

Shurugwi Dialogue Meeting Report

United Baptist Church Hall

14th February 2014



Background

In light of the urban poverty which is an emerging reality in Zimbabwe, the Poverty Reduction Forum Trust (PRFT) has been guided by its Poverty Watch Flagship to carry out research, dialogue and policy advocacy on poverty related issues. As part of its Poverty Watch Flagship, PRFT has been conducting Basic Needs Basket (BNB) Survey initiative project in major towns of Zimbabwe such as Harare and Mutare and Bulawayo since 2010. In order to realize a broader picture on poverty situation in mining towns for policy advocacy, the BNB survey project has been scaled up to Gweru and Shurugwi in October 2013. The BNB project is being implemented in response to the lack of comprehensive and accurate up to date picture of poverty in both the urban and rural areas of Zimbabwe to allow policy interventions for improved access to basic goods and services such as food, decent housing, water, and health care by the marginalized and vulnerable citizens of the country.

Following the BNB consultative meetings held in October 2013 to sensitizing residents about the BNB Survey project and engaging them in developing Basic Needs Baskets for their respective communities, PRFT has already started to produce BNB reports accompanied by policy briefs in Gweru and Shurugwi. However, in order to come up with an in depth analysis of the socio and economic problems which are affecting the ordinary residents, PRFT went a step further to conduct a dialogue meeting in Shurugwi on the 14th of February in collaboration with the Shurugwi Residents Association (SHRA). This report presents the deliberations from the dialogue meeting.

Workshop Proceedings

Introductions and Welcome remarks

The dialogue meeting was opened with a word of prayer from the United Baptist pastor D. Marijeki. Thereafter, the introduction of participants followed. Among the twenty five (25) dialogue participants included workers from Falcon Gold mine, Unki Mine, Zimasco and Shurugwi Town Council (STC). The introductions were followed by opening remarks, a brief background of PRFT and its Basic Needs Basket Project from the PRFT's Programs Officer.

Opening Remarks, Background of PRFT and the Basic Needs Basket Project

In his opening remarks, PRFT Programs Officer, Mr T. Chiremba welcomed all participants to the dialogue meeting. Thereafter, the programs Officer proceeded to give a brief overview and background of the Poverty Reduction Forum Trust (PRFT)'s work.

The PRFT is guided by the Poverty Watch Flagship, which encompasses research, dialogue and influencing formulation of pro-poor policies. The organization's current work is premised on its experience in producing the Zimbabwe Human Development Reports (1996-2007), and most of PRFT's work is currently focusing on urban poverty which is an emerging reality. The PRFT's goal is to influence the formulation of pro-poor policies through carrying out research on poverty-related issues, engaging with policy makers, promoting broad-based consultative dialogue and processes as well as advocating for sustainable human development in Zimbabwe. Among its initiatives, PRFT conducts regular Basic Needs Basket (BNB) Surveys, a tool that measures the basic cost of living for an average family of five. The BNB provides evidence for lobbying local and national government for affordable and accessible services; housing, water & sanitation, energy and food hence, it is a pro-poor policy advocacy instrument. It can also be used by employers as a challenge to promote the common good of all employees by narrowing the gap in income between the lowest and highest paid workers in any enterprise. The BNB presents a factual representation of the living conditions faced by an organization's employees at home. At household level, the BNB acts as a guide to household budgeting and tool for understanding how different policies such as a minimum wage can affect a family's basic needs. The tool can also be used by policy makers for linking local, national and policy to the household needs of Zimbabweans.

In his background presentation, Mr T. Chiremba highlighted that PRFT's BNB project has been quite useful to advance the organization's evidence based policy advocacy work. Through the BNB project, PRFT has been able to expose the socio and economic challenges that ordinary urban residents are facing in a way to hold the policy makers at national or local level to account. From the BNB reports which have been produced in Gweru and Shurugwi since the introduction of the project in these two mining towns, the figures have shown higher disparities between the average amount of money required for a family of five to live a basic life and the households' disposable incomes, indicating livelihoods challenges that residents are facing. The programs officer indicated that PRFT has already started to challenge the new government to deliver on its promises to improve the welfare of people through its monthly policy briefs that have received regular wider coverage in newspapers.

Apart from providing information for promotion of broad based policies, the Programs Officer reiterated that the Basic Needs Basket project can effectively spearhead the dialogue process between residents and policy makers on issues affecting residents' livelihoods. The formulation and implementation of long term and sustainable policies should be made based on wide consultations to make the policies people driven hence residents dialogues on the livelihoods issues affecting them are key. The Programs officer highlighted that the residents dialogues were important as they provide an opportunity for residents to unmask socio-economic issues that can call for public dialogues with duty bearers for improved service delivery.

After a brief background of PRFT's work and its BNB project, the Programs Officer proceeded to give the participants the objective of the dialogue meeting. The objective of the dialogue meeting was to provide a platform for residents to unmask poverty related challenges and to reflect on the changes which they wanted to see in terms of service delivery and access to basic social services in their communities.

The plenary

After the background presentation by the Programs Officer, the dialogue was opened up and a number of urban livelihood issues were raised. The following is a summary of key socio-economic issues that emerged during plenary discussions;

➤ Service delivery

During the discussions, residents expressed great concern over the poor service delivery. The dialogue revealed that the water crisis has even worsened as the Shurugwi Town council had supplied water for only 2 days since January 2014. The residents acknowledged that they are still resorting to using water from nearby river for several purposes such as washing, cooking, and even drinking. Residents indicated that safe water can only be found from few Zimasco boreholes which are located a distant away from where most residents are living. However, it was revealed that water sources are being contaminated by gold panning activities and sewage bursts. The participants indicated that the sewer bursts had gone for five months without being attendant to.

The participants highlighted that locations where people live are now being used as dumping sites for refuse and town council has not been collecting the refuse timely to designated areas despite residents paying for the services. According to the residents, the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) is not taking any action to make sure that the environment is clean and water is not polluted.

Furthermore, it was revealed that there are 50 families including council workers who are living without toilets facilities in their homes and nothing is being done by the council to avail these facilities. According to residents, the lack of access to clean water and sanitary facilities has exposed residents to health diseases such as typhoid and cholera. For example, the participants cited incidences of cholera cases which were reported in Ward 6. As a result of the unavailability of clean water, it was revealed that a syndicate of thieves is taking advantage of the situation to steal water taps at night for resale.

The residents acknowledged that the bill write offs that were initiated last year is a contributing factor to the current poor service provision. According to the residents, the bill write offs failed to create a win - win situation between the town council and ZINWA as the town council's debts were not scrapped. The participants indicated that the town council is still failing to pay ZINWA for it to get enough water. It was revealed that the council is failing to raise revenue to buy the required chemicals for water purification. According to the participants the council is using only jik to clean water.

Despite the revenue challenges that the town council is experiencing since the bill write offs, the residents also raised a concern over the mismanagement of funds, corruption and the lack of transparency and accountability in the town council. For example, the communities think that Unki mine disbursed \$10 million towards the community share ownership Trust and that that the town council was allocated \$4.5 million. However, the participants indicated that there are no tangible projects that are being undertaken by the town council to improve service delivery. In another case of suspected corruption, residents revealed that the town council with the financial support from UNICEF upgraded existing toilets instead of taking advantage of the donation to build new ones in areas that have gone without the facilities.

According to the residents, the Shurugwi town council is offering stands as a bribe to external auditors so that their mismanagement of funds and corruption activities cannot be exposed.

➤ **pensions and workers' compensations**

One of the key issues that the participants raised during the dialogue process was the failure of council workers to access their pensions. According to the residents, the council is not remitting pension funds to the pension schemes. Besides the failure to get pension funds, it was revealed that families whose relatives died due to work related illness are not getting any benefits. Below is a story that of the residents narrated in a vernacular language;

“Murume wangu akafira pabasa achishanda mu Kanzuru kwemakore. Kubva ipapo, handina kukwanisa kuwana pension yake kana mamwe ma benefits zvawo kusiya kwe

imba yandichiri kubhadhara \$30, mwedzi wega wega. Kanzuru haina kukwanisawo kuti ipinze mwana wangu basa kuti tirarambe. Iyevino handisi kukwanisa kuendesa vana kuchikoro nekuti handina mari yacho. Chero chikafu chaicho kumba hakuna. Tiri kutamba nhamo mwanangu”

(My husband died due to work related illness after he worked for Shurugwi Town Council for so many years. Since then I have not been able to get his pension and any other benefits except the council house which I’m still paying \$30 every month. The council did not even make any effort to employ my child so that we can live. Right now I’m facing challenges to send children to school because I cannot pay school fees for them. There is no food at my home. I’m in poverty my son)

➤ **Housing challenges**

During the discussions, there was great concern raised over shortages of accommodation which has led landlords to charge high rentals beyond the reach of ordinary residents. The dialogue revealed that the price per room in Shurugwi can even go up to \$60 especially in Makusha, a suburb concentrated with gold panners (Makorokoza). According to residents, demand of accommodation has outstripped supply in Shurugwi due to the increasing population. On the other side, it was revealed that there is no joy to those who own council houses. What emerged from meeting is that residents are being reaped off their hard earned money as they are paying \$30 every month as rates for houses which are supposed to be on home ownership.

From the residents, the problem of accommodation in Shurugwi has been accelerated by the failure by the Shurugwi Town Council to provide cheap stands to the ordinary residents. For example, the residents revealed that the town council’s stands are currently pegged at \$15 per square metre instead of the standard \$3. The discussions revealed that the stands are being purchased by people from Harare and Bulawayo as the locals cannot afford.

➤ **Employment opportunities**

High level of unemployment was a topical issue that was discussed during the dialogue meeting. According to the participants, there are very few employment opportunities in Shurugwi. The residents indicated that a large segment of the population is jobless with very few local people working in the local mining companies. The major mining companies operating in Shurugwi include Unki, Zimasco and Falcon Gold.

Getting employment in these mining companies has been revealed to be a nightmare due to corruption in the recruitment process. To be employed as a general hand in certain mining companies in Shurugwi, it has emerged that one has to pay a bribe of at least \$60. According to

the residents, the recruitment process either in mining companies or town council is based on whom you know even if one has the required qualifications. The participants indicated that most of the job offers are given to job seekers from outside Shurugwi. According to residents, the recruitment process is disadvantaging the locals who are supposed to benefit from the mining that is taking place in their communities.

Due to limited employment opportunities, residents acknowledged that a lot of people in Shurugwi are supplementing their incomes or earning a living through illegal gold panning activities (Chikorokoza). Apart from gold panning, it was revealed that some are involved in prostitution because of poverty, exposing them to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and AIDS.

The residents bemoaned the abuse of the government empowerment initiatives that aim to create employment and alleviate poverty in the country. For example, it emerged that mining claims are only given to very few people who are politically connected and the rest of the people are working for these few people with little or no rewards. The discussions revealed that there are a number of income generating projects which can be undertaken by the people in Shurugwi to reduce unemployment. However, according to the participants, the major challenge is the lack of capital despite the availability of income generating project opportunities. The following are some of the voices that were captured during the discussion on employment in Shurugwi;

1. ***“Isu hatisi kuwana mabasa. Kana murume akasungwa nenyaya yechikorokoza, semukadzi unenge wavakutofanira kutsvaga basa kuma mining companies aya kuti mhuri iwane kurarama. Kuti uriwane basa racho mananger anotokuudza kuti tanga wandida. Zvinokanganisa magariro edu nekuti kune chirwere che AIDS”***

(We are not getting jobs. If a husband is criminalized because of gold panning, as a wife you will be duty bound to find a job in these mining companies so that there is food on the table for the family. However, to get the job, the manager will ask you to fall in love with him. This disturbs our marriages because there is HIV and AIDS)

2. ***Ukati uite zvechikoroza, ukabatwa, 2 years mujeri. Ukati ushandire vanhu vane ma mining claims vanokudzvinyirira. Tinovashandira asi kana yasvika nguva yemari vano shaikwa. Ukaenda kumatare edzimhosva, hauhwine nyaya yacho nekuti hatina mari dzekubhadhara ma lawyer. Vari kuchera vakawanda than vashandirwi vane ma mining claims. Hurumende ngaiunze wo ma kambani akaita sana Fidelity titengesewo gold redu.”***

(If you do gold panning and you are caught, you will be sentenced to 2 years in jail. If you decide to work for those who own mining claims, they will abuse you. We work for them but when it comes to the time of salaries payment, they disappear. If you decide

to sue them, we won't succeed because we don't have money to hire lawyers. The employees outnumber the owners of mining companies here. The government should bring Fidelity here so that we can sell our gold)

- 3. Munu muShurugwi mune vanhu vane ma ideas ekuita ma projects anokwanisa kuti vanhu vawane mabasa. Ini ndiri retired nurse uye ndine business plan yekuvaka clinic asi damabudziko nderekuti handina mari yekutanga nayo. Tiri kudawo mari dzema income generating projects kubva kuma mining companies aya"**

(Here in Shurugwi, we have people with good projects plans that can help to create jobs. I'm a retired nurse and I have a plan to build a private clinic but I don't have capital to start it. We are in need of funds for income generating projects from these mining companies).

➤ **Working conditions in mining companies**

Besides the lack of employment opportunities, the participants also indicated that working conditions especially in mining companies are deteriorating as some workers are going for some months without being paid. In other cases, it was revealed that the mining companies are not giving their workers meaningful salaries despite the production that is taking place in the mines. It has also emerged that workers' salaries are being cut following the change of the working period to two weeks per month. According to the participants, mining companies are not making any significant impact to the livelihoods of workers as they are not getting benefits such as housing. Below is a short story that was narrated by a Falcon Gold mining company worker;

"Ini ndiri mushandi we Falcon Gold mine, Ndiri kubvisirwa 25% ye salary yangu kubva muna July pasina tsananguro. Ma mining companies aya haasi kubhadhara vashandi. Tinogara mudzimba dze company asi hadzisi dzedu. Tiri kudawo dzimba dzedu."

(I work at Falcon Gold mine. Since July, the company has been deduction 25% of my salary without an explanation. These mining companies are not paying their workers. We are staying in company houses but they are not ours. We also need our own houses)

➤ **Health care services**

The discussion revealed that the health care delivery at public health facilities is deteriorating. It has been established that government medical facilities are not equipped with the essential

drugs. Due to the inadequacy of the drugs, the participants bemoaned the favoritism that is taking place at government hospitals as only the relatives of the health staff are fortunate enough to access the available drugs. The participants indicated that patients are forced to pay a bribe (Makandinzwanani) of \$8 at government hospitals for them to access the drugs, a situation which was said to be disadvantaging the vulnerable residents who are even failing to bring food on the table for their families.

Social responsibility programs by mining companies

According to residents, most of the mining companies' social responsibility programs are abused and politicized. The dialogue meeting revealed that most of the programs which are financed through social corporate responsibility funds are not targeting the major needs of the people. For example, it emerged that the mining companies were buying luxurious cars for council management instead of financing the purchase of chemicals which are required to clean water. The residents highlighted that they are not being consulted by the mining communities with regards to projects to be undertaken in their communities.

What changes residents expect to see?

Below is a summary of some of the key advocacy messages that were generated during the meeting.

- The availability of cheap housing stands which can be accessed by everyone including the poor and vulnerable.
- Improved service delivery especially in water and sanitation and refuse collection.
- Transparent and accountability in the use of ratepayers' money by the Shurugwi Town Council.
- Income generating projects financed by mining companies.
- Increased accessibility of health care services through improved availability of basic drugs at government health facilities.
- Community consultation in social responsibility programs design and other donor funded projects.
- Targeted Social responsibility programs e.g in water provision, housing, employment and education.
- The separation of politics and community development initiatives.
- Equal employment opportunities in mining companies.

Revenue generation ways

To improve income generation by the Shurugwi Town council (STC), the residents suggested that the council can take advantage of the Land Reform Programme to acquire more land that it can use for poultry, cattle ranching and dairy farming.

Closing Remarks

The Shurugwi Residents and Ratepayers Association executive committee member, Mr T Chitakunye gave the closing remarks. In his remarks, Mr Chitakunye called for residents to unite together so as to challenge the service providers and mining companies as one voice. The SHRA executive member also appreciated the collaboration between SHRA and PRFT that had provided a platform for the ordinary residents to discuss their livelihood challenges in Shurugwi. The dialogue was officially closed with a prayer from United Baptist church pastor D. Marijeki.

Dialogue Pictures







Dialogue meeting participants

Name	Ward /suburb	Designation	Contact details
S. Majari	Ward 10	Resident	0777598184
E. Mano	Ward 5	Resident	0772528771
L. Phiri	Ward 11	Resident	0772339860
A. Gondo	Ward 12	Resident	
L. Marirwa	Ward 9	Resident	0738965434
M. Muchaka	Ward 12	Resident	0775936911
G. Muringa	Ward 12	Resident	0779407700
S. Mabvongwe	Ward 5	Resident	0773571098
S. Nyati	Ward 6	Resident / PRFT Enumerator	0773858646
A. Dharara	Ward 7	Resident / Zimasco worker	0773639961
D. Marijeki	Ward 9	Resident / United Baptist Pastor	0773668305
E. Murove	Ward 5	Resident / Unki mine worker	0782187326
L.T. Budala	Ward 12	Resident	0773222740
L. Madzivire	Ward 12	Resident / SHRA member	0773 010465
E. Makanganise	Ward 10	Resident	0777524828
K. Mapfunde	Ward 5	Resident	0773 744282
K. C. Moyo	Ward 8	Resident	0777033281

M. Moyo	Ward 8	Resident	0778 483 628
F. Muneri	Ward 8	Resident	0739665908
H. Banda	Ward 10	Resident	0775933600
P. Shereni	Ward10	Resident	0775 881776
C. Muneri	Ward 8	Resident	0739665908
T. Chitakunye	Ward 9	Resident / SHRA Member	0775 342265
CST E. Sonono	ZRP	Police Officer	0772589 140
B. Chinake	Ward 8	Resident	0736770103
T. Nyamutumbu	PRFT	Finance & Admin Officer	307472 / 3
T. Chiremba	PRFT	Programs Officer	307472 / 3