



# THE Weekend Reader

"Your Weekly Read on Debt, Development & Social & Economic Justice"

## ZIMCODD COVID-19 Tracker Inspires Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys



On the 4th and 5th of December 2021, the ZIMCODD in conjunction with the Advocacy Core Team, SAPST conducted the Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) workshop in Kwekwe.

The meeting was attended by various stakeholders and experts from the health, public administration, and financial sector. The purpose of the meeting was to generate ideas that will help to establish a Public Expenditure Tracking Survey to be piloted in the health sector with the intention of rejuvenating service delivery.

PETS are tools used to track the flow of public resources (including human, financial, or in kind) from the highest levels of government to frontline service providers<sup>1</sup>.

An extensive mapping exercise is employed in PETS to understand the flow of funds through the different levels of government. PETS can help civil society, citizens, and policy makers alike to understand funding flows, identify areas of leakage, and make informed policy decisions based on their findings.

In other words, PETS are audits of financial flows that aim to measure the proportion of government resources benefiting the intended beneficiaries. As such, they have a proven track record of identifying leakages in the flow of public resources and catalysing improvements in financial management and utilization.

Despite various initiatives that have been adopted to ensure adequate financing, health outcomes have not improved as expected. The workshop discusses that the health sector is still faced with critical shortage of specialized professionals and health-care staff, demotivated staff who go on strikes, dilapidated hospital infrastructure, lack of essential medicines and commodities, inadequate ambulances and service vehicles, poor diet and overcrowding of patients, inadequate emergency services for delivery and underutilization of existing antenatal services.

1. Koziol, M and Tolmie, C (2010) Using Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys to Monitor Projects and Small-Scale Programs /A Guidebook. World Bank, Washington DC.



The challenges faced in the health sector are owing to financial incapacitation and corruption which have proliferated in the sector especially on how COVID-19 resources have been managed. Health experts present at the workshop blamed the government for failing to disburse all the resources it allocates to the health sector, a view which the Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Health reinforced.

The government, represented by a director in the Ministry of Finance expressed concern over the failure by the health sector to use all its allocated funds. The director noted that, the failure in the utilisation of resources might have been due to procurement delays which cannot entirely be the treasurer's fault as it awaits instructions to disburse funds. However, this argument was disputed since the government had already relaxed procurement.

After sharing its experiences on the COVID-19 resources tracker, the parliament and other stakeholders noted that the ZIMCODD inspired them to have a PETS system that is well coordinated. The meeting acknowledged that if ZIMCODD as one institution can successfully run the COVID-19 resource tracker, a consortium of the parliament and many CSOs can accomplish much more. An action plan was adopted in a bid to further establish robust public finance management in Zimbabwe. The following specific actions were agreed:

- Nomination of Members to the Task Team by Stakeholders to be done by the parliament on or before 20 December.
- Orientation of the Task Team to spearhead PETS and mapping of the PETS (Scope and framework) to be done by parliament on or before 31 January 2022.
- Resource mapping for PETS by the Task Team and convening of a multi-stakeholder meeting to agree on the conceptual framework and funding modalities by MoFED/ SAPST/ ZIMCODD to be done on or before 10 March 2022.
- Development of the PETS toolkit to be done by SAPST on or before 30 April 2022.
- Training of other Members of the Budget and Health Committee and selected Committees to be done by Parliament on or before 31 August 2022.
- Conduct PETS in the identified area by Task Team on or before 30 September 2022.
- Replicate PETS in other sectors by Task Team as on going.

The workshop managed to establish a starting point for civil society organizations, Parliament as well international organizations who have an interest in conducting Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys, to agree on the conceptual framework and build consensus on the need for a PETS in the health sector. ZIMCODD hopes that the established buy in from stakeholders and consensus to undertake a PETS in the health sector will result in successful implementation