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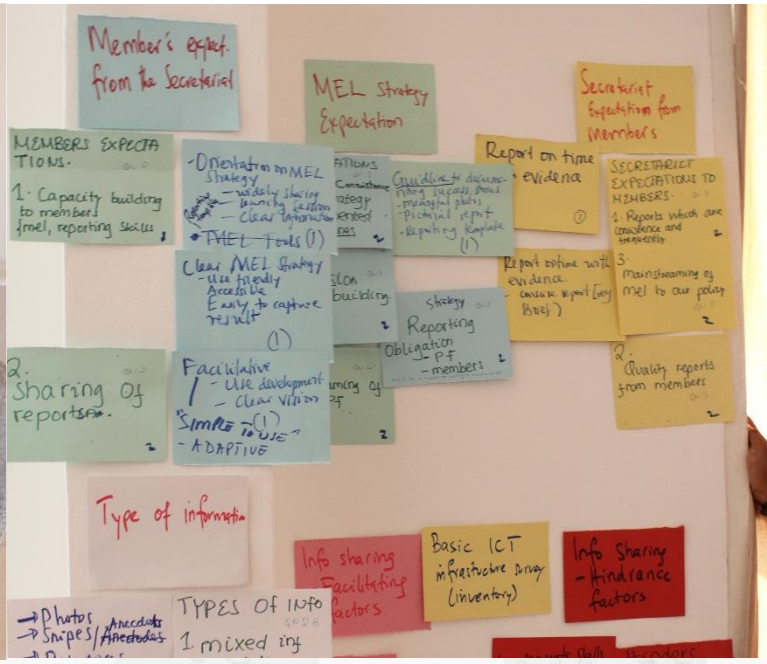

PARTICIPATORY MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING STRATEGY (2018-2020)

April 2018

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Foreword

In November 2017, Policy Forum began the process of developing a workable, participatory and integrated monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) strategy to assist the network in tracking the progress towards the achievement of the 2017-2020 strategic plan. This Participatory MEL strategy therefore embodies the aspirations of Policy Form as far as the culture of collecting and reporting accurate, relevant and timely information for adaptive management and learning purposes is concerned. It provides the medium-term vision, objectives and the guideline for the design, implementation and the practice of monitoring, learning and evaluation functions in the organization. The MEL strategy further provides an audit of the resources available to implement a participatory M&E system, the gaps and opportunities.

The full implementation of this strategy will see Policy Forum reposition itself as a vibrant network that is driven by evidence-based outcomes and a learning culture.

The development of this Participatory MEL strategy (2017-2020) was a truly collaborative effort. Policy Forum takes this opportunity to thank all stakeholders that volunteered time and expertise towards this task. We are greatly indebted to Dr. Godfrey Mulongo and Issack Kitururu for leading these efforts.

Semkae Kilonzo,

Coordinator, Policy Forum

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

APRPM	Annual Planning and Review Meeting
BWG	Budget Working Group
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DQA	Data Quality Audit
GBS	Gender Budgeting Statement
LGA	Local Government Authority
LGWG	Local Governance Working Group
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MIS	Management Information System
MRPM	Mid-year Review and Planning Meeting
PF	Policy Forum
SNE	Special Needs Education
TWG	Technical Working Group
TTJC	Tanzania Tax Justice Coalition
WG	Working Group

1. Background

The Policy Forum (PF) is a network of 76 Civil Society Organizations brought together in their interest in poverty reduction, equity and democratization and pursuit to enhance and augment the voice of ordinary citizens in national policy processes. The primary objective is to make policies work better for the people of Tanzania, especially the poor. The network focuses on governance and public money accountability at both central and local levels as the underpinning pillar on which all Policy Forum activities are based.

PF operates with two working groups: The Budget Working Group (BWG) and the Local Governance Working Group (LGWG) that bring together members to influence national level budget processes and open participatory spaces at the local level respectively. The network also co-convenes other external working groups which include Extractives Industries Working Group (now HakiRasilimali) and the Tanzania Tax Justice Coalition (TTJC).

Policy Forum's 2017-2020 strategic plan seeks to contribute to enhanced governance and accountable use of public resources by improving civil society capabilities and opportunities to influence and monitor policies. The 2017-2020 strategic plan focuses three outcome areas:

- **Outcome 1:** Strengthened PF members' capacity to influence and monitor the implementation of policies relating to public resources.
- **Outcome 2:** Improved State responsiveness to Policy Forum's advocacy agenda relating to the accountable use of public resources.
- **Outcome 3:** Institutional effectiveness and efficiency of Policy Forum network is sustainably enhanced.

According to PF's theory of change, these outcomes are preconditions for the network's successful advocacy towards influencing coherent policies and norms relating to public resource management and accountable governance and monitoring their implementation. The first outcome intends to give effect to growth of PF members' capacities to produce evidence regarding the influencing of policy processes and monitoring of the implementation and impact of policies relating to public money accountability. The second outcome is designed to enhance government responsiveness to PF's public money agenda. The third outcome seeks to strengthen PF's institutional ability to efficiently and effectively deliver the two preceding outcomes. This includes effective and efficient management of resources, access to finance and sustainability and availability of a functional and responsive Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system. The development of a MEL strategy is therefore foundational in the process of institutionalizing the MEL agenda at PF.

2. Introduction

Institutionalizing MEL agenda at PF is considered a prerequisite to achieve outcome 3 of PF's 2017-2020 strategic plan. According to this strategic plan, to sustain the effectiveness and efficiency of delivering its mission, the PF expresses commitment to direct specific efforts to improve and institutionalize MEL systems and culture in the organization. To achieve this, two important milestones are highlighted in the 2017-2020 strategic plan; firstly, to hire a competent staff to manage a participatory performance monitoring strategy development process, review data collection, analyze and review reporting tools at organizational and membership levels and build the capacity of secretariat's staff and staff from selected member organizations on participatory monitoring and assessments. The MEL officer has since been hired. Secondly is to develop and operationalize an organizational MEL strategy.

Three steps were conceived to develop the current MEL strategy:

- Assess different approaches in MEL by drawing on the best practices on similar programs and frameworks to enhance the current M&E Plan;
- Design a participatory MEL Strategy;
- Develop an implementation plan for the MEL strategy, taking into consideration capacity building and the available human and financial resources and skills within the secretariat.

The current MEL strategy was developed through a thoroughly consultative process with the active participation of the PF Secretariat, members and the Board.

The Strategic Plan consists of vision statement, objectives, description of the theory of change, outcome indicators among other important strategic elements. The MEL strategy is therefore a rock foundation upon which all MEL systems at the PF will be designed by outlining the guiding principles for conducting MEL, mechanisms for tracking performance, knowledge generation, communication, management and learning.

Key terminology:

Monitoring is a systematic process of collecting, analyzing and using information for the purpose of management and decision making that accompanies the implementation of an action, project or program. Its goals are (a) to ensure that inputs, work schedules, and outputs are proceeding according to plan (in other words, that implementation is on course), (b) to provide a record of input use, activities, and results, and (c) to warn of deviations from expected outputs (Mbabu et.al. 2014).

Learning involves the acquisition of data, information and knowledge through the M&E system, which in turn influences the understanding, memories and cultures of the organization, programme or project (Mulongo et.al. 2017).

Evaluation is a systematic process of collecting and analysing information that determines to what extent an action, project or program has achieved its defined goals and objectives. It is a periodic assessment to explain the results and outcomes of an action. It assesses relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of delivered outputs to the outcome/purpose (Mulongo et.al. 2017).

3. MEL Gaps and Constraints

There are various but interrelated gaps and constraints that currently face the MEL functions at Policy Forum, namely:

Capacity to monitor advocacy outcomes: Advocacy refers to individuals or groups undertaking initiatives, often on behalf of vulnerable populations. The objective usually is to bring about social-economic changes in the society. By its nature, advocacy is amorphous and often opportunistic – it takes numerous forms, ranging from actions that target individuals or institutions in positions of power (Naeve et.al, 2017). Because of this nature, monitoring and evaluating advocacy programs pose significant challenges to implementers. The monitoring challenges relate to skill level in tracking the theory change and advocacy related processes, data management, timeliness and reporting. Challenges to advocacy evaluations include difficulties in reliable data collection, and the aggregative approach that most advocacy actions take, as they build on previous successes while discarding unsuccessful aspects (Naeve et.al, 2017).

These challenges are currently facing Policy Forum. Monitoring of processes is still ad hoc, data management is yet to take shape, reporting on advocacy processes and milestone is still cumbersome and focus is given mostly to outputs with minimal reporting on advocacy outcomes. As far as evaluation is concerned, the internal capacity to timely transit from output tracking to quantitative and qualitative assessment and reporting on outcome indicators is weak.

Data transmission and reporting: By its architecture, Policy Forum is a constituent of diverse member civil society organizations (CSOs) with a secretariat made of a lean staff of thematic leaders. Being volunteer members of the Forum, the member CSO have no real obligation to report on progress indicators. But even when they have to report, the challenge is what data should they provide and by using what mechanism. The major challenge facing the secretariat therefore is how to build the capacity of members and how to incentivize them to report not only in timely manner, but to provide credible and relevant progress data on advocacy processes and outcomes.

4. The Strategic Focus

Given the gaps and constraints highlighted above, the priorities for the MEL function for Policy Forum for the period 2018-2020 is to strengthen internal systems that will:

- Guarantee the availability of data/ evidence whenever needed;
- Facilitate the attribution of outcomes/ results i.e. clearly identify/discern PF's contribution in the advocacy arena;
- Be able to distinctly document value for money i.e. to be in a position to respond with certainty on whether the results claimed resonate with the inputs and;
- Ensure members willingly/ voluntarily provide data and report on progress.

At the heart of PF's programme is a theory of change with the following results chain linking the Intermediate outcomes with the organizational impact.

Enhance the ability of PF members to influence and monitor implementation of policies

So that

They can collect evidence and formulate appropriate messaging targeting the Executive and Parliament relating to the accountable use of public resources

So that

The Executive and Parliament increase their interest and knowledge on policies for the accountable use of public resources

So that

Policies and/or their implementation change

So that

Policies and/or their implementation change

Which will

Contribute to enhanced governance and accountable use of public resources

So that

Service Delivery improves

This results chain provides a glimpse of the both the demands and architecture of the MEL system for Policy Forum. For instance, critical questions for reflection emerge from this theory, such as:

a) How will the secretariat and the members know when they are influencing policies and accountability?
b) How will the organization monitor (and collect evidence) changes in policy implementation?
c) How will Policy Forum measure changes (attributable to its interventions) in governance, accountable use of public resources and service delivery?

Table 1 presents the important indicators policy forum will track to answer these questions. The methods of data collection for each indicator are also highlighted. Section 5 discusses some of these methods in detail.

Table 1: PF's progress indicators

Intervention Focus/Thematic Area	Indicators	Disaggregation	Type	Method of data collection
Policy influence	PF agendas reflected in the new legislative, policy/regulator/frameworks including cross cutting issues	National level/by sector	Qualitative/ descriptive	Document review, case study
Monitoring policy implementation	Network members and partners monitoring policy and budgetary processes	Local Government Authority (LGA) level, national level	Quantitative and qualitative	Review of progress reports
	Gender sensitive budgets (giving focus to marginalized groups particularly women and children)	LGA level, national level	Qualitative/ descriptive	Document review
Governance, accountable use of public resources and service delivery	Open Budget Index score	National level	Quantitative	Survey
	Domestic resource mobilization index	LGA level, national level	Quantitative	Document review
	Equitable use of public resources at local and national level	LGA level, national level	Quantitative and qualitative	Document review
	# of recommendations addressed as raised through the Position statements	LGA level, national level	Quantitative and descriptive	Document review

To achieve the strategic focus underscored above the MEL will be guided by the following vision and objectives.

4.1 Vision

Policy Forum envisions a vibrant network that is driven by evidence-based outcomes and a learning culture.

4.2 Objectives

To achieve the vision, the following objectives will guide the practice of MEL at Policy Forum:

a) To support evidence-based advocacy by systematically documenting processes and results of PF's initiatives.
b) To instill a culture of collective learning amongst PF's members.
c) To build the capacity of members for evidence-based management and reporting.

5. Operationalizing the Participatory MEL Agenda

This section presents the key monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanisms that will be implemented by the Policy Forum between 2018 and the year 2020. Reporting and data management mechanisms are presented as well.

5.1 Monitoring and Learning Mechanisms

The program monitoring will consist of 4 interrelated levels: at activity/process level, output level, outcome level, and at the program's goal level as described below;

I. ***Activity/process monitoring*** – This will be done to determine whether the activities as outlined in the work plans are implemented as designed (specification, quantity and quality) and in time. Activity monitoring will involve simple methods such as recording participants in respective functions and observing and recording processes. Activity/process monitoring will seek to answer questions such as how many community members attended local council meetings, how many advocacy champions were trained, type of meetings held with parliamentarians etc. Implementing member CSOs will be responsible for managing activity/process data while Objective/Thematic Leaders[1] will verify the implementation through spot checks and routine consultative meetings. Activity monitoring will be reported on a monthly basis (see project reporting section for details). The thematic leaders will consolidate the various member reports under their docket and avail the reports in the management information system (MIS).

The concept of milestones

- In order to monitor outputs and outcomes on a regular basis, targets will be time-bound (SMART).
- Advocacy processes will be targeted by date i.e. targets will be divided into time-bound increments which are the milestones:
  - define what the programme aims to achieve by certain point in time (e.g. end of Quarter 1, mid-year etc)
  - tell us whether we are advancing in the right direction at the right pace to reach that destination as planned – or whether change is needed. See figure 1 for illustration

[1] The Objective/Thematic leaders of PF secretariat. At program level, these include the Capacity Enhancement Manager, Policy Analysis Manager, Advocacy Manager and Finance/Administration Manager.

II. ***Output monitoring*** – Reporting on progress at the output level will be done on quarterly basis to determine whether or not planned interventions and implemented activities are generating anticipated outputs/milestones. For each output/milestone (e.g. development of policy brief), specified deliverables will act as the means of verification (such as the policy brief document). For effective operationalization of output reporting, PF members and the various thematic leaders will jointly agree on the various milestones to track in order to obtain the various outcomes under PF. However, the technical working groups (TWG) will be the forums through which the outputs will be discussed, ratified and implemented. Thematic/Objective Leaders will catalyze the execution of outputs to ensure quality (e.g. the relevance and quality of the written policy brief). The Finance and Administration Manager will report on how the relation between inputs (particularly finances) and the outputs generated. The MEL Officer and the PF Coordinator will backstop verification efforts of the Thematic Leaders through spot checks. Quarterly reporting template (see appendix 2) will be piloted as key reporting tools.

Figure 1 presents an example of the concept of milestones for advocacy interventions intended to raise resources for nutrition programmes. The MEL Officer will develop and discuss with the secretariat colleagues and member CSOs on the milestones necessary to attain the outcome indicators outlined in ***table 1***.

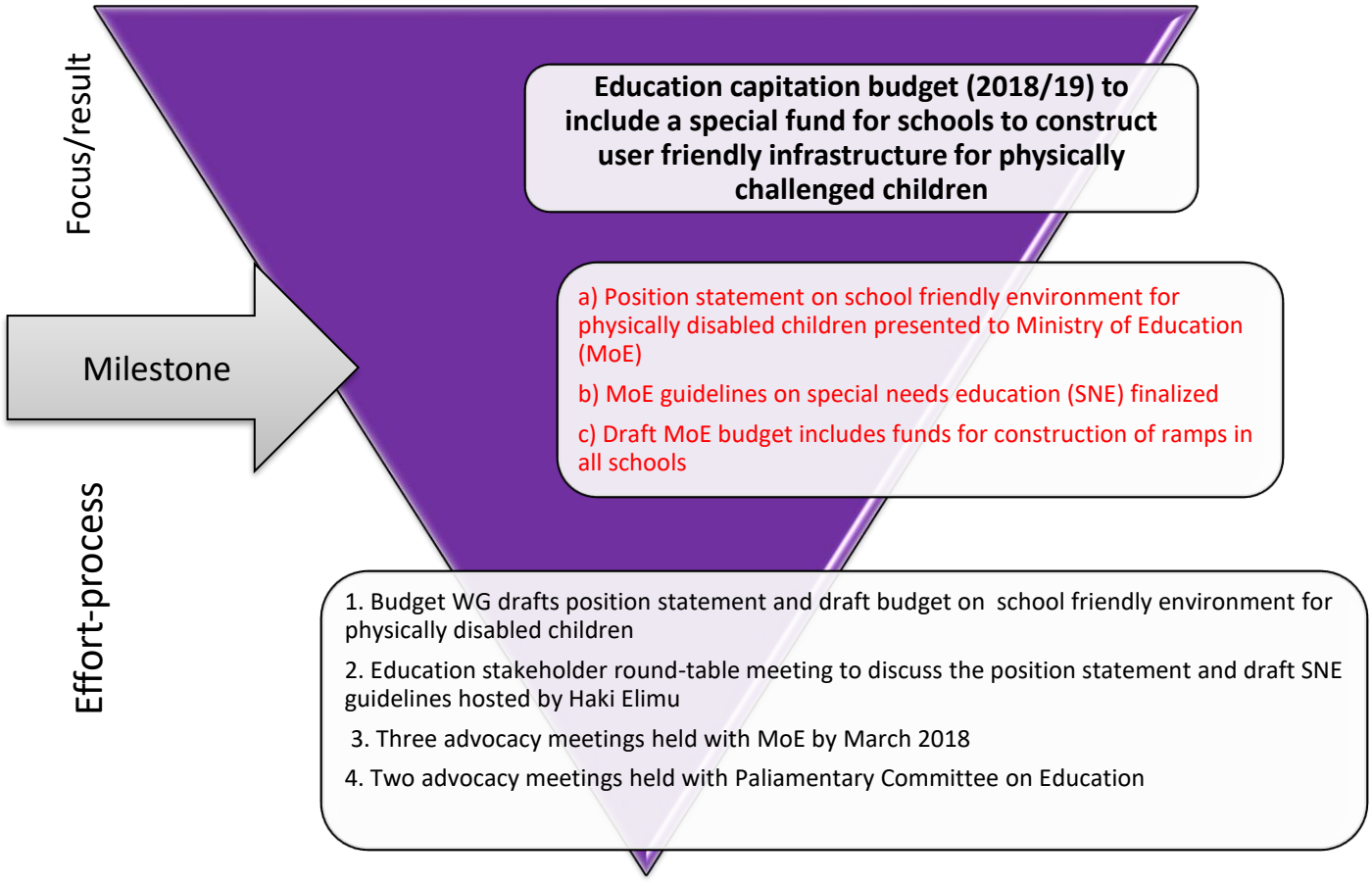

Figure 1: An illustration of the concept of milestone

III. ***Outcome monitoring*** –This will be reported bi-annually and annually (where relevant) and will provide important information regarding the extent to which delivered outputs are contributing to expected outcomes. However, there is need to shift from focusing at attribution to documentation of the contribution/ process i.e. shift from upstream to downstream contribution analysis. In doing so, focus should be on telling the story behind the desired change/ observed change.

Monitoring outcomes is discussed in detail under the research and assessment agenda (section 5.2)

5.2 Participatory Research and Assessment Mechanisms

Knowing that research and assessment is most effective when driven by specific questions, Policy Forum has identified three critical questions that will guide the evaluation mechanisms. The questions are as follows:

a) How will the secretariat and the members know when they are influencing policies and accountability?
b) How will the organization monitor (and collect evidence) changes in policy implementation?
c) How will Policy Forum measure changes (attributable to its interventions) in governance, accountable use of public resources and service delivery?

These questions have enabled the organization to come up with the key progress indicators (Table 1). Findings for these questions will determine the progress made and therefore the need to revise planning assumptions. Research and evaluation thus forms the basis for adapting the programme's implementation plan to reflect the changing context. The program will subject its interventions to various internal and external studies to document the progress on key outcome indicators. The following studies and assessment will be conducted by Policy Forum:

I. **Situation analysis:** PF conducted a baseline survey in 2017, which among other things proposed important indicators and baseline values of the same. The baseline report has played an important role while designing this MEL strategy. To complement the baseline study, a situation analysis study will be conducted in the first 6 months upon the approval of this strategy by the Board. Furthermore, the situation analysis will be conducted after a) the Secretariat develops/adapts the tools to measure the outcome indicators. The tools will be developed consultatively with the LGAs, national government and PF member CSOs and b) reaches a common understanding with all stakeholders on the measurement mechanisms and tools. The situation analysis will provide the foundation for effective evaluation mechanisms which will further establish initial conditions on the new indices against which the progress of the programme will be compared. The baseline values will also inform the setting and/or refinement of performance targets. Based on the baseline figures, the programme will establish appropriate progress targets to pursue and upon which the results will be compared. For instance, the situation analysis will identify the policies PF will focus on to ensure better results as far as the reflection of its agenda in the documents is concerned.
II. **Tanzania Governance Review study**. PF will revise the Governance Review Study with the aim of making it less generic but instead focused on key indicators on governance, accountability and service delivery. This annual survey will gather information to determine the progress on the following indicators: a) equitable use of public resources at local and national level b) network members participating in the policy and budgetary processes c) domestic resource mobilization index d) equitable use of public resources at local and

national level e) number of recommendations addressed as raised through the Position statements[2]. As mentioned above, PF will consultatively reach a common definition and measurement mechanisms for all these indicators. Of particular interest, the LGAs must understand how the measurements will be conducted and should agree to participate in the annual survey.

III. **Open Budget Index score.** Through its partner Haki Elimu, PF has been in the forefront in leading the biennial open budget survey. This survey, among other things measures the public availability of budget information; opportunities for the public to participate in the budget process; and the role and effectiveness of formal oversight institutions, including the legislature and the national audit office. Going forward, PF will adapt the open budget survey in an attempt to deepen its scope and to cascade it to the LGA level. Moreover, the adapted survey will be conducted annually. The additional indicators the survey will cover include use of Gender Budgeting Statement (GBS) by Ministers and MPs and gender sensitive budgets (both at national and LGA level)

5.3. Data, Information, and Knowledge Management Mechanisms

The data collection approach for output deliverables and outcome indicators will be two pronged; through routine monitoring and periodic field. Figure 2 shows how data emanating from the programme monitoring will be collected and managed:

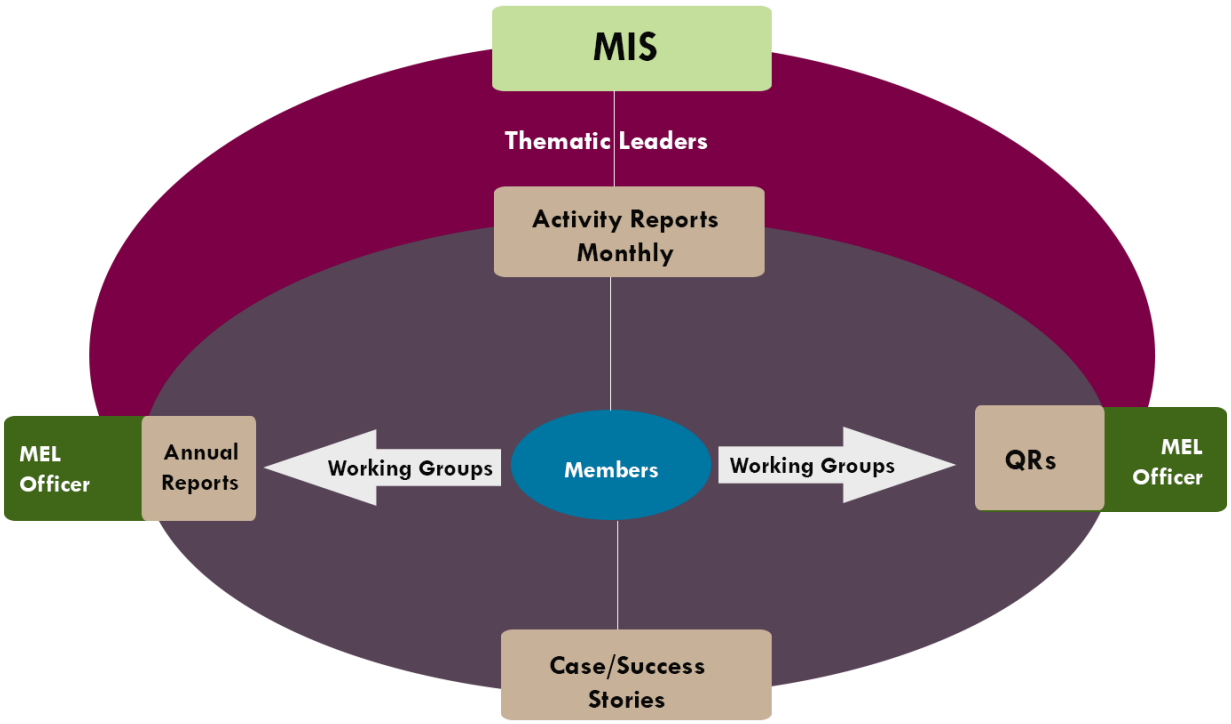

Figure 2: Data management and reporting

[2] Since 2015, a total of 31 recommendations have been provided, namely, 8 apiece in 2015/16 and 2016/17 budgets while 16 were given during the 2017/18 budget (see appendix 4 for the recommendations).

The secretariat is in the process of developing a management information system (MIS) replete with a database. Each implementing member CSO will be provided with an operational manual for this system. The MIS will provide a functionality to record/attach all evidences/means of verifications.

However, at the heart of the MIS is the source of data. The primary source of data to feed the MIS is programme implementation, spearheaded by the members. At the primary level, implementation data will be shared with the respective thematic leaders at the secretariat, who will in turn synthesize into the activity reports. At the secondary level, the quarterly (outputs) implementation data will be provided at the TWG level and later fed into the MIS after analysis by the thematic leaders. At the outcome, just like the secondary level, the TWGs will provide the synthesized data/reports, which will then be analyzed and fed into the MIS by the MEL officer.

Information generated from the monitoring and evaluation system will be disseminated through case stories, success stories, most significant changes, published research/survey reports and other information sharing mechanisms. These stories will be derived from implementation processes (by members) and their publications will provide important avenues to share lessons learned that might be beneficial in facilitating wider adoption of the most promising strategies and innovations by stakeholders and in the design and implementation of similar endeavors. Other channels for sharing information will include seminars, workshops, conferences, knowledge fairs, print, social networking and electronic channels such as blogs and web sites. The Advocacy and Engagement department, with the support of the MEL Officer will lead on these activities.

5.4 Progress Reporting

Since the programme is implemented in collaboration with member organizations, it is imperative that a robust reporting mechanism is put in place to track progress and mitigate delays in taking corrective action as required. The following are the progress reports (appendix 1-3 are the reporting templates) under this programme:

5.4.1 Monthly Progress Updates

The monthly reports are internal to the Secretariat and will be prepared and submitted by Thematic Leaders. These reports will focus on the link between resource utilization and activities executed. An online report submission and collation system has been developed (available at: https://pfmis.org/live/login.php). Staff will be trained and a manual provided on how to use this online platform.

5.4.2 Quarterly Progress Reports

The quarterly reports will link activities to respective outputs. They will provide an opportunity to interrogate quality and timeliness of the delivery of expected outputs/milestones. Implementing member CSOs through their technical working groups (TWGs) will submit the quarterly reports to the Thematic Leaders who will then consolidate thematic quarterly reports and submit the same to the MEL Officer who will collate and submit to the Coordinator. These reports will also highlight any implementation challenges so that

appropriate strategy can be sought with relevant key stakeholders.

5.4.3 Bi-annual Progress Reports

These reports will be collated and synthesized (translating project activities into outputs) by the thematic leaders who will share the reports with the MEL Officer for consolidation and verification of performance data. The MEL Officer will then share the consolidated report with the Coordinator who will review and share with the Board and other interested audience.

Similar to the quarterly reports, these reports will also highlight any implementation challenges experienced so that appropriate strategy can be sought with relevant key stakeholders.

5.4.4 Annual Progress Reports

These reports will comprehensively present program outputs and outcomes emerging during the implementation period, significant achievements, observations, challenges encountered and recommended strategies to address them. The reports will present an analysis of what will have been found to be working well or not and attendant reasons. Specifically, the technical reports will capture lessons learned for purposes of improving action. The information generated from the technical reports will also be shared with key stakeholders. Figure 3 presents an illustration of focus of PFs three main progress reports.

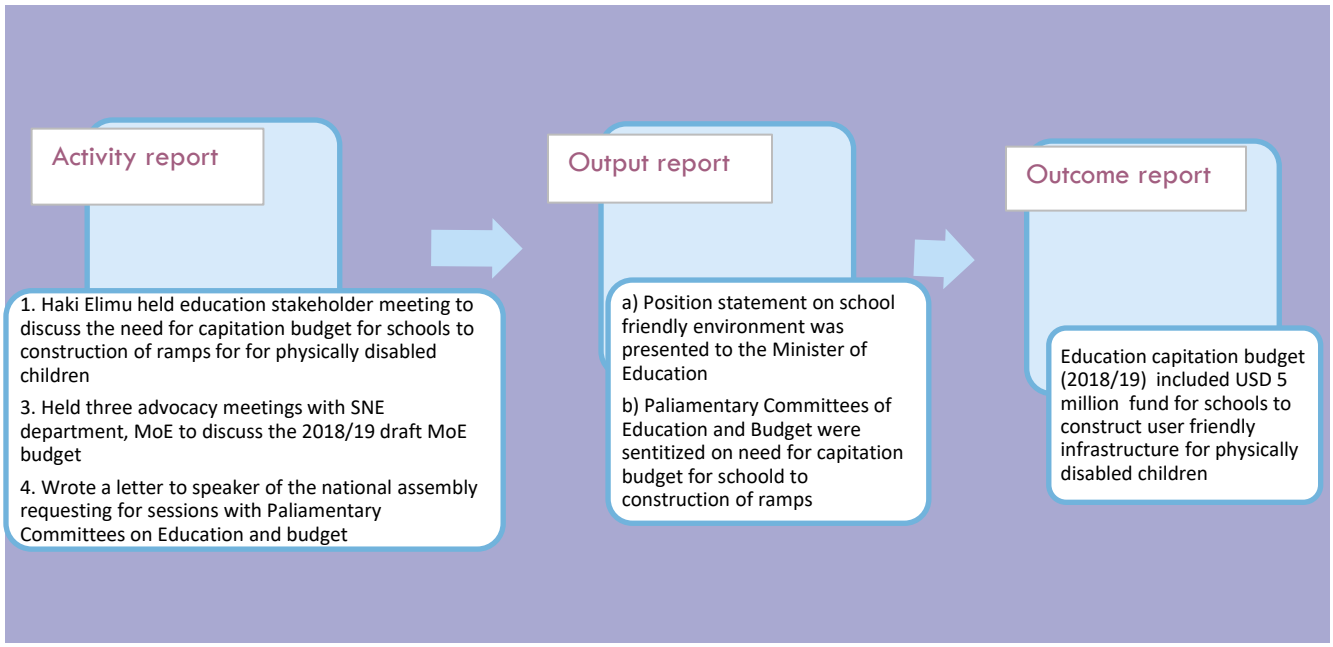

Figure 2: Example of the thematic focus of the various progress reports

Identifying and analyzing lessons learned will be an on-going process, and the need to communicate such lessons is one of the PF's key objectives. Member organizations will be encouraged to document and report lessons learned to the secretariat so that

appropriate compilation and documentation is undertaken.

To analyze lessons, PF will adopt the definition framework of Mbabu et.al, (2015)
Experience: an encounter or practical contact with something, event or observation
Challenge: a difficulty in a task or undertaking that is stimulating to the one engaged in it
Findings: information discovered as a result of an inquiry, an act of discovery
Analysis: an examination of learning points by distilling the root causes of success or of a problem
Lesson learnt: change in process, behavior or performance as a result of an experience
Recommendations: a prescription on what should be done in a specific circumstance

5.5 Data Quality Assessment Plan

All reported data will be subject to periodic data quality assessment. The MEL Officer will ensure that the data is properly documented, managed and updated on regular basis. It is essential that any data collected and reported is of the best possible quality. To ensure data quality, a Data Quality Audit (DQA) will be conducted by an independent M&E expert to verify data submitted from all thematic areas. Each member CSO and Thematic leader will be responsible for maintaining accurate and factual data for his/her objective. Data audit will focus on critical elements of data quality, namely: validity, reliability, timeliness, precision and integrity. The MEL Officer will lead the process to ensure that recommendations made by the data quality assessor are implemented.

5.6 The Learning Mechanisms

Mid-year review and planning meetings (MRPM), annual planning and review meetings (APRPM) meetings will be held bi-annually and annually respectively. The meetings will be participatory, bringing together the Secretariat, representatives of the working groups, donor representatives, representatives from the governments and board members. These meetings will serve as mechanisms for assessing implementation progress, and will serve as an essential programme management tool to help highlight areas of critical reflections and extracting lessons learned for overall improvement of programme implementation. Additionally, the MRPMs and APRPMs will inform development of the Bi-annual and Annual Progress Reports respectively. The outcome of the APRPMs will also feed into the annual planning and will allow participatory strategy realignments. Programme indicators and associated milestones will also be reviewed and updated as necessary during the MRPMs and APRPMs because the MEL process will be maintained as a dynamic system. Additionally, the meetings will be used as a forum for team building amongst key actors of the programme and as a forum to share experiences, learnings and exchange strategies. Among the key presenters in these meetings will be the Coordinator, the WG chairpersons, thematic leaders and the MEL officer. The latter will record the minutes of these meetings and share with all members, the board and donors the deliberations and the derived lessons.

At the operational level, quarterly internal reflection meetings by the Secretariat will be held to appraise on the progress and lessons at thematic levels. Similarly, zonal reflection meetings will continue to be held for the same reasons. These meetings will comprise zonal CSO members and thematic leaders. In addition to participatory programmatic reflection, the meetings will provide the Advocacy Engagement department the opportunity to identify success/case stories to pursue for documentation purposes.

6. MEL System Automation

It is noteworthy that the Policy Forum is in the process of developing an MIS for the program. Among other things, the expert will review the revised report templates to understand the functional and operational mechanism and data collection requirements to fully automate the reporting and data management functionalities. The current reporting tools (activity and output) are manual and require expertise to consolidate the different reports into main progress reports. Moreover, the manual reporting tools neither provide a logical cascading aggregation of results nor a historical repository for both the progress reports and indicator data. The online tool will address these issues by linking activity reporting to outputs and programme objectives. At the objective level, the tools will act as a repository for the progress reports as well as the indicator data. The MIS will include a functionality for an automated outcome indicator data dashboard that enables data entry and graphical visualization of the outcome progress data by region/local council, member, gender and reporting period. Moreover, the MIS will provide a data repository functionality for the outcome reports and for other documents related to indicator data (such as evidence documents trainings, workshop attendance registers, policy documents etc)

7. Implementing the Strategy

This participatory strategy will be implemented in three phases as described below:

- **Phase I - Finalization of tools:** During this phase, Policy Forum, through a consultative process, will complete the development of the MIS (complete with online reporting system) and reach a common understanding with member organization on the reporting formats, frequencies and responsibilities. Moreover, the Secretariat will take time to orient itself with the new measurement and research agenda including tools, ethical guidelines, sampling, unpacking indicators and so forth. The MEL Officer will lead the process of developing the necessary milestones necessary to deliver the outcomes. The same milestones will populate the outcome reporting template (appendix 3).
- **Phase II- capacity building:** There is need for a new paradigm to effectively implement this strategy. To meet the objectives of this strategy, the secretariat, the member organizations and the service/duty bearers (both at the local government and national level) will require retooling. Section 6.1. highlights the critical areas for capacity building necessary to implement the MEL strategy. The other programmatic requirement is the need to: a) re-think the terms of reference for the TWGs b) reach agreement on new guidelines to guide the TWGs including workplans. These moves are critically important because some of the outcomes will require a completely new set of paradigm shift and activities. Moreover, it is recommended that the PF Coordinator presents this MEL strategy to the

Board and the Directors of member organizations to ensure effective buy in.

- **Phase III- Piloting and operationalizing the strategy:** rolling out of the MIS, implementing the new reporting protocol, data collection tools and the research and measurement agenda will be done on a small scale at the beginning, for corrective and learning purposes. Once the piloting is completed, the strategy will be implemented in its totality. It is anticipated that the strategy will be fully operational in the third year. For effective operationalization and to achieve the overall PF objectives, the outcomes highlighted in table 1[3] should be well aligned in the working groups thus ensuring effective delivery. Once these are aligned, the MEL Officer should be allowed to attend the working-group meetings to present the MEL agenda whenever need arises, including sharing the progress towards achieving milestone set for the respective thematic area.

7.1 Strengthening the MEL Capacity of PF

To effectively implement this strategy, capacity building of Policy Forum (secretariat and the member organizations) and service providers (particularly local governments) is necessary. For the latter, the capacity building will focus on accountability processes and how these will be measured. This is essentially a programmatic issue. Capacity building for PF will focus on the following critical areas:

a. The requirements to implement the new MEL strategy, including the new orientation for the research and measurement agenda;
b. Participatory development of advocacy milestones and corresponding activities to deliver them;
c. Activity monitoring and tracking advocacy processes;
d. Data management and operationalization of the MIS system including reporting. Appendix 5 shows factors identified by CSO members that facilitate or hinder the reporting process at PF;
e. Data quality assessment.

In addition to these critical areas, table 2 shows the specific capacity development gaps as identified by the CSO members[4]

[3] However, it is important to note that this is not in the purview of the MEL function, but a programmatic and coordination issue.

[4] Data obtained during brainstorming sessions with CSOs subdivided in three groups

Table 2: Priorities, gaps and constraints, and capacities as far as MEL is concerned

Area	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Priorities	Capacity building; presence of coherence MEL tools; mainstreaming of MEL tools in organization strategies; resource mobilization	Capacity strengthening on documentation (evidence collection, case study, success stories); lesson sharing/ dissemination; development of ME tools; report writing skills	Effective guidelines on MEL; information flow; type of information to be shared in periodic reports to the secretariat
Gaps & Constraints	MEL tools; capacity on using MEL tools; insufficient resources (human and non-human); limited knowledge on process monitoring	Inadequate reporting skills; weak MEL framework; lack of clear guidelines on what to be reported to the PF Secretariat	Skills in process monitoring and documentation; tools for implementation
Capacities (personnel, tools, resources)	Each member possesses different tools with varied skills and resources (majority however lack MEL skills)	*Personnel* – Lack of MEL focal person for most of the CSOs; inadequate skills *Tools* – donor dependent + inadequate harmonized tools for members *Resources* – inadequate financial capacities	*Personnel* – some CSO have skilled staff with donor support *Tools* – SAM, PETS are the main tools; few have MIS systems (e.g. Key Captcha and e-system with standardized tools for all members to use in reporting) *Resources* – financial & information

7.2 Resources required to implement the strategy

There is commendable focus to improve participatory MEL functions at Policy Forum as evidenced in the allocation of the available resources. Currently, funds are available and designated to facilitate several innovative MEL activities such as:

- baseline Survey
- training of PF members and staff on data collection, analysis, reporting and participatory monitoring and assessment
- documenting and disseminating lessons learnt
- semi and annual reviews
- community radio programs evaluation
- mid and end-term evaluation of the strategic plan
- systematic documentation of advocacy experiences
- zonal reflection meetings and Annual Learning Forum

In addition to financial resources for the above-named activities, PF consist a strong team for process monitoring and a designated MEL staff. Furthermore, as mentioned elsewhere in this document, PF is in the process of finalizing the MIS for improved knowledge management.

However, financial resources to implement the research and measurement agenda are not designated. PF will conduct a rationalization exercise on top of fund raising to bridge this gap.

References

Mbabu, A., Munyua, H., Mulongo, G., David, S. and Brendin, M. (2015). *Learning the Smart Way: Lessons Learned by the Reaching Agents of Change Project*. Nairobi (Kenya). International Potato Center, 26 p.

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Naeve K., Fischer-Mackey J., Puri J., Bhatia R. and Yegbemey R. (2017). *Evaluating advocacy: an exploration of evidence and tools to understand what works and why*. 3ie Working Paper 29. New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie).

Appendices

Appendix 1. Monthly reporting template

NAME OF THEMATIC LEADER:

REPORTING PERIOD:

1. **Accomplishments Last One Month**

No.	Output/Milestone	Activities Last One Month
1		•
2		•

2. What are the major challenges you are facing (***bold things that you need action on as soon as possible)***?

3. **What are the five major things your team will undertake in the next one month?**

No.	Output/Milestone	Activities to be Undertaken in the Next One Month
1		•
2		•

Appendix 2: Quarterly Reporting Template

NAME OF TECHINCAL WORKING GROUP:

THEMATIC LEADER REPORTING:

REPORTING PERIOD:

1. **Accomplishments in last three months**

Project objectives/Thematic area	**Milestones/outputs delivered during the reporting period**	**Comments**
a)		
b)		

2. Resources

Actual expenditure during the reporting period	Planned expenditure during the reporting period	% spent	Variance	Comment on variance

3. Planned Milestones/outputs in the next three months

No.	Project Objectives	Major milestones/outputs planned for the next three months	Projected budget (per deliverable/output)
1	•	•	•
2	•	•	•

4. Management Issues

State key challenges encountered in the last three months; steps taken to overcome the respective challenges; and pending matters for resolution

Key Management Issues and Challenges	**Action(s) Taken**	**Recommendation or Pending matters for resolution**

5. Strategic Outlook

a. State of the national strategy – articulation of expected outcomes and impact at scale
b. Opportunities to fill the gaps between expected outcomes and impact at scale

Appendix 3: Bi-annual/annual reporting templates

Period: (e.g. *January-June 2018)*

Report by: (indicate your organization)

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

II. Project Progress and Results

Executive Summary

Indicator	Milestone	Responsibility	Due Date		Current status[5]	Revised Date		Modified milestone description and justification for change/or comments regarding progress
			Month	year		Month	year	
Intervention Focus/Thematic Area 1. PF agendas reflected in the new legislative, policy/regulator/frameworks including cross cutting issues								
PF agendas reflected in the new legislative, policy/regulator/frameworks	Situational analysis conducted to identify the legislative, policy, regulator and frameworks for PF's entry point	Save the children, Hakielimu,TGNP,Sikika,Children in Crossfire, HDT, ActionAid, Oxfam, UNA,KEPA, LHRC, Stipro, YPC ,OMT, TNRF, Ansaf, SNV, MIICO, Under the Same Sun, Pelum						
	Meeting with parliamentarians/MDAs							
	PF inputs presented to the parliament/MDAs							
	Draft policy documents include PF inputs/agenda							
Intervention Focus/Thematic Area 2. Monitoring policy implementation								
Network members and partners monitoring policy and budgetary processes	Capacity assessment conducted to identify knowledge gaps to implement milestones under this indicator	Save the children, Hakielimu, TGNP, Sikika, Children in Crossfire, HDT, ActionAid, Oxfam, UNA,KEPA, LHRC, Stipro, YPC ,OMT, TNRF, Ansaf, SNV, MIICO, Under the Same Sun, Pelum						
	Based on above, build members capacity to monitor budgetary processes.							
	Policy briefs produced by working group and an individual member"							
	Position statements at the working group level produced							
Gender sensitive budgets (giving focus to marginalized	Evidence of use of Gender Budgeting Statement (GBS) by Ministers and MPs	Save the children, Hakielimu, TGNP, Sikika, Children in						

[5] Indicate either 'completed', 'on track', or 'delayed'

Indicator	Milestone	Responsibility	Due Date		Current status[5]	Revised Date		Modified milestone description and justification for change/or comments regarding progress
			Month	year		Month	year	
groups particularly women and children)	Policy briefs that reflect the budget allocation for marginalized groups	Crossfire, HDT, Under the Same Sun						
	Position Statement on taxation (DRM), national budget on different sectors							
	Champions identified that will do analysis at the local level (LGAs)							
	Engagement with PORALG							
	The needs assessment at LGA conducted							
Intervention Focus/Thematic Area 3: Governance, accountable use of public resources and service delivery								
Open Budget Index score	Tracking of the presentation of the CGA report in accordance to The Audit Act 1998	HakiElimu						
	Stakeholders have been invited to input on the draft Citizen Budget							
	Tracking the required budget information is uploaded to any portal (website) for public consumption							
	Monitoring the Mid and Annual implementation report to the parliamentary committee as per the Budget Act 2003 and The Finance Act 2001							
Domestic resource mobilization index	Fiscal policies revised							

Indicator	Milestone	Responsibility	Due Date		Current status[5]	Revised Date		Modified milestone description and justification for change/or comments regarding progress
			Month	year		Month	year	
	DTAs reviewed and results shared with relevant authorities	ActionAid, OXFAM, HakiRasilimali (p), NRGI (p)						
	PF Studies done and information shared with decision makers							
	Standardized message developed and shared with all partners							
Equitable use of public resources at local and national level	Report of the analysis which highlights the trend of budget developed and shared with decisions makers	HakiElimu, SIKIKA, STIPRO, TGNP & FORUM CC (p)						
	Current year's position statements with recommendations published							
	Actions incorporate by the Govt based on the position statement documented							
# of recommendations addressed as raised through the Position statements	No. of recommendations incorporated for each Position Statement	HakiElimu, HakiRasilimali(p), SIKIKA, ANSAF etc						
	No. of Position Statements published							

Progress Narrative

Outcome 1. PF agendas reflected in the new legislative, policy/regulator/frameworks including cross cutting issues

Milestone 1.1.1.

Milestone 1.1.2.

Outcome 2. Network members monitoring policy and budgetary processes

Milestone 2.1.1.

Milestone 2.1.2.

Outcome 3. Governance, accountable use of public resources and service delivery

Milestone 3.1.1.

Milestone 3.1.2.

C. Course Correction.

D. Plans for Next Reporting Period.

E. Risks.

F. Sustainability.

G. Lessons Learned.

III. Budget Progress and Results

1. Summary

Briefly describe how total program spending to date compares against the budget and how your assumptions may have changed as the project progressed.

2. Latest Period Variance

Provide explanation for any cost category variances outside the allowable range. Explain causes, consequences for the program, and mitigation plans if relevant. Report whether or not approval for the variance has been obtained from the donor. Note: "Latest period variance" compares actuals to previous projections for the period

3. Total Grant Variance

Provide explanation for any cost category variances outside the allowable range. Explain causes, consequences for the program, and mitigation plans if relevant. Report whether or not approval for the variance has been obtained from your donor. Note: "Total grant variance" compares actuals plus current projections to the budget.

4. Interest Earned

Describe how interest earned and/or currency gains were used to support the program

Appendix 4: Summary of recommendations in the Position Statements (2015-2018)

#	Budget 2015/2016	Budget 2016/2017	Budget 2017/18
1	Being an election and constitution referendum year, more effort is needed to raise revenues; since a lot of resources will be absorbed by the electoral processes.	The government to continue strengthening its financial regulations and systems both within the Ministry of Finance (including the Bank of Tanzania) and the Tanzania Revenue Authority as well as other institutions acquiring and managing monies from levies and fees; in lieu of the vision to reduce donor dependency and external support.	The decision makers need to consider that shortfalls have impacted budget execution in previous years and adopt more realistic targets for this year. Most important of these is realigning development expenditures with actual donor commitments and taking measures to firm up any pledges previously made.
2	A budget increase needs to be backed up with a clear statement as to how the funds will be raised and an ascertainment of a lower priority expenditure to encourage prudent spending in 2015/16.	To collect more revenue, the tax administration and VAT Acts need to be fully implemented as well as the tax base widened by targeting High Wealthy Individuals (HWI) and Multinational Corporations.	The government should consider progressively mobilizing resources domestically to finance national development projects as other sources may not be sustainable in the longer term because they leave burden on the taxpayers.
3	For the integrity of the whole budget process, the Ministry for Finance needs to undertake regular consultations with the budget committee.	Given the current allocation of less than 10% to the health sector, the government needs to rethink the Abuja Declaration which requires that governments allocate at least 15% of their national budgets to health and reinstate this commitment and invest further in the sector as it has a multiplier effect in other sectors.	The government needs to give considerations to the increasing enrolment rate in both pre-primary and primary schools since the fee-free education policy has mobilized parents to send children to school.
4	The implementation plan of the fee-free education policy statement needs to be clearly stated and explained to avoid the tensions between parents/guardians and school officials.	In order to realize the set targets for the agriculture sector, the government needs to honor its commitment to allocate at least 10% of its budget to the agriculture sector as highlighted in the Maputo Declaration.	The budget should put emphasis on the strategic areas where the agricultural investment intends to take place; for instance, rural infrastructure (roads and electrification), which promote the rural industrialization, especially agro-processing.
5	Given that the value (in terms of purchasing power) of the capitation grant per school, the Government should clearly state during the 2015/2016 budget planning process how it will adjust the capitation grant value to reflect the actual cost of living.	To be able to implement effectively its policy commitment regarding the provision of free education, the government will have to allocate not less than Tsh. 852 billion aside apart from other sector needs, starting with the budget plan for 2016/17 year.	The Plan and Budget Guidelines need to state clearly and be consistent throughout regarding gender integration into the budget, rather than simply relying on special budget lines. The government's readiness to address the concerns of special needs groups and the marginalized in society, future plans and budgets need to be more explicit in this regard.
6	This year's budget should provide solutions to the resource gap which results from inadequate and often late capitation grants and the scrapping of school fees.	The Government should shift funds for higher education students' loans from development budget of education sector to the recurrent budget so as to provide the real picture of the actual amount of development expenditure within the education sector.	The capitation grant needs to take into consideration the pupils with special needs and priority be given to the issues pertaining to people with special needs particularly employment, health, education and construction of user friendly infrastructure for physically challenged people.
7	Challenges in areas such as school inspection and raising the morale of teachers to teach and learners to learn need to be addressed in order to improve management and performance in schools.	The government needs to review the amount of budget allocated for public schools inspection and ensure that inspection funds are not used to cover expenses that are not directly related to actual inspection; such as salaries.	The government should explore the potential in mobilizing resources from non-traditional financing options, especially Initial Public Offerings (IPOs), Public Partnership Programs and Build Operate Transfer Rights which are not yet widely used in Tanzania and Local loans syndications for development projects.

#	Budget 2015/2016	Budget 2016/2017	Budget 2017/18
8	As the government intends to increase capital to the Agriculture Bank to be able to provide loans to farmers, it's important that the bank plans for rural women and small-holding farmers to have access to these loans to ensure a robust gender-responsive agriculture budget.	In accordance with the Charter for Education for All (EFA 2000) through the Dakar Framework for Action, and procedures agreed upon internationally, Tanzania should allocate at least 6% of their respective GDPs for education.	In order to reduce donor dependency and external financial support as per Tanzania's Development Vision 2025, the government needs to: ● Seek greater clarity on donor commitments, ● Consider using the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework as an innovative option to financing stalled projects and reduce harmful borrowing, ● Modernize the productive sectors such as agriculture so that they can generate more revenue while creating employment, ● Strengthen its strategies to counter transfer mispricing and harmful Double Taxation Agreements (DTAs), ● Reviews its policies governing tax relief and seal all tax loopholes, ● Widen the tax base by focusing on the potential of property tax, strengthening compliance enforcement, strengthening the capacity of TRA, and formalizing and taxing the informal sector.
9	To improve the lives of women, stronger gender mainstreaming elements should feature in the social services sectors and special consideration needs to be given to the marginalized groups in the society.	Beside the government initiatives to support employment and economic empowerment at community level, the challenge on the part of the village governments on how they make use of these funds to help empowering their people needs to be addressed. The funds could for example be used as loans to small groups at the village level that for years have been finding it difficult to access loans from our financial institutions.	

Appendix 5: Facilitating and hindrance factors for report sharing

Facilitating Factors	Hindrance Factors
- Readiness of the members to share the report; - CSO possess of basic ICT infrastructure (there is a need however for the Secretariat to understand the need from CSOs for informed support/ linkages within member CSOs); - Some CSO have MIS systems/ applications ready for use; - Increased close follow-up (demand for the report from the Secretariat)	- Inadequate reporting skills by most of the member CSOs; - Some members do not see how their reports would be utilized by the by the Secretariat; - Some members are thinking of competition with the Secretariat (struggling for the same resources from same donor); - Little importance from the management (some do not see the what they should share report with PF Secretariat) - Understanding on what type of information is needed by the PF Secretariat

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