



## CSO's Voices on High Level Political Forum 2017

### CSO's Key Messages into Zimbabwe's Voluntary National Review Report

#### PREAMBLE

In September, 2015, 193 United Nations member states signed up the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), following the end of the 15 year-long Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), to end poverty, inequality and combat climate change. The SDGs are a new, universal set of 17 goals, 169 targets and several indicators setting out new development priorities for all countries for the next fifteen years up to 2030. The ambition of the SDGs is to integrate action to eliminate poverty, with efforts to better manage the natural environment while LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND.

On behalf of Civil Society Organizations under the Zim CSOs Reference Group on the Sustainable Development Goals coordinated by the Poverty Reduction Forum Trust, this report captures the voices of CSOs on Zimbabwe's readiness for the implementation of the SDGs.

## **We Commend Zimbabwe's Efforts**

Zimbabwe is one of the 44 countries that have volunteered to be part of the High Level Political Forum ( HLPF) 2017 peer review. We commend the government of Zimbabwe for volunteering to conduct the Voluntary National Review ( VNR). This is a gesture that demonstrates the government's commitment to the implementation of the SDGs. Despite the challenging economic environment that the country is currently experiencing, we recognize some achievements that have been realized as a result of collective effort by government, CSOs, private sector and our development partners. Special reference is made to progress made in the health sector especially the significant drop in HI prevalence, drop in Infant and neonatal mortality rates, the coming into effect of the New Constitution among others.

### **A. COMPLEMENTARY ISSUES CRITICAL TO ATTAINMENT OF SDGS**

Against this background, this CSOs report highlights and re-emphasizes complementary issues that are critical to the attainment of the SDGs for Zimbabwe.

#### **We therefore note the following:**

##### **1. Leadership, ownership, diversity and inclusivity**

Implementing the SDGs requires that leaders at all levels engage with the 2030 agenda. We acknowledge that government is taking the lead, but, we are cognizant of the demands of achieving the SDGs. To this end, the contribution of all sectors of society is essential to successful implementation of the 2030 agenda.

We acknowledge that the government initiated various processes towards the SDGs implementation. These include the Steering Committee chaired by the Chief Secretary to the Office of the President and Cabinet, Technical Committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Macroeconomic Planning and Investment Promotion. We however note with concern that all these initiatives are government-centric and do not include the participation of other stakeholders. We acknowledge that in some cases government has extended invitations to CSOs through NANGO, unfortunately NANGO does not represent all CSOs in Zimbabwe and as a result there has been limited CSOs participation in these government-led platforms.

We therefore note the following challenges:

- (i) To date the consultations and engagement around SDGs and particularly the VNR has been ad hoc since there is no mechanism in place for national dialogue and consultations.
- (ii) The SDGs have not yet been officially launched in the country and as a result there is no adequate awareness and engagement especially with key stakeholders who

- include marginalized groups like People With Disability, Older Persons, Women, Youth, Children and the Media.
- (iii) The government processes on SDGs are mainly centered in Harare and they are still more of government structured processes, engaging with ministries at the national level and not necessarily involving the provincial and district levels of the ministries

#### **Our Recommendations:**

- (i) We underscore the need for a more comprehensive coordination mechanism that promotes and supports autonomous and coordinated organizing and includes Local governments across the country, Parliament, Civil Society Organizations and private Sector.
- (ii) The government should have one coordinated information centre on SDGs and important dates and it should be accessible to everyone to ensure that everyone is informed on the SDGs processes.

## **2.Policy, legislation and enabling environment on SDGs**

We recognize that the government has put in place several progressive legal frameworks including the New Constitution, enactment of laws targeting the women, disabled community, old age, children youth. Examples are: Older persons act, gender commission, Disability Act. judgement outlawing marriage of persons below the age of 18, Domestic Violence Act among others. We also note that the process to re align the existing laws with the new constitution is in itself a positive milestone given the fact that the success of SDGs hinges on the implementation of the new constitution.

We however note the following challenges:

- (i) We note with concern the snail's pace towards the realignment of the laws with the New Constitution which now retrogressive towards the full realisation of some of the benefits.
- (ii) It should be appreciated that the right and freedom to assemble is the aggregate of the individual liberty of speech which is one of the essential foundations of a democratic society. The continued existence of AIPPA and POSA represent a reversal in the successes towards protecting and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the New Constitution. These pieces of legislation lead to a further deterioration of civic space in Zimbabwe thus limiting their participation and contribution to the development processes of the country.
- (iii) We note a general lack of funding and implementation of enacted policies.

## **3.The role of Media**

The Media plays a critical role in information dissemination and regarded as the fourth arm of government yet to date the Ministry of Information and Media is yet to submit a single proposal to realign the existing media laws with the new constitution. There is little progress in terms of the enabling environment and media freedom in light of AIPPA and POSA. We note with

concern that SDG 16 which speaks to media and freedom is not part of the government's 10 priority Goals yet media is regarded as an enabler for sustainable development. We are concerned that if media is not brought on board early enough, the SDGs will remain an "elitist agenda" and the failures of the MDGs will be relived. There is a key opportunity to expand freedom in the media through legislation and support of community radio stations. However, there is slow process with regards to licensing and funding of these initiatives

We recommend government to prioritise media law reforms and access to information and to avoid the a piece-meal approach to reforms.

## **B.PROGRAMMING ISSUES**

### **1. SDGs Prioritization.**

We acknowledge the government's prioritization of 10 SDGs realizing the country's capacities and limitations. We are however concerned by the omission of Goal 16. Currently the country is seized with governance issues reflected by rampant corruption and a demonstration of political will to stem it out is key.

### **2. Integration and alignment of the SDGs to National Plans**

While we applaud the alignment of the SDGs to ZIMASSET. It is however important that Government moves beyond the realignment to actual implementation and a clear demonstration on how Government will undertake the mainstreaming of the SDGs in all its plans and programmes. We note with concern that the ZIMASSET cluster meetings are purely government-led processes that have failed to effectively include other key stakeholders hence are not inclusive and representative.

We therefore call for the development of an open and robust indicator level integration process that will ensure clear tracking of achievements and results at the implementation level.

### **3. Inclusion of Disability and Older Persons**

We appreciate efforts by Government in enacting friendly legislation and policies to promote and protect the rights of People With Disability and Older Persons i.e. Older Persons Act, Disability Act. However, inclusion of these groups of people at all levels is not sufficient, there is need for adequate disaggregated data for example by gender, age, nature and extent of disability to ensure appropriate interventions and adequate funding for the programmes related activities. There is need for the institutionalization of disability and elder persons planning so that the environment is accommodative to all and not disabling.

There is need for more inclusive awareness raising of SDGs through development of disability, old age friendly communication channels and ICT infrastructure such as Braille, SDGs in vernacular languages including indigenous languages, use of theatre and music as a way of communicating SDGs to the diversity of the population.

#### **4. Addressing Youth and Children's Issues**

Active participation of children and youth in the SDGs agenda is of paramount importance. However, so far the engagement with the youth and children has been ad hoc. Consultations and awareness raising activities carried by government and UNDP mainly to youth, students and children included SDG lectures happening in Universities e.g. Great Zimbabwe University, Bindura University of Science & Technology, NUST, Africa University. Government spear-headed platforms through NAC, SDG debates and Quiz conducted by Zimbabwe United Nations Association (ZUNA), Youth4 SDGs platform exhibitions in 2016 engaging students, Event at Lake Chivero focusing on SDG 16.

However, government led consultations on SDGs have not been broad-based and they are mostly skewed towards urban areas. Government has to demonstrate commitment to address children's issues by instituting and operationalizing child-friendly budgets accompanied by disbursements. The harmonization of laws that pertain to children's issues need to be expedited.

#### **5. M and E for policy Reporting and Evaluation–**

The current reporting on development progress lacks credibility due to the absence of a comprehensive M and E framework that is holistic and transparent. In its absence monitoring implications of government policies on overall development and macro-economic environment. There is need for synchronisation of sector specific M and E plans for all the goals being targeted to come up with a national M and E plan in order to come up with objective assessments. Without a national M & E, assessment of impact of Economic and social empowerment policies such as command agriculture, youth empowerment programmes will remain options. The key message is that the government has to come with sound policy evaluation tools.

**6. Evidence and Disaggregation of Data** – this is a cross cutting issue in the implementation and evaluation of policies. The key messages are: (1) There is lack of disaggregated, national level data for effective targeting of persons with Disability, youth, older persons, women e.t.c in poverty eradication and social development (2) Reporting on development/ humanitarian issues/ climate change hazards and data on vulnerability is not disability inclusive e.g Cyclone Dineo, there was no clear position on how the disability community was affected or could be supported by government or other development partners

### **C.MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION**

The Government of Zimbabwe has to decisively deal with corruption. The SDGs implementation calls for domestic resource mobilization yet Zimbabwe continues to lose millions of dollars through corruption and illicit financial flows.

We call for full adherence to principles of transparency and accountability in the use of public resources and plugging the revenue leakages to curb corruption. Domestic accountability should form the core of Government's responsibility towards all citizens in the implementation of the SDGs.

## **D.ZIM CSOs REFERENCE GROUP COMMITMENTS TO THE SDGs IMPLEMENTATION**

We acknowledge the existence of various other CSOs platforms that seek to contribute towards SDGs implementation in the country. As the Zim CSOs Reference Group on SDGs<sup>i</sup> whose members include apex bodies of organizations of People With Disability, the Elderly, Youth, Children, Women, Church, Media and Human rights, we have built a coherent set of actions that will engage with the SDG process locally, regionally and internationally. The following key areas will be central to our work:

- SDGs Awareness Raising
- Advocacy for SDGs localization
- Participatory Citizen Monitoring of SDGs implementation
- Supporting Government efforts through resource mobilization for SDGs implementation

The Zim CSOs Reference Group on SDGs will provide a collaborative and coordinated mechanism for the roll out of the SDGs process locally. The Reference Group through their membership and structures guarantee a multi-sectoral approach to working on the SDGs.

## **Annexure: List of organizations who participated and contribute to this report under the banner of the ZIM CSOs Reference Group on SDGs**

This publication is a product of the Zim CSOs Reference Group on SDGs workshop held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 2017. Organizations which took part and contributed to CSOs' voice on Zimbabwe's Voluntary National Review (VNR) Process in 2017 are as follows:

1. The poverty Reduction Forum Trust,
2. CARITAS Zimbabwe
3. Girls & Women Empowerment Network Trust
4. Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC)
5. The Zimbabwe Association of Community Radio Stations (ZACRAS)
6. Larche Zimbabwe
7. SAYWHAT
8. FBC
9. National Council of Disabled Persons of Zimbabwe (NCDPZ)
10. Simuka Africa
11. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
12. Disabled Women Support Organization (DWSO)
13. SAYWHAT University of Zimbabwe
14. Mufudzi Old People's Centre
15. Zimbabwe Cross Borders Association
16. Society for the Destitute Aged (SODA)
17. Epilepsy Support Foundation
18. Alive Albinism Initiative
19. Shamwari yemwanasikana
20. Communities Against Drugs & Substance Abuse
21. For YouthsBy Youths
22. Weekly Mirror
23. Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Zimbabwe
24. Women Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCOZ)
25. Mai Nevana Climate Change Wellness and Adaptation Centre
26. The Sunday Times
27. Plan International
28. National Association of Youth Organizations (NAYO)
29. Vision Africa
30. Zimbabwe Older persons Organization (ZOPO)
31. SightSavers
32. New Ziana
33. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
34. Caritas Zimbabwe
35. Older Persons Board
36. HelpAge Zimbabwe

37. Angels Foundation
38. Media Institute of Southern Africa Zimbabwe (MISA)
39. Musasa Project
40. SA Bumhudzo
41. Harare News
42. Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC)
43. Labour Economic Development Research Institute of Zimbabwe (LEDRIZ)
44. Young Voices Network (YVN)
45. Radio Voice Of the People
46. ZiFM
47. The Herald
48. Deaf Zimbabwe Trust
49. Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC)
50. Methodist Development & Relief Agency
51. National Association of Social Workers Zimbabwe (NASWZ)
52. Safe Hands Center
53. 263 Chat
54. SheepGate
55. Careers Zimbabwe
56. Island Hospice & Healthcare
57. Human Rights NGO Forum
58. Centre for Community Development Solutions (CCDS)

---

<sup>i</sup> The Zim CSOs Reference Group on SDGs is coordinated by the Poverty Reduction Forum Trust and is currently made up of the following apex organizations: CARITAS Zimbabwe, National council of Disabled Persons in Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe National Council of the Welfare of Children, SAYWHAT, National Association of Youth Organizations, Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, Women’s Coalition of Zimbabwe, HelpAge Zimbabwe, Media Institute of Southern Africa.