Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development

Investing in People
For Social and Economic Justice

COMMUNITY MOBILISATION TOOLBOX

The Community Mobilisation Toolbox was developed by ZIMCODD under the Citizens First Forum (CIFFO) project which seeks to raise the ability of new social movements and resident associations to be able to demand their rights and also participate effectively in community and national development processes.

The Community Mobilisation Toolbox is a tool that is composed of basic strategies necessary to foster unified communities for social and economic change. The Community Mobilisation Toolbox will be used by Citizens First Forum (CIFFO) members as a guide to address communities' social and economic justice challenges. The toolbox contains information on:

- The definition of community mobilisation;
- The importance of community mobilisation;
- The basic steps to consider when mobilising communities;
- The checklist of key action points which needs to be taken note of at each stage of community mobilisation;
- The various forms of community mobilisation; and
- Benefits and challenges of community mobilisation.

1. Introduction

> *Community mobilisation is the process of engaging communities to change retrogressive norms and practices within their own communities.*

What is Community Mobilisation?

Community mobilisation is a grassroots process, where community members get excited about an issue and take advantage of that energy to create change. The process is not done by outside 'experts', telling communities what to do but by the community members themselves take charge as they know best their problems and how to address them sustainably. Community mobilisation is all about empowering people to improve their lives through building a power base among a wide group of people, rights holders, who have traditionally been denied a voice and whose social and economic rights have been threatened, ignored or violated by duty bearers and solution holders.

2. Objectives For The Community Mobilisation Tool Box

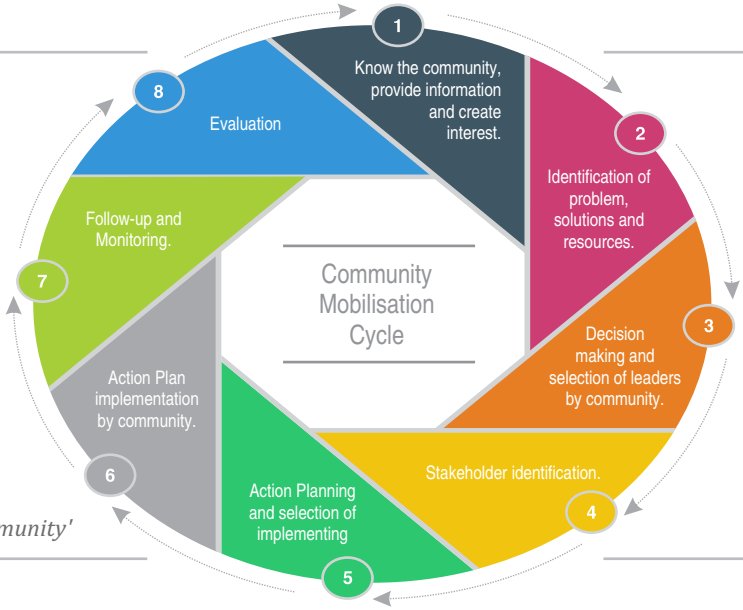
- *Understand community mobilisation as it relates to social and economic rights;*
- *Incorporate community mobilisation principles into social and economic change processes; and*
- *Develop locally specific strategies that bring social and economic change.*

3. What Are We Mobilising For?

The Community Mobilisation Toolbox is meant to build a critical mass of support around issues of social and economic justice, with particular interest in constitutionalism, to help citizens in holding duty bearers accountable. Once communities are able to mobilise themselves, they become the primary stakeholder responsible for demanding constitutional accountability in order to address their own socio-economic development issues.

> ***Constitutionalism:*** *Is the practice of governance whereby the Constitution is recognised as supreme law and all other laws enacted and decisions made by Government actually conform and give effect to the values, principles and rules set under the Constitution.*

4. Community Mobilisation Cycle



Source: Handbook 'Steps and methods to mobilise the community'

5. Community Mobilisation Methods

Community mobilisation is attained through various methods which are generally participatory in nature, including the following:

- Conversation Method
- This includes principles of group discussions and exchange of knowledge, where community members feel free to share their views, feelings and insights.
- Workshop Method
- This method introduces skills and knowledge to combine different insights in a group towards effective cooperation.
- Mapping Method
- This method visualises the key resources, infrastructure, people and other means in a defined area to realise the change being pursued.
- Community Action Planning Method
- This is a planning process, where a group develops a participatory plan of action which has the support of everybody in the group and where people commit themselves towards implementing agreed activities.
- Stakeholder Analysis
- This method describes relations between different institutions, offices, solution and right holders and/or key people who have interests in the project, plan or problem.

6. How to Bring Change through Community Mobilisation?

The following elements should be considered for effective community mobilisation in order to bring change:

- Know the community, provide information and create interest:- It is important to learn and understand community norms an values of the community and its important issues of concern and interest in order to know where intervention efforts should be directed.

Checklist:
☑ *Did we have a meeting with the local leaders?*
☑ *Did we get permission from local authorities?*
☑ *Did we have a meeting with the community to identify their needs?*
Method(s): Conversation and Mapping

- Identification of problems, solutions and resources:- The community should outline issues of concern/problems that need the attention of the community and decide possible solutions to the problems. Resource mobilisation is also critical, e.g. human, finance, skills/expertise, etc

Checklist:
☑ *Did we consult and involve all sectors of the community (women & children, youths, senior citizens, disabled, HIV/AIDS, etc.)?*
☑ *Did we list all identified problems, proposed solutions and resources?*
☑ *Did we categorise identified problems into specific social and economic rights violated and/or threatened?*
Method(s): Workshop and Mapping

- Decision making & Selection of leaders by community:- Community members should elect leaders (Community Development Committee) to lead the community development processes.

Checklist:
The Community Development Committee should include:
☑ *Chairperson;*
☑ *Vice Chairperson;*
☑ *Secretary;*
☑ *Treasurer;*
☑ *Committee Members x 2*
☑ *Are there channels for effective communication?*
Method(s): Workshop

- Stakeholder identification:- Community members need to identify key stakeholders directly or indirectly involved in the identified problem and/or proposed action plan and resources.

Method(s): Workshop and Stakeholder Analysis

- Action planning and selection of implementing leaders and people:- Action planning is central in order to plan on possible interventions targeted at achieving intended objectives. To implement the action plan, leaders should be chosen to lead the proposed actions.

Checklist:
☑ *Did we do a joint planning with all community members?*
☑ *Did the community leaders get training from the Social, Economic and Cultural Rights Toolkit?*
Method(s): Conversation and Workshop

- Action plan implementation by community:- Community members will implement planned activities themselves according to the agreed plan by the whole community.

Checklist:
☑ *Is the community responsible for the implementation of their own plan?*
☑ *Are there standardised procedures for project implementation?*
☑ *Are there strategies for implementation effectiveness and efficiency? E.g. due dates for activities; etc.*
Method(s): Conversation and Workshop

- Follow-up, Monitoring & Evaluation:- The elected Community Development Committee will be responsible for local project monitoring.

Checklist:
☑ *Is the Community Development Committee taking responsibility for monitoring and evaluation?*
☑ *Is the Community Development Committee recording the whole monitoring and evaluation process?*
☑ *Is the Community Development Committee sharing M&E reports with the rest of the community?*
Method(s): Conversation and Workshop

7. Types of Community Mobilisation

As communities come together to bring about change in their livelihoods, there are different ways in which the community will be organised. These are outlined below:

a) Community Development

Community development is defined as a long term process which tries to address imbalances in power and bring about change based on the realisation of social and economic rights, (Federation for Community Development). Critical is the ability by communities to solve their own problems by knowing the country's Constitution, together with constitutionalism, social, economic and cultural rights, advocacy and enforcement of rights as well as learning community leadership, communication and mobilisation skills. Community development builds a culture of working together by communities members in order to bring about social and economic change. Community members would seek to build:-

- Social Capital: Building cooperative relations and connections;
- Human Capital: Building knowledge, skills and confidence;
- Physical Capital: Delivering goods and services; and
- Cultural Capital: having a sense of one's own identity and understanding of others as well as a sense of belonging to a group *(Institute for Volunteering Research, 2010).*

b) Social and Policy Planning

Social and policy planning focuses on solving specific social problems to get results through the inclusion of communities in development processes to influence policy.

Why Social and Policy Planning?

- Community participation in socio-economic development processes ensures effective policies;
- Community involvement in national policies;
- Policy makers and elected government officials gain knowledge from working with the community;
- It informs policy changes needed over time as communities have first hand experiences with policy effects;
- It sustains long term community development goals; and
- Community participation energises the community to continue to seek change.

c) Social Action

Social action is the practice of taking action to bring about change and is highly carried out for social and economic justice by community members. Members come together to make demands on the solution holders or larger communities for recognition. Power for change is exercised through numbers, media, votes, boycotts and other types of social, political and economic pressure to convince those in power.

Why is Social Action Important

- It empowers and energises marginalised populations;
- It unifies communities;
- It creates a force by marginalised communities to be recognised by the duty bearers/solution holders;
- It may be the only force that will bring long term positive social change;
- It may be morally necessary;
- It motivates demoralised communities who have been discriminated against.

When to Take Social Action?

- When negotiation and reason don't produce satisfactory results;
- When remaining time is short to negotiate and action is urgently required;
- When the time is right and there is a window of opportunity;
- When resources are available to make action possible;
- When a dramatic statement is required to attract public attention;
- When there is need to energise and empower a demoralised community;

Who Should Engage in Social Action?

Social Action is most effective when those who engage in it are the ones whose interests are at stake.

8. Benefits of Community Mobilisation

- A greater ability to bring about changes intended due to the power of collective voice;
- Community empowerment through involving marginalised sectors of the citizenry in improving the conditions which shape their lives.
- Increased self sufficiency among community members through maintenance of a high level of ownership, by people, of their own destiny;
- Increased social support for growth by bringing together diverse groups of people with the same interests; and
- Greater equity in the society as people gain control over the forces that shape their livelihoods.

9. Challenges of Community Mobilisation

Community mobilisation comes with the following challenges which need to be overcome for successful action plans:-

- It requires significant initial investment of resources and relationship building;
- Community mobilisation is process oriented, it is difficult to implement effectively within highly prescriptive environments *(encounter with prescribed community structures that place limitations on some of the strategies that the group can implement);*
- Community mobilisation is a mix of structures and the unknown, making it a challenge to manage;
- Leaders often forget that it is a facilitative process not a directive process thereby ending up frustrating member efforts and commitment through dictating processes.
- Not trusting the wisdom of the Community Development Committee;
- Not identifying the correct stakeholders;
- Not willing to add new stakeholders when they are identified;
- Misjudging community readiness to commit to the implementation of the action plan;
- Not allowing enough time to mobilise the community;

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