Evidence and Collaboration for Inclusive Development (ECID) National Engagement Meeting Outcome Document

1.0 Introduction

The Poverty Reduction Forum Trust (PRFT) conducted a national level engagement meeting with Parliament and government line ministries representatives. The meeting was held at Holiday Inn Hotel in Harare on the 24th of September 2020. The meeting sought to achieve three objectives, namely;

(i) raising awareness of the Evidence and Collaboration for Inclusive Development (ECID) programme among key national stakeholders;

(ii) generate buy in of national stakeholders into the programme as users of evidence collected by the programme and;

(iii) understand and appreciate national stakeholders' data needs.

The meeting was attended by 18 women and 18 men of whom 10 were between the ages of 18 and 35, 18 between the ages of 36 and 55 and 8 between the ages of 56 and 66. The meeting had representation from the following government line ministries; Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, Ministry of Information Publicity and Broadcasting Services, Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation, Ministry of Health and Child Care, and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Ministry of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs and following Parliament Portfolio and Thematic Committees, Portfolio Committee on Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Portfolio Committee on Finance and Economic Planning, Portfolio Committee on Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs, Portfolio Committee on Health and Child Care, Portfolio Committee on Women Affairs, Gender and Community Development, Portfolio Committee on local Government, Rural and Urban Development, Portfolio Committee on Media, Information and Broadcasting Services, Portfolio Committee on Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment; Thematic Committee on Gender and Development, Thematic Committee on SDGs and the Staff of Parliament.

This document captures key outcomes generated from the meeting.

2.0 ECID Programme Overview and Baseline Findings

Below is a summary of issues raised by participants in response to the two presentations made on the overview of the ECID programme and ECID Baseline findings.

2.1 Simplifying the concept of marginalisation to data collectors and duty bearers

The concept of marginalisation is highly contested and is defined differently by the different community groups. Concern was raised whether the concept was simplified enough for data collectors to be able to communicate the same concept to respondents in a way that would allow for the collection of correct responses on the subject. Although one of the baseline survey assumptions stated that community members (who are not considered part of marginalised groups) understand who the most marginalised people in their community are and why, it was not established whether the community members understood the concept from the programme's perspective. The meeting expressed concerned that there is a danger that every community group considers itself most marginalised than others.

2.2 Baseline Methodology

The baseline findings were appreciated by the stakeholders from both Parliament and Government. The stakeholders however, indicated that drawing conclusions from the baseline is difficult considering that they were not conversant with how the Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Perception Surveys were administered. Questions were raised around the quality of the data and the participants indicated they were not in a position to accredit a process conducted without their involvement

2.3 What Informed Priorities in Two Programme Areas

Questions were also raised whether they were deliberate follow up actions that were made to interrogate the dynamics that influenced the different priorities identified in the two programme areas. The baseline report identified Health, Employment, Education and Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) as four key priority areas in descending order for Manicaland Province whilst for Matabeleland North Province it was Health, Social Welfare, WASH and Education in descending order. The stakeholders were interested in understanding the dynamics that informed the prioritisation of the services. This has to be established through a follow up action as the programme moves forward.

2.4 Why Manicaland and Matabeleland North Provinces?

The participants were also interested in understanding the choice of the two provinces as projects sites. The response we gave to this question was that the project areas were identified as part of the Gender, Inclusion, Power and Politics (GIPP) Analysis process which collected and reviewed data from CSOs and desk review of secondary data. The data collected and analysed during the GIPP analysis identified the two programme areas for intervention. The meeting was of the opinion that consultations with the government, especially Social Welfare Department, would have added value in identifying programme areas where most marginalised communities are located. The Ministry of Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare queried whether the poverty Atlas provided by ZIMSTAT had been consulted towards informing the choice of the project intervention

3.0 Data Needs

3.1 Parliament of Zimbabwe (MPs and Senators)

The Members of Parliament (MPs) and Senators indicated that they use information from government line ministries, information from community leaders such as traditional leaders and councillors and published documents to lobby for policies. Parliament also noted that they do use CSO generated data and were strongly lobbying government to do the same.

Members of Parliament and Senators however noted that in some instances, they face challenges which impede them from using CSO generated data. The challenges include, but not limited to;

- Methodology that is not credible
- Partisan data or data that supports certain political narratives
- Data not specific on the persons consulted e.g collecting data on disability from people without disabilities

The representatives of Parliament highlighted that they would prefer to receive both qualitative and quantitative data depending on the issue at hand. This calls for consultations when collecting data on different thematic issues. They also highlighted that they would prefer to receive this data or evidence as oral presentations during meetings, on WhatsApp, emails in addition to written reports.

The MPs and Senators recommended that CSOs should take the following steps to improve acceptance of CSO generated data in policy debates spaces;

- Avoid bias and produce impartial reports
- Produce non-judgemental reports
- Should not be partisan
- Data should be validated by ZimStats

The Parliamentarians urged the CSOs to continuously engage stakeholders such as Parliament in order to build sustained relations that will help deal with the red tapes that may be faced in seeking authority to collect data.

3.2 Central Government (Line Ministries)

Central Government representatives highlighted that they use data derived from national surveys, individual walk in, administrative data such as monthly, annual report (official reports), parliamentary questions or responses, websites of credible data sources, and primary evidence such as pictures in designing programmes. They also noted that they use CSO generated data if the data is collected in collaboration or partnership with the relevant CSOs that have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with government. Government representatives also indicated that they do not use CSO generated data in cases where the data is collected outside the dictates of the law, agreements, obligations, and when the organisation involved is doing work beyond agreed terms of reference.

Government also indicated that they face challenges using CSO generated data and highlighted the challenges as stated below;

- Methodological flaws
- Biased data, exaggerated, influenced by funders for instance
- Language and diction used, in some instances is highly polarizing

To guide the type of data that government would prefer to receive from CSOs, it should include;

- Validated data which is a true representation of what is on the ground
- Fair and acceptable sample representation
- Data in sync with national developmental agenda e.g. along Transitional Stabilisation Plan (TSP), Vision 2030, National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), SDGs Agenda
- Mainstreaming of cross cutting issues e.g. gender, women, youth, people with disabilities

Government also stated that they would prefer to receive the data with the following characteristics;

- Quantitative and Qualitative way, consistent
- Disaggregated by age, sex, gender, location, etc
- Raw Data sets
- Timeliness, when was the data collected
- Electronic form
- Establish protocol/ criterion to do away with red tape

In-order for CSOs generated data to gain acceptance in the government corridors, the following recommendations were given;

- Must be apolitical
- Follow confines of the Law, Legal frameworks and corporation agreements
- CSOs must stick to their lanes i.e. agreed terms of references
- Data must mainstream national vision and ethos (VISION 2030)
- CSOs must spread their wings and increase geographical coverage
- Capacity building to ensure CSOs are able to collect credible data
- Ensure their work is not a duplication in the same area of interest or environment

Lastly, government stated that CSOs should follow procedures and make use of devolved government structures when entering into a community for the purpose of collecting data. The procedure varies according to government ministry or department and depends with the nature of decentralisation of the departments. For example, the Ministries of Local Government and Public Works and that of Women and Youth Affairs have representation from national down to community level.

4.0 Acceptance of Citizen Generated Data

For as long as the concerns raised above are not addresses, both government and Parliamentarians concurred that acceptance of utilising citizen generated data to design programmes and lobby for policy change would remain a challenge. The following recommendations were made to the ECID project for its data to be useful to decision makers;

- Engage relevant government departments and line ministries in the design and administration of the project survey. This will give the government the opportunity to assess the tools, methodology, and sample size of the survey. Government said they are averse to CSOs who only come to them to demand use of research findings that they were never aware of or involved in their production.
- Engaging Communities with survey findings (Validation). It was recommended that CSOs in the programme validate their findings with communities where they would have collected the data and get further feedback on the findings. Communities have to know what their information was used for so that they are able to participate fully in future survey exercises.

4.0 Way Forward

The ECID Programme should write a concept note to the relevant line Ministries and ZimStat seeking collaboration on collection of data. This will help in building trust between the programme and government and its departments and help avoid some of the red tapes found in seeking approval for data collection. Once formal relationships are established it becomes easy to engage at both levels. Both government and Parliamentarians recommended that ECID engagement with them should not be ad-hoc and once-off but on a more consistent basis.

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