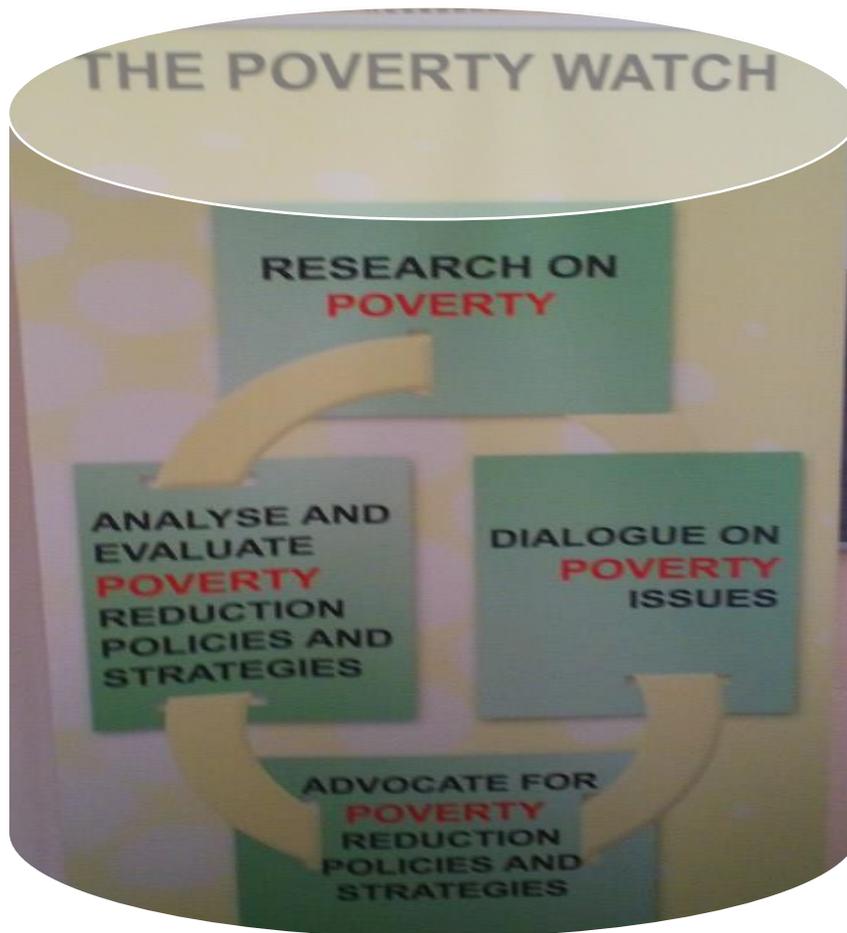




Half - Year Report: September 2014



Basic Needs Basket Survey Project

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1.0 Executive Summary

This report provides key highlights of the Poverty Reduction Forum Trust (PRFT)'s achievements during the first half of implementing a three year (2014-2017) Catholic Overseas Development Agency (CAFOD) supported Basic Needs Basket (BNB) Survey project. The project is implemented in response to the lack of comprehensive and accurate picture of poverty in both the urban and rural areas of Zimbabwe to inform policy interventions. The first half (May 2014 – September 2014) saw PRFT conducting BNB surveys and producing BNB reports accompanied by policy briefs to sensitise policy makers on poverty agenda and inform pro poor policy interventions. During the period under review, PRFT continues to reach out both state and non state actors on poverty agenda through both on line and print media. PRFT's work PRFT also went a step further to conduct a civil society workshop to inform and update the CSOs of Government(s) work and processes on the post 2015 development agenda. The period also saw PRFT strengthening its interaction with policy makers and duty bearers in various forums for recognition of its pro poor advocacy work.

2.0 Technical Description of the project

2.1 Goal

The Project seeks to enhance civil society capacity to advocate for improved governance and transparency in the distribution and utilization of national resources and to demand quality service provision and to generate regular and reliable statistical and qualitative information of the basic cost of living for ordinary residents, and push for policies and programs that cushion vulnerable urban households.

2.2 Specific objectives

- To continuously provide up-to-date, reliable and verifiable information on the poverty situation in rural and urban areas of Zimbabwe

- 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
- To strengthen the use of social accountability approaches by citizens and CSOs in Zimbabwe to make service delivery more effective, efficient and accountable.
- To build the capacity of community members and provide them the skills to monitor quality of public services provision at community and district levels.
- To identify critical issues and approaches for strengthening social and public accountability in Zimbabwe.
- To bring efficiency in the allocation and utilization of public resources.

3.0 Achievements

3.1 BNB surveys and policy brief publications

During the period under review, PRFT continues to undertake BNB surveys in Harare and Mutare under the CAFOD grant. PRFT continues to receive support from Christian Aid to undertake the same project in Bulawayo, Gweru and Shurugwi with the aim of providing information on the cost of basic goods and services required by an urban family for a decent lifestyle. The analysis of the BNB surveys continued to reflect increasing marginalization of the ordinary residents as shown by the widening gap between the minimum amount required by a

family of five and monthly household incomes due to the shrinking income side. Through the BNB surveys, a social research tool, PRFT has noted that households have become more vulnerable due to deteriorating social infrastructure and lack of strong transparency and accountability mechanisms in the use resources being generated for urban development. During the reporting period, PRFT published and distributed three (3) policy briefs on poverty agenda. In its policy briefs, PRFT continued to call for policies and interventions to strengthen social accountability mechanisms at the government and local authority levels, address food insecurity among urban poor households and deteriorating social infrastructure in urban areas.

Specifically, PRFT has urged local authorities to provide social platforms for residents and engage communities including women, youth and vulnerable in the decision making processes. PRFT has also put forward several policy options on how local authorities can augment their revenue base to spearhead sustainable urban development from the resources that it can generate through;

- maintenance and upgrading of council halls and recreational facilities so that they can be used as venues for private functions at competitive rates
- Availing of affordable market stalls through wide consultations with the residents
- partnerships with private business in urban infrastructure investment

Through the publication and distribution of BNB reports and policy briefs, PRFT has continued to foster good relationship with the government departments and some parliamentarians in the 8th Parliament of Zimbabwe. Forexample, PRFT was invited by Honourable Nyamupinga to input into the motion on status of health care delivery system in Zimbabwe.

3.2 Media engagement

During the period under review, PRFT's work continues to appear in the media. The continuous interaction of PRFT with media houses has strengthened PRFT's reaching out initiatives. Realising the relevance of our work, more media houses and online newspapers such as The standard and NewsdzeZimbabwe online have joined the ship to cover our policy briefs. Besides coverage of PRFT's work in local media, PRFT's work and policy advocacy initiatives continues to receive international recognition through South Africa Broadcasting Cooperation (SABC). Below are two sample newspaper cuttings and website links in which PRFT featured.

NEWSDAY, JUNE 24, 2014

Think-tank says unaccountability spurs resource mismanagement

**PHILLIP CHIDAVAENZI
SENIOR REPORTER**

A LOCAL think tank, Poverty Reduction Forum Trust (PRFT), has blamed the absence of public accountability systems for the sharp increase in cases of mismanagement of resources at public institutions, especially local authorities.

In a report accompanying its Basic Needs Basket for the month of May, the think-tank expressed concern that cases of corruption had shot up at a time service delivery had taken a nosedive.

"At the time when the economy is shrinking with most people struggling to pay their bills, city councils have been involved in corruption scandals and mismanagement of public resources," PRFT director Judith Kaulem said.

Kaulem said the recent case where Harare City Council diverted \$2 million from the \$144 million Chinese loan fund for rehabilitation of the city's water infrastructure and splurged on luxury vehicles for council executives indicated a brazen disregard of lack of public accountability ethos.

She said at a time when the City Fathers were dipping their fingers in the public coffers, "residents have continued to experience erratic supply of water in their suburbs" and laid the blame on the absence of strong transparency and accountability systems

in local authorities and public institutions.

Kaulem said social accountability demanded that citizens be accorded their right to question decisions that affected them and office bearers have to respond efficiently.

Local Government minister Ignatius Chombo recently defended council's decision to buy luxury vehicles using money meant to improve service delivery, saying council executives were entitled to luxury vehicles as they were key players in the project.

Government has, however, said it would soon amend the Public Finance Management Act or introduce a new piece of legislation in line with Section 308 of the new Constitution to whip into line overspending permanent secretaries and heads of parastatals.

Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs deputy minister Fortune Chasi has indicated that such spendthrifts, including those who diverted money allocated to their ministries and entities, would pay back from their pockets.

"The Constitution now requires that after disciplining and punishing government officials and those in charge of State-owned companies for the loss, the next step is recovering of funds or property which in this case means the officials will pay from their pockets," Chasi said.

Deteriorating social in



Phillip Chidavaenzi

THE squalor, burst sewer pipes and roads littered with potholes in most of the country's high density suburbs mirror the high levels of impoverishment that has become synonymous with Zimbabwe's urban existence.

The official adoption of the multi-currency system in the country in September 2009 – dominated by the US dollar and the South African rand – brought a semblance of stability and helped improve people's livelihoods.

But after enjoying five years of economic stability, the national economy has slid into a deflationary state since February, threatening to undo all the economic gains and halting further recovery.

Economic growth accelerated to an average 10,5% between 2009 and 2012, but growth decelerated to 3,4% in 2013, and is projected to decline further to 3,1% in 2014.

The state of deflation has meant that while shops are stocked with goods, the majority of people are unable to afford them due to the liquidity crunch.

Deteriorating social infrastructure in the country has also been cited as one of the major contributors to economic decline and, consequently, high levels of poverty and unless the problem is addressed, the fight against poverty would not yield significant results.

Poverty Reduction Forum Trust (PRFT) executive director Judith Kaulem said the state of urban infrastructure translated to poor social



Burst sewer pipes in most of the high density suburbs mirror the high levels of impoverishment that has with Zimbabwe's urban existence

She urged central government and local authorities across the country to prioritise deteriorating social infrastructure as a means of curbing rising levels of urban poverty.

In the forum's monthly policy brief for June, PRFT Kaulem said the country's infrastructure was crying out for attention and addressing the problem would ensure that socio-economic benefits were enjoyed by all sectors of society.

"PRFT has noted that the current urban development model where residents' money is the only source of financing capital projects is not sustainable as it requires an enabling environment for residents to raise income and pay for the services," she said.

She said the high levels of unemployment plaguing the country should be an indicator to local authorities that relying on residents' rates payments was not enough to sustain urban development projects.

She recommended that local au-

Bulawayo, Shurugwi and Mutare in June, residents said urban councils should increase their revenue base from maintenance and upgrading of council halls and recreational facilities so that they can be used as venues for private functions at competitive rates.

Residents also called on the local authorities to avail affordable market stalls through wide consultations with the residents, she added.

"PRFT calls for dialogue platforms that bring the local authorities, the government, private business, civil society organisations and residents to put together their efforts towards urban development," Kaulem said.

She added that poor service delivery has been accelerated by misappropriation of public resources and residents have been on the losing end and there was need for transparency and accountability in the use of Zimbabwe National Roads Administration (ZINARA) funds in urban road development.

She said addressing poverty in

veys have established roads coupled with road blocks in suburbs such as Mga – Nehosho has shortages," she said.

PRFT established public transport options shunning routes those suburbs in high penalties for

"The situation holds living in the long distances in port to the town orbitant fares being motorists who are of the desperate said.

Zimbabwe's situation following a led to a lack of infrastructure, power and water have cited inefficient power supply as economic decline maintenance and existing infrastruc-

August 2014 Policy Brief coverage

<http://www.thestandard.co.zw/2014/08/31/poverty-stalks-urban-dwellers/>

<http://www.newsdezimbabwe.co.uk/2014/08/poverty-hits-urban-dwellers.html>

3.2 Civil society' workshop on Post 2015 Agenda: CAMPASS project

Following participation in the CAMPASS research project towards adding Zimbabwe's voice into the post 2015 discourse in 2012, the period saw PRFT hosting a civil society workshop on Post 2015 development Agenda. The workshop brought together key stakeholders which included UNDP. The major workshop objectives of the workshop were to inform and CSOs of Government(s) work and other processes that were going on around post 2015 development agenda, to explore opportunities in which CSOs could build partnerships with government and other players and to advocate for continued involvement of CSOs in shaping the post 2015 agenda. The Poverty Reduction Forum Trust (PRFT) invited two key government officials¹ from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MOPSLSW) and Ministry of Finance and Economic Development who have been representing the government in a number of the Post-2015 discussions at various levels to share with civil society, the journey, the output and the way forward

The key issue that came from the presentations is that although all the processes that have been done have led to output document on 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a framework which will guide the production of the final document to be presented in September 2015 UN General Assembly, the discussion on the post 2015 development agenda is still unfinished business and there is still space for civil society, governments for further contribute their views in the remaining platforms such as the national consultation meetings and influence the final outcome document to be presented during the September 2015 UN General Assembly. The presentation from the Mr Mhishi who has been extensively involved with the SDGs as co-chair of the Open Working Group for Southern Africa spelt out that whilst most of the goals of

¹ Mr. Sidney Mhishi (Acting Principal Director- MOPSLSW) and Mr. Nyaguse, (Director National Development Planning – MOFED)

SDGs have been unanimously agreed upon by the members of the UN general assembly open working group on SDGs, there are still further negotiations on other goals which were not agreed upon by member states. Other outstanding key issues which were highlighted included the discussions on financing of the SDGs, targets and indicators and the monitoring and evaluation framework.

The government representatives used the platform to share with civil society on the governments' plans to produce a final country report on MDGs progress which is starting in September 2-14 and ending in February 2015

As a way forward, the government, civil society and UNDP came up with recommendations on what has to be done. Below are some of the key suggested recommendations from the workshop.

- The participants agreed to prepare for the national consultation which is going to be coordinated by UNDP and conducted after the September 2014 UN general Assembly meeting.
- The government and UNDP recommended National Association of Non Governmental organisations (NANGO) should mobilise its members and work towards making sure that the outcome document is available to the ordinary people before the national consultation meeting and making sure that all people's views and comments are captured and fed into the national consultation meeting.
- The civil society also recommended the government to improve its communication channels with the civil society and rope in all stakeholders in the task force which will be responsible for the production of the national final report on MDGs
- The government also recommended for the creation of a portal to capture all CSO's views on Post 2015 discussions as a way to make sure that all information is collected and used

The half day workshop provided an opportunity for PRFT to cement its relationship with government ministries (the MOPSLSW and MOF) on national developmental issues. The government officials committed themselves to

3.3 Engagement with Policy makers

During the first half, PRFT has organised platforms to interact with policy makers. For example, a public dialogue meeting that PRFT conducted in Harare brought together stakeholders such as City of Harare representatives and the residents. The platform gave residents an opportunity to air out their views with regards to service delivery. In the Mutare dialogue meeting, a councillor (Ward 18) was also in attendance among other participants. Through the support of Christian Aid, PRFT has also organized BNB consultative meetings in Gweru and Shurugwi which brought together residents and councillors to discuss poverty issues which are affecting residents. The meetings were meant to develop Basic Needs Baskets in the two towns.

4.0 Other Activities

4.1 NANGO pre Budget Consultation Meetings

During the period under review, PRFT was invited to participate and facilitate in the Nango's 2014-2015 Pre National Budget Consultative meetings. As a member of the consortium, PRFT used this platform to influence poverty reduction strategies through the national budget. Through this forum, PRFT has urged the government to prioritize infrastructure rehabilitation especially in health, roads and water in the forth coming national budget.

4.2: Government's workshop on ZimAsset; 2015 Cluster Priorities

5.0 Lessons Learnt from the project

Through the production of BNB reports accompanied by policy briefs, the BNB project has gained more popularity among stakeholders as evidenced by their positive responses and comments. The regular policy briefs have proved to be an effective way of strengthening PRFT's advocacy work. In the next year, PRFT will continue to produce policy briefs and

distribute them to its wider network. In order to reach out more stakeholders, PRFT is also going to expand its distribution list. However, PRFT has realised the virtual distribution of the BNB reports and policy briefs has been leaving out a lot of people without access to internet facilities. To cater for this segment of the population, PRFT will send hard copies of monthly BNB reports to different distribution centres in all the towns where PRFT is operating. The BNB surveys unmask socio-economic issues that call for follow-up debates and dialogues. To this end, PRFT is planning to strengthen its work by organising regular BNB dissemination workshops in areas where it is operating. Already the BNB project has been expanded to Gweru and Shurugwi during the period under review with the support from Christian Aid

- Public dialogues meetings have helped PRFT to advance its advocacy work. In the next phase, PRFT will conduct more policy dialogues to strengthen its views on government policy interventions. PRFT will make use of its monthly BNB reports to identify topics which need further analysis through public dialogues.
- Continuous partnership with other civil society organizations is critical in PRFT's work. Through the collaboration of PRFT and residents associations such as Harare Residents Trust (HRT), Mutare Residents and Ratepayers Association (MRRA) and Bulawayo Progressive Residents and Rate Payers' Association (BPRRA), it was very easy to implement and achieve the intended objectives of the BNB project during the period under review.
- PRFT has realized that there is need to further strengthen the residents' ability to hold the duty bearers accountable. To this end, PRFT proposes to introduce capacity building in public and social accountability.

6.0 Scheduled activities in the next half

- Social and Economic dialogue meetings in Mutare²
- Bi-monthly BNB surveys in Mutare and Harare

² PRFT will be conducting a residents's dialogue in Mutare in two weeks' time. The objective of the dialogue will be to raise awareness among residents on ZimAsset specifically pre-empting government's 2015 cluster priorities and get residents' views.