



## **Public Service Investments, Social Development Programmes and Enjoyment of Social and Economic Rights in Peri Urban Areas**

### **A Case of Ushehwekunze, Epworth and Seke**

#### **A Summary of Key Findings from the Research Report**

##### **1.0 Introduction and Background**

In March 2019, the Poverty Reduction Forum Trust conducted a participatory research in three selected peri urban areas namely; Epworth, Seke and Ushehwekunze. The study focused on establishing how public service delivery projects and social development programmes have impacted on the enjoyment of socio-economic rights.

A lot of effort has been put towards improving service delivery and social development in urban communities. Government through its various ministries has been running a lot programmes in social development sectors such as education and health. The Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) is a typical example of a social protection programme that government has been implementing to improve access to education by vulnerable children. At local authority level, Councils are mandated to mobilise resources and implement service provision projects that make basic amenities more accessible to the urban population. Investing resources in projects that target to improve access to service delivery is key in uplifting the lives of the poor since they largely depend on public services provided by government.

It is evident that peri urban areas have become a recipient of so many developmental programmes in the last decade. A visit to any of these areas would confirm this. However, the sad story is that peri urban areas continue to experience poor access to basic social services such as clean water, roads, education and health. This raises a lot questions around adequacy, quality, inclusiveness and sustainability of various social development initiatives that are implemented.

This study therefore sought to unravel more information about these projects and programmes especially with regards to how these critical factors have impacted on the ability of communities to enjoy socio-economic rights in peri urban areas. The assessment of the implementation of these projects was done using a human rights based approach which forms the basis of achieving sustainable social transformation in line with the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda's principle of Living No One Behind. The human rights approach looks at fundamental issues that must be achieved in a programme which seeks to achieve broad based social development. These issues include adequacy, quality, accountability and equality (gender inclusiveness). Data collection was done mainly using Focus Group Discussions (FDGs).

## 2.0 Findings of the study

### 2.1 Public services projects and social development programmes

The study confirmed that a number of public service delivery projects and community development programmes are being implemented in peri urban areas with the aim of improving access to basic rights such as shelter, education, housing, water and social security. Below is a list of public service projects and social programmes that were identified to have been implemented in the targeted areas;

- Local authorities' road development and maintenance projects
- Government led Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) and Free maternity services programmes
- Housing Cooperatives led housing schemes
- Women empowerment projects - Zimbabwe women Micro Finance Bank led Loan programmes for communities
- Schools construction
- Water access projects
- Development of market places for vendors
- Local authorities led cleaning campaigns

### 2.2 Level of implementation service delivery projects and social programmes

Local authorities have been undertaking road development and maintenance activities in suburbs as per their annual plans. The general conclusion is that most road development and rehabilitation projects are taking long to be completed. For example, it was revealed from the Focus Group Discussions (FDGs) that the Epworth Local Board's road rehabilitation project (Delpot road project) which started in 2016 was yet to be completed.

A huge disparity on road development and maintenance was found in Ushwehwekunze where housing cooperatives have failed to make meaningful progress on road development. The roads have been developed but no gravel and tar was spread on the roads. As such the rain seasons made the road infrastructure dilapidate to extreme levels

The study established that housing schemes that were undertaken by cooperatives have been hardly completed. It was established that the cooperatives led housing schemes have

collapsed along the way or have not finalised the provision of basic amenities for the home owners. In Ushehwkunze, there are number of developments that were established to be still outstanding especially in the areas that Ushehwkunze housing cooperative got land to develop. Pending activities for the project include finalisation of piped water and provision of electricity.

A different picture is portrayed in areas where companies and housing schemes have accessed land and developed houses for people. In these areas, electricity has been connected to homes. Furthermore, these areas have a relative bigger access to water as there are boreholes that have been drilled by CFI, a company that owns Ushehwkunze land.

The Zimbabwe Women Micro Finance Bank embarked on a programme to help women and youth access loans for small businesses. The study revealed that the programme was not completed. Only accounts were opened with the bank and no loans were advanced to the applicants. There was no confirmation from participants of people who were advanced loans by the Bank.

Both the BEAM and Free maternity services programmes were said to be still running although there were indicators that they may have collapsed due to funding constrains.

### **2.3 Participation of communities and implications on enjoyment of social and economic rights**

Local authorities service delivery projects such as road rehabilitation and building of schools are implemented in line with budgets that get approved on yearly basis. The budget consultations meetings that local authorities undertake on annual basis serve as a platform for community members to participate and make their submissions on local authorities' service delivery plans. However, the deliberations that were made during the FDGs meetings indicated that very few community members had attended previous local authorities' budget meetings. A huge gap was noted around awareness and education on the importance of attending budget meetings and community led accountability mechanisms. It was noted that most people only come to know more about these projects when they are already under implementation, yet there is an opportunity for them to engage with their local authorities at planning stages.

**On housing cooperative led housing schemes,** the opportunities for participation disappeared after the banning of the housing cooperatives by government in 2017. The community members were privy to the Commission of Inquiry that was set up by the President in 2018 to investigate all the urban land allocations which took place under the former Ministry of Local Government's tenure, Dr Ignitius Chombo. No feedback has been received as yet with regards to the commission of Inquiry. The community members are expecting the government to intervene and facilitate the regularisation of the suburb.

The study also established broad based participation and public engagement in Government led social welfare programmes and empowerment projects and the BEAM programme has been quite limited. There is lack of spaces for communities to give feedback on issues of

concern with regards to these programmes. It emerged from the discussions that young married women have been mostly affected by information gaps on District Social Welfare Free Maternity services programmes. Young women in marriages were found to have little opportunities to access information that allows them to benefit from these government programmes hence they have not been able to benefit from the programmes. They specifically indicated that they were not aware of the places to register their pregnancies in order to benefit from the free maternal services.

In the case of the Zimbabwe Women Micro Finance Bank's Loan programme, little space was provided for dialogue and building the capacity of women and youth to adequately meet the loans requirements. As with the other social development programmes, communities were found to have little knowledge on accountability mechanisms available in case they need to hold government programmes to account. The information on who to follow up with and how they can do it is not readily available for mostly youth and women who are key targets of empowerment programmes. There is a knowledge gap among women around who they are supposed to approach when they have issues with community development projects such as the one led by Zimbabwe Women's Micro Finance Bank.

## **2.4 The impacts of the projects and programmes on enjoyment of socio- economic rights**

Residents in Seke, Chitungwiza got a reprieve from the road rehabilitation activities that the local authority has undertaken. The discussions revealed that access to affordable products and markets has improved following to the filling of potholes on roads that links the community to major supermarkets.

The rapid urban housing development that took place over the last decade has contributed towards improved ownership of houses by home seekers. However, lack of finalisation of housing projects led by housing cooperatives has plunged a lot of residents into poverty. The right to access water, education and clean energy remains an unfulfilled dream for most residents. The study established that there is a high level of inequality in terms of access to basic services in Ushehwekunze Suburb. There is poor access to basic services such as water and electricity in areas that have been developed by Ushehwekunze Housing Scheme. Life seems to be better for few households who have managed to get their homes connected to electricity.

Firewood is the source of energy for residents who have been housed under Ushehwekunze housing cooperative as electricity is yet to be connected to their homes. Churches that have undertaken borehole drilling projects in the area have contributed to improved access to safe and clean water in the larger part of Ushehwekunze.

Access to affordable transport has become an issue in peri urban areas due to collapse of the road infrastructure. Community members are spending a huge proportion of their meagre incomes on transport as commuting is part of their daily life. Community members make frequent travels mainly to the city centre to buy their stock for reselling. The Focus Group Discussions also established that most children commute everyday to schools located in neighbouring areas such as Highfields. The major challenge is that the school (RUJEKO

primary School) that is in proximity to the community can't absorb every child due to capacity constraints. Families with school going children are the most affected since have to fork out more money to cover the transport costs. Little money is left for other basic needs such as food and health.

**On government led social protection programmes**, it was evident from the discussions that social protection programmes have become a necessity for households since they live in extreme poverty conditions. Whilst the study did not go further to look at the number of community members who benefited from these government schemes, it is clear that the programmes had smaller coverage. A key challenge that was raised is inadequate government led social protection as the current protection schemes tend to reach out to a few people.

The study also established that churches and non -governmental organisations dominate the provision of social protection services to the vulnerable groups and the offer social protection services based on charity basis. The challenge that has been established is that the charity based social protection programmes do not cover everyone who is in need of assistance.

The study also found out that in the period when these programmes were functional, the conditions available made it very expensive to access the benefits. The discussion we had with community members in Ushewekunze indicated that the free maternity programme made it mandatory for the pregnant mothers to get registered and seek maternal services at a local government clinic. This was a challenge for the deserving mothers in the areas since there is lack of a government clinic in the suburb. They had to travel to a government clinic that is far off and thereby incurring some costs along the way. Lack of information and awareness on the government's free maternity programme contributed to its low uptake during the period when it was functional.

The social and economic rights issues that the study picked around programme concerned;

- i. limited spaces for community feedback on the programme
- ii. limited spaces for effective dialogue between the target groups and the bank
- iii. Targeted groups lacked capacity building needed for them to meet the loan application requirements

**On availing of market places initiatives for vendors**, the study established that such initiatives are demonstrating a change in the attitude and perception around informal sectors activities which have become a major source of livelihood for so many people. Participants in Over-Spill applauded the Local Board for availing market places to vendors. However, there were critical issues that participants raised and these concerned the affordability of the rentals and quality of market places. The general reflection was that the pegged rentals are too high if they are compared with the incomes being earned by vendors on daily basis. Another issue of concern is that the rentals being charged do not commensurate with the services that the Local Board provides at the market places. A major challenge that was identified is the lack of good ablution services at the designated places. The participants also expected the Local Board to provide storage facilities for the security of their goods.

### 3.0 Key Recommendations

- There is need for government to provide awareness raising for its social development programmes. There is also need to have spaces for community feedback on implementation of government's national development programmes. Access to information by communities should be enhanced in the interest of public accountability.
- The government should provide a conducive environment for realisation of the right to basic, accessible and adequate health care and education. In this regard, the government should build more schools and health centres
- Programmes targeting to empower women and youth should be designed in an inclusive manner so as to increase their uptake
- More resources should be invested towards capacity building on empowerment programmes targeting women and youth. Women and youth should be trained so that they acquire the skills and knowledge for them to take part and benefit from empowerment programmes such as access to micro finance programmes. . At the same time, the duty bearers within government institutions should be capacity build to correctly identify the needs of the communities where they intend to roll out programmes. More resources should be channelled towards public engagement and consultations.
- Another important finding from the study is that, communities have little knowledge on accountability mechanisms available for them to use in cases where they need to follow up certain programmes with government institutions. The information on who to follow up with and how they can do is not readily available. There is need provide communities with information packs on the accountability mechanisms available for government run programmes
- There is need for government to allocate more resources towards social protection and human development. The government should develop a comprehensive social protection scheme and protect all the vulnerable groups as per the constitution
- There is need for government to speed up the regularisation of peri urban suburbs such as Ushewekunze
- Communities should participate in local and national budget process
- Youth should be educated on accountability mechanisms on monitoring government's national programmes
- Monitoring of local authority projects should be strengthened
- Local authorities should build more boreholes and schools
- Road maintenance should cover all areas

- Local authorities should provide market places for people to people who have been affected by cleaning campaigns in Seke
- Local authorities should engage communities in the formulation of community development initiatives such as availing of market places to vendors and informal traders
- There is need for programmes on community public accountability on service delivery projects and national development programmes.

The full research Report can be accessed on [www.prftzim.org](http://www.prftzim.org)



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