and sustainable social protection mechanisms.

The SCTP was also anchored in the 2014 National Social Protection Policy, supporting the Social Assistance Pillar by providing regular cash transfers to improve the livelihoods of poor and incapacitated households.

## **8. CONSIDERATION OF THE AUDIT REPORT BY THE COMMITTEE**

After carefully reviewing the Follow-up Performance Audit Report, taking into account stakeholder submissions and responses from the MCDSS, the Committee makes the following observations and recommendations:

### **8.1. Roll Out of the Social Cash Transfer Programme to Various Districts**

#### **Audit Findings**

The follow-up Audit established that the MCDSS expanded the SCTP, from 80 districts in December, 2017, to 116 districts by November, 2023. Additionally, the Audit Report acknowledges the significant nationwide scale-up of the Programme, with beneficiary coverage increasing from approximately 574,663 in 2017 to about 1.1 million in 2023, representing a 56 per cent increase.

Stakeholders noted that beyond the audit period, the SCTP coverage rose to 1.3 million beneficiaries in 2024. In addition, citing the 2022 Living Conditions Monitoring Surveys (LCMS), stakeholders highlighted that 1.95 million households were extremely poor, leaving over 635,000 households (33 per cent) unreached. This underscored the need to scale up efforts to reach all households living in extreme poverty.

Stakeholders also affirmed the Audit findings on increased Government funding to the SCTP, highlighting a shift in the funding structure. Between 2018 and 2020, donor contributions dominated the budget, accounting for approximately 73 per cent. However, from 2021, Government funding steadily increased, reaching 40 per cent. In 2022, for the first time, Government contributions surpassed donor support and maintained a consistent 70 per cent share through 2023 and 2024.

Furthermore, stakeholders expressed concern that the beneficiary validation process, intended to verify and clean up collected data was flawed due to the failure to successfully carry out the validation exercise.

#### **Ministry's Response**

The MCDSS confirmed the full roll-out of the SCTP to all 116 districts, highlighting that expanding coverage was a key strategy to reduce extreme poverty. Beneficiary households increased from 616,464 to 1,311,101, reflecting the Government's strong response to the Committee's recommendations. During the review period, the Government emerged as the primary financier, contributing 62 percent of total funding. However, by July, 2025, this share had risen significantly to 90 percent, with partners contributing the remaining 10 percent.

### **Committee's Observations and Recommendations**

- i. The Committee observes that the long-term sustainability of the SCTP requires the institutionalisation of a structured graduation strategy. This would transition economically active households out of dependency through Cash Plus, which includes livelihood support, skills training, and financial inclusion. Such an approach would reduce fiscal pressure and allow the SCTP to support new vulnerable entrants.
- ii. The Committee further recommends that the MCDSS enhances coordination with the Ministry of Home of Affairs and Internal Security, and explore the use of the SIM registration database, with appropriate data protection safeguards, to strengthen identity verification and reduce duplication.
- iii. Additionally, to promote fairness and improve resource allocation, the Committee urges the MCDSS to strengthen the ZISPIS to generate disaggregated data and facilitate spatial analysis of SCTP coverage. This would enhance transparency and support more targeted interventions in underserved and high-need areas.

## **8.2. Payment made to Ineligible Beneficiaries**

### **Audit findings**

The Audit Report revealed that a total of K2,053,800 paid to ineligible beneficiaries across ten districts had not been recovered, despite previous recommendations. It further indicated that while 9,786 beneficiaries were removed from the ZISPIS system between 2018 and 2022, these cases reflected natural graduation rather than corrective action.

Additionally, the targeting approach had some weaknesses as it had both inclusion and exclusion errors which resulted in the erroneous inclusion of ineligible beneficiaries and exclusion of vulnerable persons.

### **Ministry's Response**

The Ministry acknowledged the observation made by the auditors. It stated that initially the concerned beneficiaries qualified for enrolment on the SCT Programme under the Multiple Categorical Targeting model during the pilot phase. The model had an elaborate eligibility criterion focusing on categorical parameters such as disability, age and sex of head of household. However, following a review and harmonisation of the Programme's eligibility criteria in 2015 (inclusive model) beneficiaries enrolled earlier, based on the Multiple Categorical Model were rendered ineligible under the revised parameters and required to be re-assessed (retargeted) based on the revised eligibility criteria. However, this had not been done at the time of the Audit.

The Ministry has since planned to undertake a comprehensive re-assessment of all the beneficiaries currently benefiting from the SCT Programme to ensure that all households on the Programme are eligible as per the current eligibility criteria.

### **Committee's Observations and Recommendations**

The Committee notes the commitments made by the MCDSS to review long-standing beneficiaries of the SCTP. Accordingly, the Committee resolves to await a detailed progress report on this undertaking. Further, the Committee recommends the

development of clear and comprehensive guidelines outlining graduation pathways from the programme, to support effective transition of ineligible beneficiaries out of the SCTP.

### **8.3. Inclusion of Uncertified Beneficiaries on the Programme**

#### **Audit Finding**

The Audit revealed that out of 189 persons with disabilities (PwDs), 150 (79 per cent) had disability cards, while 39 (21 per cent) did not. Of those without cards, 23 (60 per cent) received K400 bi-monthly instead of the stipulated K800. Additionally, some non-disabled beneficiaries were paid K800, depriving eligible PwDs of their rightful entitlement.

In addition, the limited presence of the Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities (ZAPD), which operated in only 21 out of 116 districts due to inadequate funding, had continued to hinder effective reach and verification of beneficiaries with disabilities across the country.

Further, the Audit revealed improvements in the certification of PwDs, which was attributed to the registration of 24,654 individuals, bringing the total number registered on the Disability Management Information System (DMIS) to 51,250. However, stakeholders noted a coverage gap, highlighting that as of 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2025, only 7.5 per cent of PwDs identified in the 2022 Census Analytical Report had been registered, based on a population of 1,804,563 aged five years and older.

Furthermore, stakeholders highlighted the need to improve access to certification for PwDs. To this end, a rights-based functional assessment tool was available to expand certification, shifting from a medical to a multidisciplinary approach involving health, social, education sectors, and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). In this regard, adopting the rights-based model would enhance inclusive social protection access for PwDs.

#### **Ministry's Response**

In response, the Ministry submitted that it had implemented interventions such as sensitisation on the importance of acquiring disability cards and collaboration with service providers, particularly clinicians from the Ministry of Health. These efforts led to an increase in the number of PwDs receiving medical slips or disability cards. Additionally, the MCDSS acknowledged the limitations of the medical model in certification, therefore it was actively developing modalities to transition to a rights-based approach, which it believed would enhance inclusivity and increase enrolment of PwDs into the DMIS.

#### **Committee's Observations and Recommendations**

- i. The Committee observes that the limited geographical presence of the ZAPD significantly hinders access to disability targeting and certification, especially in rural and remote areas. To address this, the Committee recommends decentralising disability certification functions by building the capacity of local service providers

and appointing designated focal points at community level to implement the rights-based certification model.

- ii. Additionally, the Committee urges the MCDSS to increase the transfer value for PwDs to at least K2,000, as the current K800 is insufficient to meet their basic needs.
- iii. Further, the Committee recommends the integration of the ZISPIS and the DMIS to facilitate information sharing between ZAPD and other Government systems whose programmes use disability determination as a criterion for eligibility.

#### **8.4. Disbursement of Transfer Amounts: Ministry Headquarters to the District offices**

##### **Audit Findings**

The Audit Report revealed that between 2018 and 2020, SCTP funds were not disbursed on time due to delayed releases from the Treasury and Cooperating Partners, sometimes affecting up to two bi-monthly payment cycles. However, from 2021 to June, 2023, payments were largely disbursed on schedule, with minimal delays. Notably, 98 per cent of surveyed beneficiaries confirmed receiving their payments consistently and on time during this period.

Additionally, the introduction of automated payments through the ZISPIS eliminated the use of Pay Point Managers, allowing direct transfers to beneficiaries. While ZISPIS was designed to enhance efficiency and facilitate electronic payments, its limited rollout, covering only 12 out of 116 districts meant that the majority of districts continued to rely on manual payment systems.

##### **Ministry's Response**

In its response, the MCDSS stated that transfer disbursements had improved, noting that at one point, 950,000 beneficiaries were paid within four days. This efficiency was attributed to the successful expansion of the ZISPIS to all 116 districts.

##### **Committee's Observations and Recommendations**

The Committee acknowledges the commendable progress achieved through the nationwide rollout of the ZISPIS, which has significantly enhanced the efficiency of fund disbursements to local-level entities. In this regard, the Committee recommends the following:

- i. the Treasury, in collaboration with the MCDSS, should ensure that adequate and predictable budgetary allocations for the SCTP are secured and released in a timely manner to guarantee uninterrupted and consistent payments to beneficiaries; and
- ii. strengthen beneficiary communication and grievance mechanisms by providing timely and accurate information on payment schedules and amounts and operationalise robust grievance redress mechanisms to enable beneficiaries to report payment delays or discrepancies, and ensure that such issues are addressed promptly and effectively.

## **8.5. Transfer Amounts not reviewed Annually**

### **Audit Findings**

The Audit revealed that while the MCDSS revised the SCTP, transfer amounts remained unchanged at K90 for three years (2018–2020), increasing to K150 in 2021. In 2022, transfers rose to K200 per household and K400 for households with a PwD, up from K150 and K300 respectively in 2021.

Stakeholders noted that despite aforementioned increases, transfer values remained significantly below the 2022 Poverty Datum Line of K517.60, covering less than 40 per cent of basic needs. They contended that even with the temporary price-shock top-up introduced in 2024, the transfer amount remained below the threshold needed for basic sustenance.

### **Ministry's Response**

Despite the constraints, the Ministry reported that it had made significant strides in increasing domestic financing for the SCTP. Government contributions grew from 40 per cent in 2021 to over 90 per cent by mid-2025, reflecting strong national ownership and commitment to social protection. The Ministry remained committed to strengthening the SCTP as a key tool for reducing poverty and vulnerability, while continuing to advocate for increased budgetary allocations to improve both coverage and adequacy of transfers.

### **Committee's Observations and Recommendations**

- i. The Committee notes that, although the SCTP transfer is not intended to replace regular income, it plays a significant role in poverty alleviation. Therefore, the Committee recommends for the annual review of transfer amounts and adjustments taking into account inflation, and using a cost-reflective approach. This will maintain the real value of the transfers over time and strengthen the programme's impact on poverty reduction.
- ii. Further, the Committee urges the MCDSS to establish a policy-based adjustment formula linked to inflation and poverty dynamics.

## **8.6. High Administrative Costs**

### **Audit Findings**

The Audit revealed that administrative costs for the SCTP consistently exceeded the recommended benchmark of 15 per cent. In 2020, these costs reached 27.4 per cent of total transfers, surpassing the 20 per cent maximum threshold, while in 2021 and 2022, they were 20 per cent and 19.5 per cent, respectively. This pattern indicated inefficiencies in programme delivery and raised concerns about cost-effectiveness as the programme scaled up.

### **Ministry's Response**

The MCDSS submitted that higher administrative costs were primarily incurred during the programme's scale-up phase and this was due to elevated enumeration expenses. To mitigate costs, a bi-monthly payment cycle was adopted instead of monthly payments. Additionally, the Ministry embraced technology for beneficiary payments, partnering with banks and mobile network providers to facilitate electronic disbursement of social cash transfers. Further, the Ministry informed the Committee of recent improvements, noting that as of June 2025, administrative costs had been reduced to 8 percent.

### **Committee's Observations and Recommendations**

The Committee notes the significant reduction in administrative costs. However, to sustain and enhance efficiency in service delivery, the Committee recommends the following:

- i. implement real-time monitoring of administrative expenditures at all levels, with particular attention to district pay points;
- ii. undertake regular assessments of administrative cost trends and revise expenditure plans as necessary to maintain cost-efficiency; and
- iii. optimise the use of the ZISPIS platform to improve overall programme efficiency and cost-effectiveness. This should include targeted awareness-raising in rural areas and comprehensive training for frontline staff to strengthen beneficiary management.

## **8.7. Measures to Improve Food Security for beneficiary Households**

### **Audit Findings**

Efforts to improve food security among SCTP beneficiary households were largely dependent on coordinated inter-ministerial action, supported by a strong legal and policy framework. However, the Audit revealed delays in finalising the National Social Protection Policy and the Social Protection Bill, both of which were expected to be concluded by November, 2023.

In addition, stakeholders submitted that fully operationalising food security interventions required a review and alignment of guidelines for related programmes to support the implementation of the Cash Plus approach. This alignment would help facilitate access to complementary services such as agricultural support, entrepreneurship training, labour market inclusion, and other income-generating initiatives that build household resilience and provide pathways out of poverty.

Additionally, the Audit noted that although the Cash Plus Agenda had been approved by Cabinet, implementation had stalled due to the absence of comprehensive guidelines. This had delayed the integration of SCTP with other social protection initiatives such as the Farmer Input Support Programme.

Furthermore, an assessment of 1,033 beneficiaries showed that the SCTP had a modest positive impact on food security, with at least half of the households able to afford two meals per day, indicating improved meal frequency.

### **Ministry's Response**

The MCDSS reported that while the Social Protection Policy had been launched, the Social Protection Bill had not been prioritised as it initially believed the Policy was sufficient. Nonetheless, the Ministry indicated that it was actively engaging stakeholders, particularly on matters related to financing, as well as the complex nature of the Bill.

The Ministry envisioned the full implementation of the Cash Plus Agenda, recognising the SCTP as a foundational social protection programme. The ultimate goal was to gradually transition and align the SCTP with broader Government initiatives such as the Keeping Girls in School Programme and Women's Livelihood Support, all of which aimed at enhancing productivity and resilience among targeted households.

### **Committee's Observations and Recommendations**

- i. The Committee notes with concern the existing regulatory gaps resulting from the absence of a Social Protection Bill. In this regard, the Committee strongly recommends the urgent enactment of the Bill as a means of guaranteeing, in the long term, the rights of vulnerable populations to access basic social protection services.
- ii. The Committee notes the lack of coordination among social programmes, which has often resulted in duplication of beneficiaries. To address this, the Committee recommends the integration of all social programmes targeting vulnerable beneficiaries under a unified framework. These programmes include, but are not limited to:
  - SCTP;
  - Food Security Pack;
  - Keeping Girls in School;
  - Supporting Women's Livelihoods;
  - Farmer Input Support Programme;
  - School Feeding Programme;
  - Cash for Work;
  - Health Facility Outreach Services; and
  - Empowerment Initiatives for vulnerable people.

The Committee emphasises that integration will enhance efficiency, improve targeting, and ensure optimal use of resources in delivering support to the most vulnerable populations.

## **8.8. Cross-Cutting Findings**

Although not expressly highlighted, the Audit Report brought to light key cross-cutting matters affecting the effective implementation of the SCTP. These include:

### **8.8.1. Risk of Digital Fraud and Scams**

Stakeholders expressed concern over the increased risk of scams and fraudulent messages as digital platforms become more widely used for SCT disbursements. This vulnerability is particularly pronounced among beneficiaries with low digital literacy. To address this, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS) was encouraged to collaborate with relevant Government agencies to design and implement digital literacy campaigns. These should include SMS alerts, community outreach, and multimedia messages in local languages to sensitise beneficiaries on common scams and safe mobile phone practices.

### **8.8.2. Limited Mobile Phone Ownership and Digital Access**

The 2022 National ICT Survey revealed that only 51.8 per cent of Zambians aged 10 and above owned a mobile phone, with significant disparities between urban (67.6 per cent) and rural areas (41.8 per cent). Given that a majority of SCTP beneficiaries lived in rural areas, limited mobile device access remained a significant barrier to the digital payment of transfers.

## **Committee's Observations and Recommendations**

- i. The Committee acknowledges the critical role of digitisation in enhancing SCTP delivery. It, therefore, recommends the acceleration of the SCTP digitization programme, along with targeted interventions to improve fraud awareness, as well as mobile phone access among beneficiaries. This could be achieved through public-private partnerships or donor-supported initiatives.
- ii. The Committee emphasises that the long-term benefits of improved service delivery, enhanced transparency, and reduced fraud risks justify the initial investment required to enable digital access.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

The Committee commends the Auditor General for undertaking the Performance Audit and acknowledges the ongoing improvements made by the MCDSS in implementing the SCTP, particularly the successful roll-out to all 116 districts and continued policy reforms. The Committee recognises the positive impact of the SCTP in advancing the Government's aspirations to reduce poverty and inequality across the country. However, it also notes the challenges faced by the Ministry and emphasises the need for remedial action to address persistent issues in targeting the most vulnerable populations, as well as concerns related to ineligibility and beneficiary graduation. Furthermore, the Committee calls for increased investment in resources to ensure the sustainability of the programme. It is hopeful that the

observations and recommendations in this report will be carefully considered and implemented.



Dr Christopher K Kalila, MP  
**CHAIRPERSON**

July, 2025  
**LUSAKA**

## **APPENDIX I - NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OFFICIALS**

Mr Barnabas Bwalya, Director (Social Committees)

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Ms Taona Chabinga, Committee Assistant

Mr Malama Mwape, Intern

## **APPENDIX II–LIST OF WITNESSES**

Action Aid Zambia

Auditor General’s Office

CARITAS, Zambia

Civil Society for Poverty Reduction

International Labour Organisation

Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection

Ministry of Community Development and Social Services

Ministry of Finance and National Planning (Department t of National Planning)

Ministry of Local Governance and Rural Development

Policy Monitoring and Research Centre

United Nations Children’s Fund

Zambia Agency for Persons with Disabilities

Zambia Information and Communications Technology Authority

Zambia Institute of Policy Analysis and Research

Zambia Statistics Agency