



Workshop Report on

**MONITORING RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION'S COMMUNITY ADVOCACY PLANS ON
SERVICE DELIVERY IN GWERU**

Midlands Hotel, Gweru

25 June 2015



Background of the Workshop

The Poverty Reduction Forum Trust (PRFT) hosted a half day workshop on monitoring Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association (GRRRA)'s community action plans on the 26th of June 2015 at Midlands Hotel in Gweru. The workshop was conceived from the background of the Basic Needs Basket Project that the Poverty Forum Trust (PRFT) has been implementing in Gweru in collaboration with the Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association (GRRRA) since October 2013. Since the inception of the project, PRFT has been producing and sharing with GRRRA members and other civil society organizations, evidence on the cost of basic services required by an ordinary household of five to live a decent and dignified lifestyle in Gweru. To strengthen its Basic Needs Basket advocacy work in 2014, the Poverty Reduction Forum Trust equipped the leadership of the GRRRA with advocacy skills to engage service providers on various social and economic challenges that ordinary residents were facing. The qualitative and statistical information on the cost of basic goods and services required by urban households in Gweru was used by members of GRRRA as guidelines to identify services delivery concerns which were of major priority in terms of advocacy. The members developed advocacy strategies which targeted improved access to basic services such as housing, energy and transport. For example, the GRRRA members committed to lobby the city council to ensure transparency and accountability of the \$20 water pump levy which the Gweru City Council started to charge households in May 2014. The levy had come as a surprise to the residents and the city council had not properly consulted the residents especially with regards to how the council was going to ensure proper accountability of the money. Following this, the residents wanted to engage the city council on how the \$20 figure was arrived at and also to lobby for the option to use a separate account to collect the levy in a way to promote accountability.

The community actions points had certain benchmarks on what the communities wanted to achieve through lobbying different stakeholders on the challenges which they identified during the advocacy training workshop in 2013. Against this background, PRFT saw the need to bring together the members of GRRRA to discuss the progress in terms of the implementation of community action points and to learn from the journey that was undertaken. The workshop provided a platform for the residents to have an interface with Gweru City Council (GCC) councillors and the local authority's representatives (from housing, health, roads and engineering departments) who were invited. The workshop was an opportunity for the leadership of GRRRA to get feedback from Gweru City Council and to further engage them on service delivery.

The workshop had the following key objectives

- ▶ To provide a platform for the members of GRRRA to provide feedback on the community actions which they committed to implement in the 2013 Advocacy Training workshop
- ▶ To generate lessons and recommendations to improve advocacy work in Gweru
- ▶ To strengthen engagement on service delivery issues
- ▶ To discuss possible ways and synergies on how PRFT can further collaborate with different local stakeholders on the Basic Needs Basket Project

Methodology used in the monitoring and evaluation of Community action plans

The Poverty Reduction Forum Trust organized the workshop in collaboration with the Gweru Residents and Ratepayers Association. The GRRRA leadership facilitated the workshop. In order to get the feedback from the members, three key members of the GRRRA gave presentations on the progress which they had made in the implementation of the community advocacy plans. Plenary discussions were also held to give other residents and key stakeholders, a room to give their responses and to validate the presentations made.

The table below summarises achievements made by the GRRRA since the advocacy training in July 2014

Advocacy issue	Specific Changes which residents wanted to see	Activities which were monitored	Progress achieved and key challenges met
<p>Advocacy issue 1</p> <p>Equal distribution of electricity among urban wards</p>	<p>Mkoba 9 and 10 (villages 1, 2 and 3) receiving a fair share of the available electricity in Gweru.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward Developmental Meetings • Stakeholder meetings (business community, civic society organisation, ZESA) • Report back ward meetings/ Monitoring and Evaluation meetings 	<p>The GRRRA members living in Mkoba organised ward meeting in February 2015 and they invited ZETDC representatives and other residents to the meeting. The members used the platform to seek explanation from ZETDC on why villages 1, 2 and 3 in Mkoba were highly load shaded as compared to other surrounding areas. Through the discussion, ZETDC officials told residents that the electricity challenges in the areas mentioned were as a result of technical fault which occurred during the previous rain season. ZETDC indicated that their failure to rectify the problem timely was as a result of heavy rains which flooded the trenches which they had dug in the process of fixing the problem.</p> <p>The members then monitored the situation after the rain season and they found out that the problem remained unaddressed. As part of the activity plan, the members were at the stage of further engaging the ZETDC offices to get an update with regards to the issue.</p>

<p>Advocacy issue 2 Road Rehabilitation in Mkoba North and Ascot (ward 8)</p>	<p>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road infrastructure free from potholes • Increased availability of public transport in Mkoba North (Ward 10) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Mobilization Meetings/ ward meetings • Stakeholders Consultative meetings (Business community, Council, CSOs) • Regular Follow up Ward meetings 	<p>As part of this community action plan, the members of GRRRA organised a dialogue meeting with Ascot and Mkoba councillors in 2014. They used the platform to raise their concerns regarding the deterioration of two main roads namely Mkoba via Mambo and Ascot roads. They lobbied the councillors to expedite rehabilitation of these roads through pothole patching as a short term measure to improve availability of public transport. In their responses, the councillors cited lack of enough revenue inflow to finance road maintenance due to collapse of industries. Lack of timely maintenance of the city’s roads was also attributed to the failure of the central government to remit enough funds to local authorities for road maintenance. From the engagement meeting held, the councillors indicated that they were looking forward to prioritise the roads once resources were made available from central government (Zinara funds)</p> <p>Through their monitoring, the members noted the beginning of Mkoba North and Ascot pot hole patching by the city council in May and June 2015. The GRRRA members indicated that they will further engage the council and hold them accountable over the use of Zinara funds.</p>
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<p>Advocacy issue 3 Fostering for the use of separate account to collect water pump levy to improve transparency and accountability</p>	<p>Transparent and accountability in the use of ratepayers' money</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement meetings with residents, media to gain support • Engaging the town council • feedback meetings/ monitoring and evaluation review meetings with residents 	<p>The GRRRA through its chairperson engaged the Gweru Town council management and lobbied for increased transparency and accountability of the water pump fees which residents started to pay in May 2014. The residents lobbied for the option to have a separate account to collect the levy as a way of promoting accountability. The feedback which they got from the management was that the option of creating a separate one account was not a feasible idea since the council was just recovering the money which it borrowed from the rates account. The other feedback from the management was that council had already installed the pumps and the levy was meant to cover for the expenditure which was pre-financed from the rates account. The engagement improved the dialogue process on accountability as the council indicated that it was willing to disclose to the residents, the information on the amount of money which it had already collected</p>
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<p>Advocacy issue 4: Availability of more affordable housing units and accommodation for low income earners in Senga and Nehosho</p>	<p>Poor households accessing council stands and owning their houses</p> <p>Non RAISE MSU students accessing affordable accommodation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ward Meetings with residents, students for support • Engagement Meetings with council • All stakeholders Meeting (Business community, Council, GRRRA, MSU) • Feedback meetings 	<p>On this community action plan, the GRRRA members succeeded in sensitising the key policy makers with regards housing issues in Mkoba and Nehosho. The GRRRA members approached the office of the Provincial administrator (P.A) where they raised the problem of lack of housing opportunities for low income earners in Senga and Nehosho. The office of the Provincial administrator referred the GRRRA leadership to the Gweru City Council. In a once- off meeting with councillors, the members lobbied against the council's move to commercialise Senga and Nehosho stands, which had disadvantaged the low income earners as they could not afford the highly priced stands. The move was also found out to have disadvantaged out of campus Midlands State University (MSU) students who were now forced to pay commercialised rentals on new houses which were built in the area. The councillors engaged indicated that there were ongoing discussions to solve student's concerns in Senga and Nehosho. As part of the activity plan, GRRRA members had planned to further engage students' representatives to get maximum support on their next engagement meeting with other key stakeholders.</p>
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Plenary discussion

Following the presentations from GRRRA leadership, the dialogue was opened up and participants deliberated on key issues that emerged from the feedback on community action plans. The representatives from the Gweru city council's key departments and ZETDC office were given an opportunity to respond to some of the key concerns which were raised. During the plenary, the residents raised a concern over the slow pace that they had observed in pothole patching on the affected roads. In their responses to the issue of pothole patching, two councillors confirmed that the process was not moving in line with their plans. The councillors attributed the slow pace in road maintenance in affected areas to the mismatch between actual revenue inflows and expenditure obligations. The councillors indicated that the disbursements from the central government (Zinara funds) for road rehabilitation were not on time and the funds were insufficient. The residents recommended that the city council should account for all the money that is supposed to be used in road maintenance.

On the issue of housing, residents indicated that the council's housing department should have pro poor housing schemes where the low income earners are considered in the allocation of stands at cheaper rates. The residents indicated that the council's move to commercialise housing stands in Senga and Nehosho was to a larger extent benefiting the rich people with enough money to buy the stands at commercial rates. In responding to this, Mr Fundira (Ward 9 Councillor) acknowledged that the commercialisation of the Senga stands had further affected the poor households and students since they were now forced to pay commercial rates and rentals on new houses. However, he indicated that the council is willing to assist low income earners to have their own houses. He advised the concerned households to form an association and submit to council their applications so that they can be considered to get stands at affordable rates. The ward 9 councillor also highlighted that he had already engaged other councillors and MSU on the plight of MSU students staying outside the university's campus. The councillor mentioned that they were in a process of engaging the students to provide information on where they are staying in Senga and Nehosho. He indicated that the information will be useful in engaging the owners of households in the next stakeholder meeting to discuss the plight of the students.

During the plenary discussions, residents also indicated that the council should effectively consult them when coming up with key decisions that affect their livelihoods. The residents challenged the city council to disclose information relating to the number of households that they had used in coming up with the \$20 water pump levy. In the plenary, the residents also challenged the Zimbabwe Electricity Distribution Company (ZETDC) management to improve its monitoring and evaluation to make sure that households'

concerns are effectively dealt with and by the right staff. In responding to the electricity related concerns, the ZETDC marketing Official, Mr Chirwa urged residents to always contact the right person or office if there is no satisfaction with regards to the way their electricity connectivity issues are handled.

Conclusions and Way forward

Below are some of the key actionable points that came from the discussions

- The ZETDC marketing representative, Mr Chirwa committed to make follow ups on the connectivity challenges in villages 1, 2 and 3 (under wards 9 and 10) and to provide feedback
- The office of the Assistant Mayor for Gweru City Council recommended for another meeting at management level to deliberate all the residents' submissions and concerns. The GRRRA leadership will be invited to this meeting.

Key Gaps and recommendations

1. As an observation, there is need for GRRRA to strengthen its evidence based advocacy by monitoring Gweru City Council's capital expenditure projects and hold the city council to account. They should be able to query on any differences. Effective advocacy work can be done if residents have more evidence. Thorough research is an important pillar of a good advocacy strategy. In future programming, PRFT would like to train GRRRA members in carrying out expenditure tracking and this will help them in coming up with a sound advocacy strategy. This project idea can tap into the already established working relationship with councillors and GRRRA. GRRRA should have a sound monitoring system that should validate the city council's service delivery projects and their monitoring process should also include regular visits to where capital expenditure projects are being carried.
2. There is need for effective communication platforms where the city council is supposed to share its plans with the residents. To have effective local participation, residents should be well consulted and the council should disclose information to residents in the spirit of promoting good governance. For example, the city council is recommended to avail expenditure report for public scrutiny.
3. PRFT saw the need to create BNB committees to strengthen PRFT's collaboration with GRRRA in advocacy work. The Basic Need Basket committees will be responsible for undertaking and monitoring specific advocacy work under the BNB project. This initiative will foster smooth implementation and monitoring of advocacy initiatives as there would be specific people in GRRRA working on BNB advocacy issues.

4. The workshop opened other opportunities for collaboration between PRFT and local state and non state actors. Through working on the BNB project, PRFT can improve its advocacy work by using its BNB information to inform local pro poor council decisions. For example, PRFT's BNB information which reflects poverty characteristics of urban households can be used as evidence by council in identifying and meeting the needs of specific households. For example the council can make use of the information on households' income levels to know the households who should be considered under a pro poor housing model. This can be one area to explore so as to increase the utilisation of BNB information in local planning.

List of Workshop participants

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