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Collecting reliable data from households on their welfare and living conditions is essential for assessing country trends in poverty and inequality. When these data are combined with information on household characteristics and access to social services and programs, it becomes possible to conduct an analysis of (i) the causes of poverty, (ii) the factors that explain differences in wellbeing among population groups, and (iii) the effectiveness of support programs. In Zimbabwe, such data are collected every five years through the Poverty Income and Consumption Expenditure Survey (PICES).

While smallholder agricultural productivity and market access are important factors that determine welfare of rural households there were – until now – no surveys in Zimbabwe that collect detailed data on this and combine it with information on household asset ownership, household wellbeing and access to support services, and do this by gender. This prevents a good understanding of constraints for raising welfare in rural areas, of an assessment of the effectiveness of policies, and of how this differs between men and women, and between various other subgroups of the population.

In addition, until recently, there was no legal provision for the release of micro-data to researchers for in-depth analysis of such data to inform policy making. Consequently, in Zimbabwe the understanding of the causes of poverty and the binding constraints for addressing these has been limited. This makes it difficult to identify possible pathways out of poverty and guide the prioritization of policy and investment.

To fill this gap the Zimbabwe Reconstruction Funded [Poverty Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Assistance \(TA\)](#) activity was put in place. The TA aims to enhance the understanding of poverty and its causes by increasing the availability and analysis of high quality data on poverty, other welfare indicators and on household income-earning activities. This is to be done through implementation of a high-quality household survey that meets international standards. The TA also seeks to strengthen national capacity for producing high quality poverty analysis and a poverty focused and evidence-based development plan with an accompanying result monitoring system.

Components of the TA

Poverty Income and Consumption Expenditure Survey (PICES)

This component supported the implementation of a new PICES survey from January to December 2017 that meets international poverty measurement standards. It also aimed at building capacity of the Zimbabwe National Statistical Agency (ZIMSTAT) office to collect, analyse and disseminate household survey data. Support is provided within the context of the PICES technical committee which includes development partners co-funding the survey, ZIMSTAT staff and representatives of government ministries.



The PICES surveys collect data from all members of approximately 32,000 Zimbabwean households, with a focus on consumption which is taken as the welfare indicator. This consists of food consumption

and expenditure, including consumption of own-produced goods, as

well as expenditure on nonfood items and ‘imputed’ user values of durable assets and housing. Data are also collected from all household members on education levels, income sources and labor market participation; use and costs of social services such as health, education, drinking water, electricity, social protection, and farm input subsidies; and migration. The survey will enable an update of a large portion of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) indicators. The report with findings is expected to be published before the end of 2018.

Development of a legal framework for the release of micro data

Support was also provided to an amendment of the National Statistics and Census Act and an accompanying a Statutory Instrument (S.I.) that would facilitate and promote the sharing of anonymized micro-data with researchers for in-depth analysis. Important concerns around protecting the privacy of data providers and safeguarding the confidentiality of the data were addressed through trainings on micro-data anonymization techniques and further hands-on support. The law was amended in January 2017 and the new S.I. that spells out the procedures for accessing micro-data was gazetted in August 2018. The release of a first set of micro-data is foreseen before the end of the year. The release of the anonymized micro-data of the PICES 2017 is expected to follow soon after.

Agricultural Productivity Module (APM) of the PICES survey

The PICES 2017 was complimented by a survey module on agricultural productivity applied to subsample of 2450 farm households. The APM module was funded by a grant from the Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building. Detailed gender disaggregated data were collected on land size, soil and tenure type, area planted, labor and input use as well as yields, subsidies, knowledge, marketing and household decision-making by gender, among others. Data were collected during two visits: one after planting and one after completion of the harvest.

Technical support was provided to the supervision of data collection and the conducting of consistency checks. Two rounds of a non-standard unit measurement survey were also supported. These will greatly enhance the reliability of the measurement of weights and quantities of inputs and yields when local units are used in household responses during surveys.

The APM module will enable an assessment of the factors that may explain differences in agricultural productivity among smallholders and between different farm types, and their impact on household wellbeing.

The importance of support programs and policies for enhancing productivity and poverty reduction can also be assessed. The survey was completed in November 2017 and a final report with findings is expected in December 2018. A draft version was already shared with the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Rural Resettlement in July 2018 feeding into debates on rural development policies. Release of the anonymized micro-data is expected in December 2018 and will enable high quality analysis by Zimbabwean and other researchers and provide high quality field evidence for the design of better informed policies and the prioritization of public spending to strengthen agricultural sector performance and improve wellbeing of rural households.

Support to the development of a poverty reduction strategy paper

The TA also supported the development of an interim poverty reduction strategy paper (I-PRSP) with an adequate monitoring and evaluation framework linked to clear development goals and policies, and broad links to public spending. The document reflects modern planning principles and was grounded in sound analysis and broad-based consultations with 1700 civilians and national and local officials and civilians. It was completed in September 2016 and the results frame was finalized in June 2017. Lessons learned in the preparation of the I-PRSP will be helpful for the preparation of the 2021–2026 national development plan.

The Zimbabwe Reconstruction Fund (ZIMREF) is a World Bank administered multi-donor trust fund that has received contributions of US\$40 million from Denmark, European Union, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and the World Bank’s State and Peace Building Fund. ZIMREF aims to support the strengthening of Zimbabwe’s systems for reconstruction and development. Visit our website to find out more. For feedback and comments please email ckhuphe@worldbank.org



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