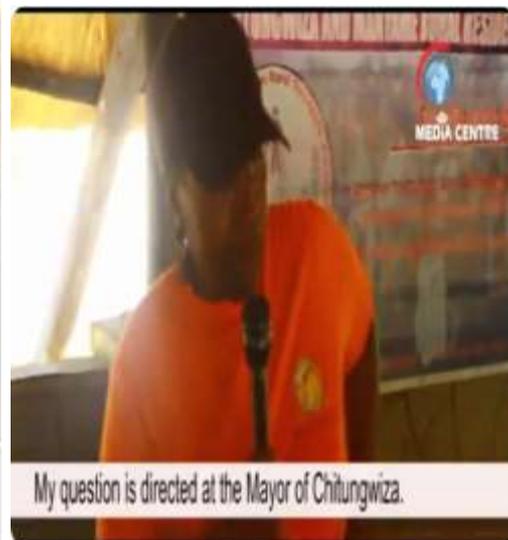


Media Centre

2nd Floor Bothwell House,
66 Jason Moyo Avenue,
Harare.

Fostering Communicative Public Spheres and Community Based Partnerships that Promote Citizen Agency, Social Accountability & Responsiveness.”

October 2019-31 December 2019



Executive Summary

Media Centre and Tell Zimbabwe are implementing the project titled, “Fostering Communicative Public Spheres and Community Based Partnerships that Promote Citizen Agency, Social Accountability & Responsiveness.” The overall aim of the project is for “Informed citizens (women and men, girls and boys) freely participate, interact. The specific objective of the project is Credible mainstream and alternative media enable and inform actions of marginalised communities in rural and urban areas; promoting transparency, accountability & inclusion in close collaboration with civil society. The project creates networks for sharing and accessing information, highlighting relevant news stories in community owned platforms that are online and offline as well as ensuring that key stories are captured in mainstream media through a network of freelance and mainstream media that the Media Centre and Tell Zimbabwe trust work with. The most important results of the project so far:

1. Citizen journalism training bootcamp in Triangle capacitated 134 citizen journalists out of an anticipated 70 showing interest by citizens to be informed
2. The content generation and issue-based meeting enabled an interface of 5 members of parliament (MPs) and councillors with the community in Chitungwiza that resulted in MPs promising to take the discussions to parliament.
3. The creation of WhatsApp groups that facilitate accountability exerting engagement. The Chitungwiza meeting gave scope for ordinary citizens to shape the legislative agenda with respect to water provision.
4. The content generation/story enterprising resulted in a girl engaging in child prostitution attracting attention and receiving help out of child prostitution.
5. Masvingo provincial hospital receiving solar equipment after Tell Zimbabwe reported on the electricity challenges the maternity ward was facing.
6. The Tell Zimbabwe story that “Masvingo pumps untreated water,” triggered a rapid response to the local authority which ended up buying and stored water treatment chemicals in bulky. The media tours and conference worked as feedback platforms to residents and a commitment that the blunder will never happen again.

The most important lessons learnt so far is to engage community leadership in time to enable them to prioritise our events. There is also serious appetite for citizen journalism training within rural communities who feel marginalised by the system. The huge lesson is that citizens yearn to have safe spaces where they can meet with their elected public servants and discuss developmental issues. Also, the effect of new technologies as smart phones has spurred a development in the freedom of information.

Results Matrix

	Outcome	Assessment	Means of verification (evidence)
Bridging outcome 1	Information and communication gap narrowed in marginalised rural and urban communities with Youth and women voices amplified and participation increased.	Outcome met	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chitungwiza WhatsApp group created 2. Chiredzi WhatsApp group created 3. 100 stories published in Zim Sentinel and on Tell Zimbabwe newspaper platforms
Bridging outcome 1.1	Increased exchange and interaction between community voices and mainstream media in targeted communities, contributing to more inclusive media content.	Outcome partly met	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tell Zimbabwe newspaper stories on targeted communities 2. Triangle citizen journalism training bootcamp
Bridging outcome 1.2	Increased dialogue between citizens in rural and urban communities and their leaders on governance and developmental issues based on reliable information.	Outcome met	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chitungwiza Issue based and content generation meeting report.

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1. Introduction

The project is premised on the pretext that if marginalised communities gain knowledge and media literacy skills through citizen journalism, they will be in a position to attain consciousness, which will enable them to speak and act against a cross-section of socio-economic inequalities. It seeks to put to use opportunities presented by social media and citizen media with respect to fostering community and citizen centred governance processes whose dearth is at the core of Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political problems. Its main objective being to ensure that information and communication gap is narrowed in marginalised rural and urban communities; with youth's and women's voices amplified. The project addresses lack of access to information in marginalised rural and urban communities of Mashonaland East, Masvingo, Manicaland and Harare Provinces. These have poor access to information, which has compounded socio-economic challenges including poor access to health, water, education and other social services. The significance of the project is that it will enhance accountability of duty bearers by facilitating constructive engagement between rights holders and the duty bearers.

The report is structured in this manner. The introduction orients the project to the reader documenting the objectives of the project. The contextual analysis then follows that depicts the media landscape, the economic situation and the contextual changes that are taking place during the project. After contextual analysis the report then looks at the results analysis, which documents the results of the project as at 31st December 2019. This section proffers the outputs achieved and also the impact of the activities done so far. Baselines and current status will also be analysed. The gender section that follows presents the performance of the project from a gender perspective showing how the project is impacting on men and women and boys, and girls. The following monitoring and evaluation section describe the project's monitoring and evaluation systems. The risk management section document how the envisaged risks during project implementation were mitigated. The next section then document partner collaborations employed to achieve results highlighting the added value and benefits to the project strategy. Resources utilised during the project will also be presented including a financial summary. The last section of the report is on sustainability and lessons learnt.

The report seeks to bring to the fore the current progress in implementing the project, draw lessons from the already implemented activities and ensure that all project objectives will be achieved by the end of the project. It is part of the monitoring and evaluation exercise that takes stock of commitments made *visa vee* implementation. Since it is a first quarter report it will also evaluate the outputs provided so far to see if they suffice to achieve the overall targets at the end of the project.

2. Context

Zimbabwe's political and economic landscape deteriorated sharply in the last quarter of 2019. Government purchased arms to crush street protests over deteriorating political and socioeconomic conditions. Government is determined to stifle citizens' rights to freedom of expression as provided for in the Bill of Rights. The human rights records for Zimbabwe during the period under review was also not encouraging. According to Heal Zimbabwe, 37 human rights violations that were recorded between the 1st of October and the 31st of December 2019. 21 threaten civil and political rights of Zimbabweans, 15 cases threaten the wellbeing and the quality of social protection systems available to the Zimbabwean populace and 5 cases directly impedes the economic prospect of Zimbabweans. The country lacks an all-inclusive process of national dialogue with opposition MDC Alliance refusing to take part in the state led Political Actors Dialogue (POLAD) and challenging the legitimacy of the incumbent, Emmerson Mnangagwa's presidency.

The project is being implemented in a media landscape that continues to be largely repressive. Government has undertaken to repeal the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). As part of its claims to reform the media, government has proposed to enact the Freedom of Information Bill. There are however fears that the Bill may not go a long way in terms of giving effect to constitutionally enshrined freedoms of expression, the right of access to information and freedom of the media. These fears arise from the government's reluctance to allow meaningful participation of civil society in the media reform process, lack of political will to align the country's laws to the constitution and government's culture of not respecting constitutionalism

Owing to poor economic performance and deepening poverty, coupled by a 95,39% increase in data costs, the last quarter of 2019 saw some decline in internet access. According to the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (POTRAZ), access to internet fell by 8% to 10% by the third quarter of 2019. Annual inflation reached 300% in October 2019, resulting, among other things, in newspaper cover prices rising beyond the reach of many readers. Publishers and media owners have been hit by escalating costs and are finding it increasingly difficult to sustain media businesses

3. Results Analysis

A number of results have been achieved in the first three months of project implementation. Some of the highlights in rolling the project included finalisation of the monitoring and evaluation log frame which was finalised and re-designing of Zim Sentinel and Tell Zimbabwe online platforms. The results specific to the outcomes is as follows:

Expected Outcome 1: Information and communication gap narrowed in marginalised rural and urban communities; with youth's and women's voices amplified and participation increased

Results

- Tell Zim newspaper reported on electricity problems affecting Masvingo Provincial Hospital ward highlighting the challenges that nurses and patients were now forced to bring their own candles. The impact of this article resulted in SolidarMed installing a solar system that lights up the whole ward and the Information Technology system. The system was commissioned on 19 December 2019.



- A story about [teenage prostitute being a hit in Kuwadzana](#) resulted in one teenage Ruvimbo (14) being assisted out of prostitution by some concerned citizen.
- Tell Zimbabwe Trust (TellZim) carried a well-researched that unearthed that City of Masvingo's engineering department slept on duty and failed to report that they had run out of Aluminium Sulphate and ended up pumping water without one of the water treatment chemicals. The response to the story was that the council set up a media tour and a commission of enquiry to investigate what led to the disastrous incident and indicated that anyone found guilty may lose his or her job. To Tell Zimbabwe, the story triggered a rapid response to the local authority which ended up buying and storing water treatment chemicals in bulk. The media tour worked as feedback platforms to residents and a commitment that the blunder will never happen again. Again, following the publication of the story, residents' organisations such as Masvingo United Residents and Ratepayers Alliance (MURRA) and Masvingo Residents Trust (MRT) issued press statements demanding detailed explanations from council. Residents on many Masvingo WhatsApp groups congratulated TellZim for a job well done.
- Women and youth participation have been enhanced through 50-50 participation in all Media centre and Tell Zimbabwe activities. In the Triangle bootcamp that took place on 12th of December, 85 where woman while 93 where youth. In the content generation meeting 38 where woman while the majority of the participants were youth.
- Platforms on WhatsApp that cascade information to marginalised communities and narrow the communication gap have been created. These serve as discussion hubs for example between rights holders and duty bearers; between marginalised communities and the media fraternity. Citizens are slowly becoming a news source to be used by mainstream media.
- Stories developed on Zim sentinel and on Tell Zimbabwe platforms also had gender aspect and touched on the marginalised rural and urban communities. 100 stories where developed on Zim Sentinel for example:
 - www.zimsentinel.com/zesa-powercuts-spur-deforestation
 - www.zimsentinel.com/harare-residents-bath-in-rivers-as-water-woes-worsens
 - www.zimsentinel.com/condomise-team-in-countrywide-against-stis-unplanned-pregnancies
 - www.zimsentinel.com/youth-mobilization-key-for-transformation
 - <http://www.zimsentinel.com/women-bear-the-brunt-of-health-crisis/>
 - <http://www.zimsentinel.com/councillor-leading-in-the-making-of-reusable-sanitary-pads/>
 - www.zimsentinel.com/zimbabwe-citizens-forum-calls-for-unity
- Stories posted on Zim sentinel between 1 October 2019 and 31 December 2019 have reached 2 811 views.
- Captivating stories posted on twitter between 1 October 2019 and 31 December 2019 reached that expressed the plights of rural communities. These includes
 - <https://twitter.com/sentinelzim/status/1186227413338001409>
 - <https://twitter.com/sentinelzim/status/1186996009756512259>
 - <https://twitter.com/i/status/1197788529486704640>
 - the twitter followers are at 6468 of which 73% are male while 27% are female.
- need to further train citizen journalism anchors for purposes of facilitating relevant, interest generating engagements on WhatsApp.

Expected Outcome 2: Increased exchange and interaction between community voices and mainstream media in targeted communities, contributing to more inclusive media content

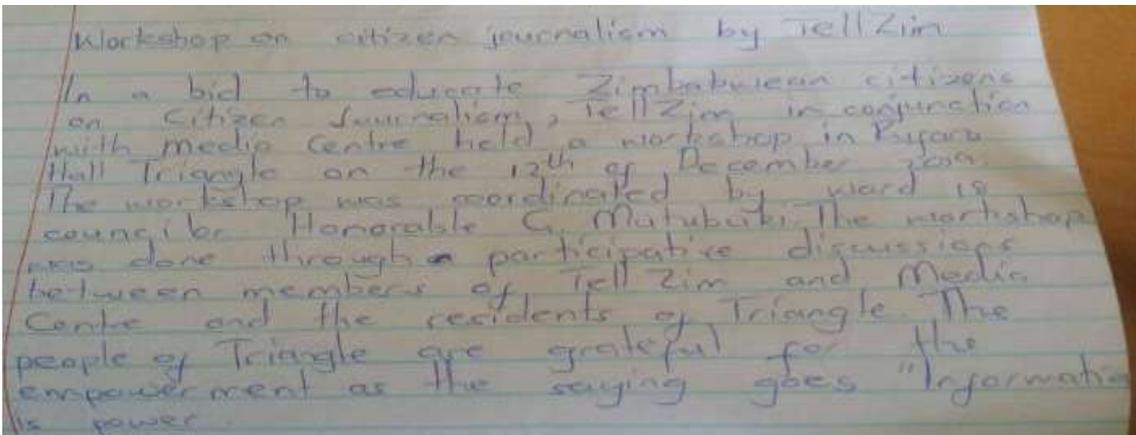
Results Analysis

Citizen journalism training bootcamp was done in Triangle. Its mandate was to capacitate citizens to reporting news as citizen journalists, ethics, safety and security in citizen journalists, dealing with fake news in citizen journalism and photography, video and reporting using mobile phones.

Participants at the Triangle bootcamp developing shot stories in groups



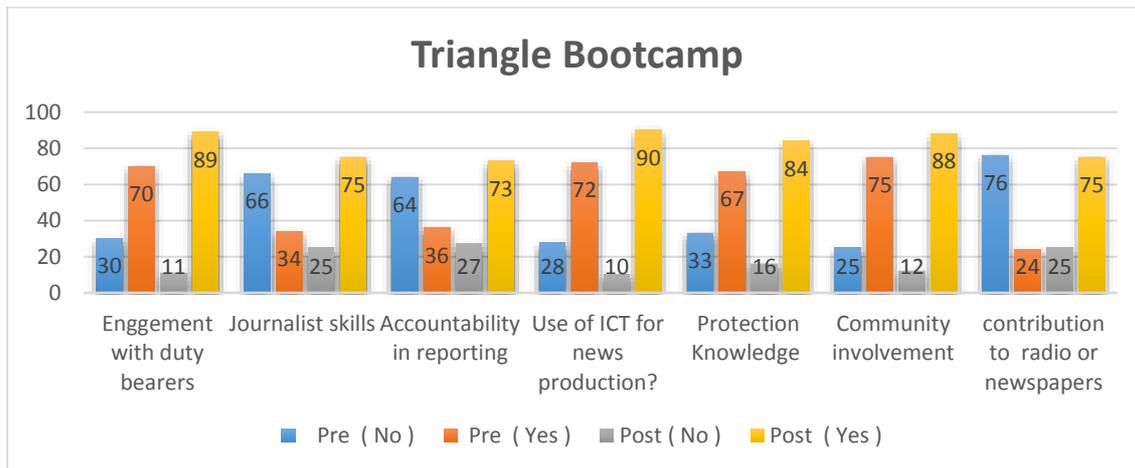
Sample stories developed after training by one of the groups



Key results coming out of this training bootcamp meeting.

- At planning stage, the project had projected to train 70 citizen journalists. However, due to the ground work that was done and its outreach, more participants showed up at the meeting resulting in 134 being trained.
- WhatsApp group was created that will ensure continuity of the engagement by the citizen journalists. This group includes the local counsellor and part of the police and will go a long way as a news source to the community.

Quality assessment



Source: Media Centre

Pre and post workshop questionnaire forms were filled by participants which demonstrated changes understanding of citizen journalism by participants. Based on the responses from the participants the uptake to engage duty bearers in issues that affect citizens as service delivery increased by 19%. Journalist skills increased by 9% for gathering and reporting news. Also, accountability and reporting in reporting also increased by 9%. Participants better understood how to utilise their mobile phones to capture news and this was reflected by 19% increase in this indicator. The knowledge by citizens journalist to protect themselves from harassment during reporting also increased by 17%. The need to report on stories that has community involvement also increased by 13%. The bootcamp greatest impact was on ensuring that more citizen journalists would engage in discussions in newspapers and in radios. There was a 51% uptake in this regard.

Expected Outcome 3: Increased dialogue between citizens in rural and urban communities and their leaders on governance and developmental issues based on reliable information.

Results

- Seven media platforms have been created online and offline that cover and replicate community issues and dialogues. These include the Chitungwiza WhatsApp group, the Triangle WhatsApp group, the MC citizen journalists WhatsApp group. Also, the Zim Sentinel twitter handler, the Media Centre Facebook page; the Tell Zimbabwe Facebook page; the Tell Zimbabwe newspaper. These platforms are fast becoming reputable news sources that communities are utilising.
- A content generation and issue-based meeting in Chitungwiza resulted in open, objective, critical and ongoing engagements between marginalised rights holders and duty bearers. The meeting was a dialogue between Chitungwiza residents and 15 councillors and, 5 members of parliament who represent them in Parliament and Council.

Chitungwiza Community engagement meeting 17 December 2019



Key results coming out of this engagement meeting included:

- As a result of the pressure from the counsellors after the meeting, Chitungwiza municipality made a press statement on 02 January 2020 which stated their intention to deal decisively with illegal structures within its jurisdiction.
- Chitungwiza municipality promising to deal with their administrative bottlenecks that cause slow distribution of stands and on the illegal water connections and address the issue of houses constructed in wetlands; those that are on top of sewer lines and those below electricity lines
- The 5 Parliamentarians present promised to lobby in Parliament for construction of Muda Dam to improve water supplies in Chitungwiza.
- The meeting was also live steamed on Facebook and twitter resulting in online participation.
- The meeting gave scope to participating residents to shape legislative and council agendas with respect to water provision, fighting corruption and general service delivery. For example, participants mandated MPs to question the Minister of Finance over the omission of the issue of construction of a dam to provide water for Chitungwiza residents in the 2019-2020 national budget.

Indicators and status

Indicator	Baseline	Status
Number of women, youths and other people in marginalised rural & urban communities using project-based platforms to freely express themselves & access information on pertinent socio-economic & political issues.	42% of Women, youths & other social groups are cut off the mainstream communication loop (Media & Information)	95 community members, 38 being woman used project-based platforms to express themselves. Platforms utilised include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 WhatsApp groups • Zimbabwe sentinel Facebook page • Media centre Facebook page
Number of people capacitated with media literacy and civic engagement skills through citizen journalism	730 citizen journalists targeted for capacity building with 420 being youths (252 males & 168 females)	134 Citizen journalists trained as citizen journalist 86 being female
Number of monthly stories on key issues affecting marginalised & disadvantaged social groups in project communities	8	100 stories published on Zim Sentinel (www.zimsentinel.com).
Number of project-based information sharing platforms linking community based citizen journalists with mainstream media.	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 WhatsApp groups • Zimsentinel Facebook page • Media Centre Facebook page
Number of community development actions emanating from content generation & issue-based engagement meetings and policy roundtables.	0	•5 MPs Lobbying parliament to discuss the Construction of the dam in Parliament with a view to budgetary allocations being made and concrete construction plans commencing
Number of community-based media and communication platforms that facilitate youth participation and engagement	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •3 WhatsApp groups •Zimsentinel Facebook page •Media Centre Facebook page with 3824 likes as at 28 January 2020 •Zimsentinel Twitter handle (@sentinelzim) at 6468 followers.
Number of young freelance journalists citizen & student journalists utilising acquired skills to report on community issues	0	4 student journalists mentored at Media Centre writing stories on Zim Sentinel.

4. Gender

Women, in both rural and urban communities, are the majority yet are the least active in terms of participating in national development processes. The current socio-economic hardships affect men and women differently. Women, due to their gender roles in society bear the burden of unpaid care work. This is further exacerbated by negative impacts of climate change and food insecurity which affects women more than their male counterparts. Women are greatly affected by national policies immensely yet have little access to information let alone policy formulation. Media Centres activities mainly targeted women and other vulnerable groups to reduce the access to information gap. All activities had 50-50 participation with the majority of participants being below the age of 35. This will enable women to contribute meaningfully

to the national socio-economic development frameworks to ensure a better today and dignified tomorrow. Furthermore, it will enhance their participation in the development agenda.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are undertaken as a continuous process with the log frame or results framework as the main critical reference point. Progress, challenges and risks are monitored on a daily, weekly and monthly basis through media content analysis, social media analytics, policy analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, staff meetings, Board meetings, monitoring and evaluation forms, interviews, Focus group Discussions and other requisite evaluation tools. Separate log frames are used for recording all online stories and videos developed. The Monitoring and Evaluation Officer is the focal point in the monitoring and evaluation of projects. Monitoring and evaluation support from Fojo/IMS have helped Media Centre to refine the results framework. Media centre got technical advice to refine intervals of reporting for example daily, weekly and monthly. Fojo's Media & Information Habits, Consumption and Perception in Zimbabwe survey assisted with regards to indicators and baseline values. 6. Risk management. Before stories are written, pitches are done in which the story is assessed in terms of its rationale, policy implication and what aspect of the story have not been written about. This ensures impactful story development and avoids generalisation of stories.

6. Risk Assessment and Challenges

- Shrinking civic space as the government's security forces are tightening the freedom of speech and assembly;
- Inconsistencies in the fiscal policy environment making budgeting difficult;
- Presence of state security agents at meetings e.g. Chitungwiza and Triangle meetings thus compromising the security of both participants and secretariat staff;
- Introduction of ZWL is causing a lot of confusion for programming as we are not sure whether to write requisitions in ZWL or USD;
- Lack of an organizational vehicle posing logistical challenges;

7. Partner strategies and coordination

In the period under review, Media Centre worked with Tell Zimbabwe to undertake the Triangle citizen journalism training bootcamp and with Chitungwiza and Manyame Residents Association (CAMERA) to organise the Chitungwiza Content generation and issue-based engagement meeting. The implementing partners have community structures and connections that are necessary to further project objectives with respect to community participation, relevance of activity content to project communities and coalition building for effective social service delivery.

8. Resources used, including financial summary

See attachment

Sustainability

Project will attain sustainability on the basis that WhatsApp groups created will be community owned, with project communities contributing to its long-term sustainability. Being community owned, the project's long-term interests will be safeguarded by project communities who stand to benefit in day to day survival in relation to such issues as how-to better market agricultural products, the cost of basic commodities, water provision and such other pressing survival issues. Buy-in and cooperation with key social actors such as traditional leaders also contributes to social and contextual sustainability.

Innovation

In this project, a number of things were done differently. In terms of planning events a number of innovative methods were utilised as ensuring that equipment for live streaming was up and running. Also, the ability to ensure that all participants wanting to be part of the citizen journalism training were accommodated using existing financial resources was also innovative. Livestreaming events also was innovative as it ensured a wider audience. Posting on online platforms meeting proceedings also broke the distance barrier. Also, the use of duty bearers as main guests at trainings and issue based, content generation meeting resulted in more appetite by citizens to participate.

Lessons learnt and recommendations

That Media Centre has a lot of work to do with regards to fostering communicative public spheres among the generality of Zimbabweans. The citizen journalism training bootcamp conducted in Triangle clearly showed that there is a dearth in basic constitutional and rights awareness among citizens. It is therefore an opportunity for Media Centre to further scale up activities around citizen journalism training bootcamps especially in the context of access to information as a right which at the present moment are being brazenly violated through the implementation of draconian legal frameworks by the government as MOPA, that do not have safety nets to cushion the rural communities.

During the period under review we have learnt that we tend to generalise stories which are not in line with focus areas of the project. Therefore, in the next reporting period we will be correcting this anomaly through story pitching. We will constantly ensure that each story has a problem it addresses, policy recommendations given and that follow up mechanisms are in place to track the impact.

Media Centre has a monumental task ahead of it to see that Zimbabweans are first aware of constitutional provisions that have to do with access to information, accountability of duty bearers and also to ensure that the information gap between urban and rural communities is narrowed. Media Centre has also learnt that through its issue-based content generation meetings that has been playing a leading role in bridging the gap that exists between citizens' and duty bearers as Parliamentarians and councillors. More work however needs to be done probably through using radio stations like Radio Zimbabwe that have a national outreach and educate citizens on access to information in general and making duty bearers account in particular in vernacular languages. This will go a long way in fostering active citizen activism around demanding for transparent use of public resources and this will surely keep duty bearers on their toes following up issues that citizens raise.

In Chitungwiza, the huge lesson is citizens yearn to have safe spaces where they can meet with their elected public servants and discuss developmental issues. In Zimbabwean political culture it is very rare that the voted and voter after an electoral process can actually sit down and have serious conversations as well as introspect on the job that the elected have been doing.

This has been integrated into the project through creation of WhatsApp group that interface 5 Member of parliaments, 36 councillors and the citizens.