



G06877 Rural Basket Surveys and Urban BNB project
Mid Term Report: February 2017

Supported By



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1.0 Project context analysis and Summary of achievements

This report provides key highlights of the Poverty Reduction Forum Trust (PRFT)'S achievements in the first half (August 2016 – February 2017) under the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA) supported project on Rural and Urban Basic Needs Basket (BNB) Survey (G06020). The project is being implemented in a context where the country is witnessing further social and economic collapse as evidenced by a further slump in economic growth by end of 2016, reduction in tax base for the government, loss of jobs and high levels of unemployment, liquidity shortages and deteriorating service delivery service. These challenges have a great negative bearing not only on the ordinary women and men but also on other constituencies including the elites, private sector and the entire macro-economy. The lack of a consistent and inclusive economic policy environment characterized by ad hoc and temporary interventions in the form of Statutory Instruments (SI 148/2015, SI 64/2016 and SI 20 of 2017) and the bond notes introduction in November 2016, continue to put the poor at risk of slipping into more poverty burden. Since the second half of 2016, the country has witnessed more of knee jack economic policies and legislation which have had a direct and immediate impact on people's livelihoods. This has been observed despite the fact that the government has committed to put poverty eradication on the agenda through the adoption of country driven Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) and the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) frameworks. PRFT's work is mainly premised on the belief that any economic policy framework which balances both economic growth and the social inclusion objectives allows the enjoyment of a dignified lifestyle by every person in the society including those at the lowest end in terms of human development.

It is against this background that the Rural and Urban Basic Needs Basket project has been angereed to respond to these issues mainly through continuously providing in-depth analysis of the implications of government's policy responses to the fragile and highly informalised economy in a bottom up participatory approach. The prevailing context points to the increasing need for PRFT's to do more work around facilitating dialogue on poverty and social statistics. In the period under review, PRFT continued to use data from local level structures (Residents Associations (RAs) and CSOs) as well as desk researches to produce rural and urban BNB linked papers including (1) *securing rural social and economic transformation through agriculture*, (2) *improving open and participatory budgeting in local budgeting process*, *analysis of Statutory Instruments (SI 15 of 2015, SI 64 of 2016 and SI 20 of 2017) on the informal economy and cross borders*, *analysis of the I- PRSP's Pillars (including the Agricultural productivity, Growth and Food security)* and Thematic paper on the *socio-economic implications of the current cash shortages on the poor in Zimbabwe*.

The adoption of the SDGs agenda by the Zimbabwe government in 2015 and prioritization of country driven poverty reduction agenda through the interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I- PRSP) came as an opportunity for PRFT to proactively demand space to input into these policy frameworks through community consultation and dialogues with the view of ensuring that their voices are captured and influence the development trajectory.

The implementation of SDGs awareness project supported by another funding partner, CAFOD, made a very strong complementary impact on OSISA's BNB funded project as the BNB project was realigned to mainstream SDG analysis. PRFT did not stop to collect qualitative and quantitative data during the time when it was waiting a disbursement from OSISA. Instead, the organization strategically made use of its previous climate research publication, media reports on poverty, consultations with other civil society organizations and government stakeholders to respond to the government's policy announcements. Field activities for Dora will be undertaken in the next half as more budget space will be available for PRFT to execute these activities with impact.

Key achievements of the project in the reporting period which dovetails with the indicators as outlined in the outcome project matrix are summarized as: (1) The government of Zimbabwe through, especially the Ministries of Macro-Economic Planning and Investment Promotion and that of Public Service, Labour & Social Welfare increased their recognition of PRFT as an authoritative voice on issues of poverty. This was evidenced by their continued invitation of PRFT to input into the I-PRSP process and to sit on the Zim-Asset Cluster on Social Services as the only CSO among government departments. (2) increased PRFT visibility through improved communication of its work through social media and policy dialogues, among others. (3) Improved engagement among the RAs that PRFT work with and their local authorities.

2.0 Technical Description of the project

2.1 Goal

The overall goal of the project is to generate regular and reliable statistical and qualitative information of the basic cost of living for ordinary residents. The evidence will allow PRFT to push for policies and programs that cushion vulnerable urban and rural households.

2.2 Specific objectives

- To continuously monitor and provide information on poverty and access to basic service delivery in rural and urban areas of Zimbabwe.
- To raise awareness on the rural livelihoods challenges among government departments, rural households and other development organizations so that informed interventions can be undertaken.
- To strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations and residents associations so that they are able to actively engage policy makers and advocate for pro-poor development policies and to guarantee access to services to all layers of society.
- To strengthen existing dialogue mechanisms among residents, state and non-state actors at local level and to promote the creation of sustainable dialogue mechanisms where lacking.

3.0 Achievements in the first half

While there was a gap between the last funding cycle and the current one, PRFT continued to draw from work undertaken in the previous program to inform emerging issues. To that end, PRFT contributed and influenced policy decisions that were taken by government which had negative impacts on the people especially the poor and marginalized. Among some of the interventions were:

3.1.1 Policy Analysis and dialogue on the implications of SI 148 of 2015 and SI 64 of 2016) on the informal economy and poverty reduction

PRFT made an intervention to respond to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development's adoption of a policy instrument (SI 148 of 2015) which was meant to revise travelers rebate from \$300 to \$200 for travellers in private vehicles and removed rebate on goods imported by a traveller and being transported by a transport service vehicle, which is drawing a trailer and is used for conveyancing of goods through a port of entry. While attribution to policy advocacy remains a challenge, however PRFT is happy to report as a result of collaborative efforts with other CSOs, especially Youth Empowerment and Transformation Trust(YETT) , Cross Borders Association (ZIMCROSS) and the Informal Traders Association, the reversal to this policy instrument (<http://www.herald.co.zw/latest-update-on-travellers-rebate/>).

Advocacy Message from the consultations

“By specifying that the rebate shall not apply to ‘goods imported by a traveller and being transported by a transport service vehicle, which is drawing a trailer and is used for conveyancing of goods through a port of entry’, the government is prejudicing and socially discriminating the poor genuine people, and informal traders (who use such transport facilities like the omnibuses and pick-up trucks, in ferrying their goods across the borders) and transport sector employment”.

A comparison of Basic Needs Prices and incomes had revealed a decline in the welfare of the cross boarders through increase in cost of cross boarder business.

3.1.2 Poverty Watch Report on the Analysis of Peri urban land distribution and poverty

Through Household Income and Expenditure Surveys implemented between July and October 2016, in Masvingo, Mutare, Bindura, Gweru and Shurugwi, PRFT collected social statistics on poverty experiences in peri urban communities. The issue of accommodation came high on the challenges faced by these communities.

Informed by the BNB social statistics, PRFT's produced a policy paper exposing the negative impacts of the government's housing policy and how peri urban housing challenges are manifesting in multiplicity of ways including the failure of the public policies to mainstream bottom up approaches to social and economic justice and human development. PRFT captured key public voices which were fed by residents associations and this included:

“ The current land distribution process demonstrates a piece -meal approach to poverty reduction since most of these residents are economically disempowered to raise revenue to build houses. The distribution of a public resource like land is always good as it presents an opportunity to address social injustices in house ownership. However, distributing land to the unemployed youths without initiatives to economically empower them to pay for the development of the land and construction of a proper house derails efforts to fight poverty and social injustice in a sustainable manner. The most common outcome is reselling of the stand or development of a substandard house and this is not what real social and economic empowerment should mean for the poor urban population. Most of these residents cannot meet the requirements to access financial assistance from banks to build the houses. The government and local authorities tend to lose out potential revenue sources through rates payment if a large proportion of beneficiaries of land fail to build houses. There must be a balance between distribution of land to fill the immediate social justice needs of the homeless and improving productivity of land for industrialization.**Reads part of the publication**

The research intervention has so far steered local level engagements in Mutare where PRFT's advocacy focal person for Rural and Urban Basic Needs Basket in Mutare, Mr David Mutambirwa of the Mutare Residents and Ratepayers' Association mobilised Mutare residents and other local CSOs to raise awareness on the housing development challenges in Mutare. The lobby activity provided short policy position which drew from the experiences in Giboki, a peri urban set up in Mutare. (Refer to his report in file)

4.0 Rural Basic Needs Basket survey and National policy Advocacy: Social and Economic Dialogues Series

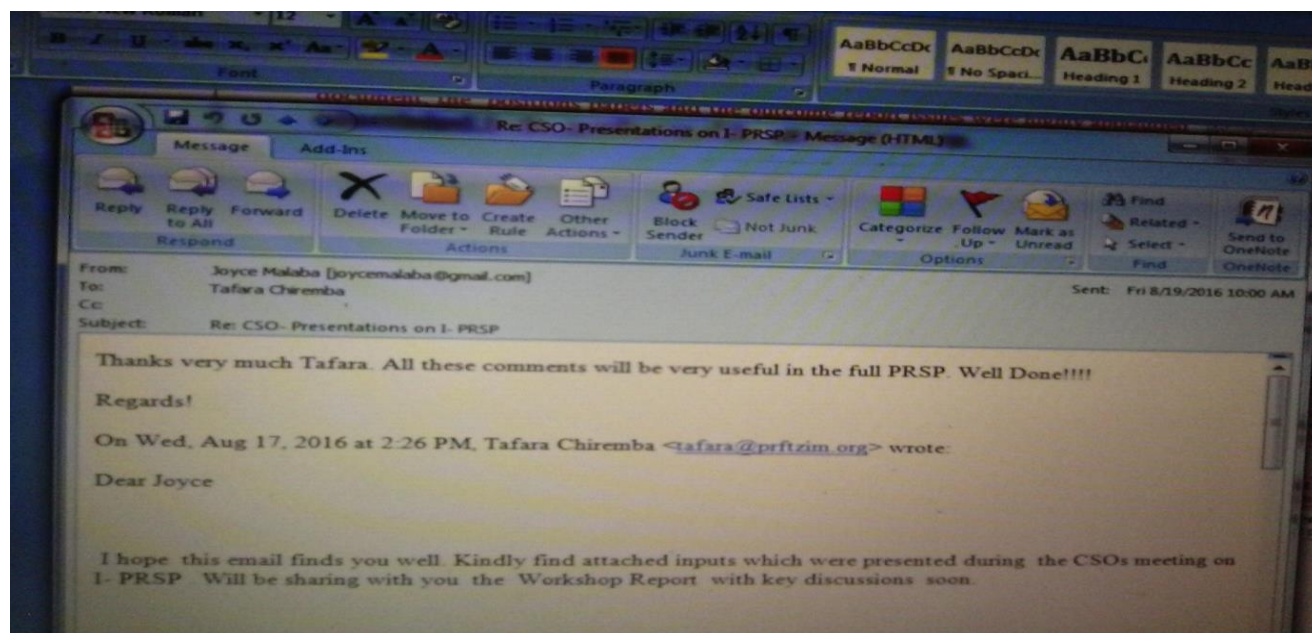
4.1.1 Study and national dialogue securing rural livelihoods through economic transformation in Agriculture

In its first publication on rural BNB report and climate change in Dora in 2015, PRFT observed that rural livelihoods were deteriorating due to climate change and lack of responsive policies on addressing stability in income and food consumption. In response to these issues, PRFT organized a dialogue platform, to engage ministry of Macro Economic planning and Investment Promotion, Ministry of Agriculture and Mechanization and Irrigation Development, Donors and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) where it lobbied for increased focus on securing rural livelihoods through agricultural transformation. The full research reports on Agricultural

Transformation and the structural economic transformation policy paper can be accessed on <http://www.prftzim.org/download/securing-rural-livelihoods-eco-transformation-in-agriculture/> and <http://www.prftzim.org/download/sustainable-economic-transformation-in-the-context-of-sdgs/>, respectively.

4.1.2 PRFT 's input on I- PRSP process in Zimbabwe

PRFT used its current research database and expanding knowledge on international development frameworks to input into the government's I – PRSP (2016 – 2018). The Poverty Reduction Forum Trust in collaboration with Labour and Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe (LEDRI) and Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) created a platform for CSOs to critique and input into the I-PRSP process in Zimbabwe. Through this platform, sector-specific position papers were developed and presented to the national consultant for I-PRSP who later acknowledged that they had to refocused the final I-PRSP document to respond to some of the issues raised. The full position papers on CSO's analysis of the I- PRSP document can be accessed on;<http://www.prftzim.org/publications/thematic-research-reports/>. Prioritizing governance reforms came as an overarching recommendation from the project intervention as CSOs felt that the document was silent on governance reforms to tackle mismanagement of domestic resources that could be used to fund social service delivery.



Feedback from a co – national researcher and consultant for the Government's interim – PRSP (Ms Joyce Malaba)

- PRFT was directly invited to attend and make an intervention during the official launch of the Government's final I- PRSP document by the Minister of Finance and Economic

Development on the 26th of September 2016. The Director of the Poverty Reduction Forum Trust attended and presented the CSO submission based on the outcome report. PRFT has also been told (informally) that the Ministry of Finance is inviting us to be part of the PRSP steering committee, which will be an oppoprtnunity to influence the process from within.



In the Picture

Judith Kaulem presenting her intervention on ministerial coordination – She questioned why the I-PRSP is focusing on Science Technology Engineering and Maths education (STEM) yet the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) which is meant to benefit orphans and vulnerable children is now neglected and why the issues of governance were not prioritized.

4:1:3 National research and advocacy on Poverty and Macro -economic policies

PRFT generated evidence-based policy advocacy messages on the current cash shortages to expand the knowledge base in this subject thus strengthening its capacity to engage government on possible reforms to improve the situation and hence minimize the impact of the cash crisis on the poor and marginalized segments of society in Zimbabwe. In pursuit of this, PRFT used a desk review and consultative approach to investigate the impact of the current cash shortages (induced by dollarization and the subsequent introduction of bond notes by RBZ) and its implications on the livelihoods of the women, youth and informal sector in Zimbabwe. PRFT was able to bring the officials from the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe to respond directly to some of the challenges raised by the participants from the youth, informal traders and women in particular. The RBZ was challenged to come up with inclusive monetary policies. PRFT continues to lobby the RBZ and Ministry of to take up some of the key short-term and medium-term recommendations emanating from this study among which are:

- Restoring financial sector confidence
- Recasting Bond Notes experiment
- Restoring productive capacity
- Restructuring fiscal position

- Stemming all investor risk issues:
- Creating an Appropriate Currency Regime

The PRFT is going to follow up on these recommendations with the RBZ as well as the Parliament Portfolio Committee on budgets to push for a motion from Parliament. The publication can be accessed on www.prftzim.org

5.0: Communication

5.1 Upgrading of website and media engagement

PRFT has upgraded its website (www.prftzim.org) to improve communication on its work. The new website now features latest publication icon, a portal of SDGs information, BNB policy briefs, PRFT's Youtube link.

The continuous interaction of PRFT with media houses has seen its policy briefs receiving coverage in local newspapers such as Newsday and Herald. PRFT adopted a vigorous drive to improve its media presence through Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. In the reporting period, the Poverty Reduction Forum Trust Facebook page has grown from 345 likes to 510 to date. The page has a weekly engagement of over 600 people.

Twitter updates

Our tweets have grown from 52 to 2321 to date

Followed accounts have increased from 547 to 847 to date

Whilst our followers have grown from 77 to 287 to date

Likes have moved from 11 to 726

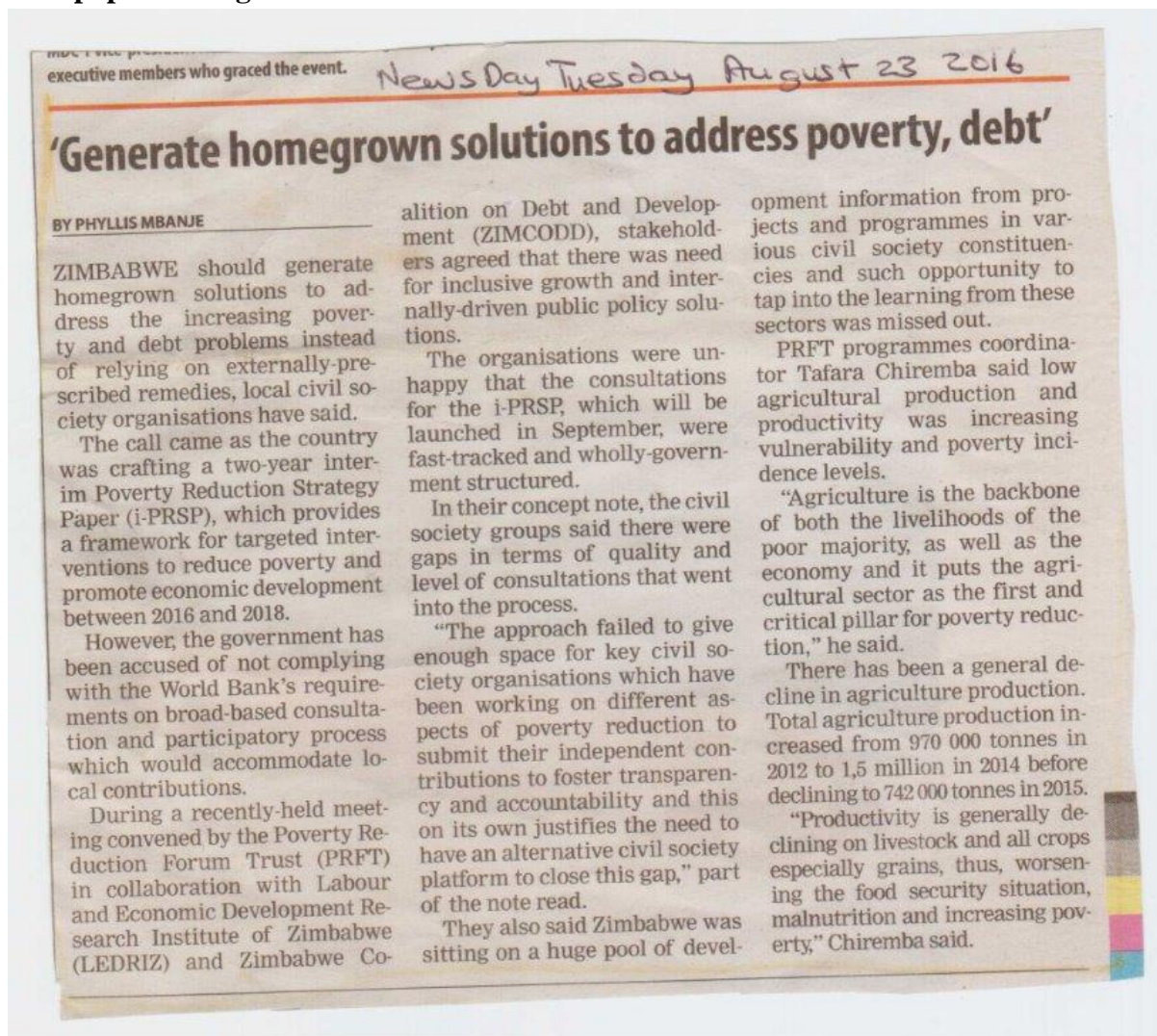
6.0 Activities in the next half

In the next quarter, PRFT seeks to engage more at the national policy level with its policy positions being informed by the following activities:

- Rural Basic Needs Basket Surveys engagement in Mutare and Dora
- Urban Basic Needs Basket in Masvingo and Bindura
- National level research and CSO consultation on SDGs policy implementation

7.0 Appendix

Newspaper cuttings:



Online Media coverage links

CSOS CRITIQUE I-PRSP FOR ZIMBABWE

(<http://spiked.co.zw/?p=1785>)

CSOs localization of SDGs

<http://spiked.co.zw/?p=2390>

Generate homegrown solutions to address poverty, debt'

<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/08/23/generate-homegrown-solutions-address-poverty-debt/>

<https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/09/13/organise-informal-sector-collecting-tax-govt-urged/>

<https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2016/07/24/zimbabweans-poorer-2011-experts/>

<https://www.thestandard.co.zw/2016/11/06/declining-rentals-hit-landlords/>