



Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF)

The space of community knowledge in evidence informed policy-making: Experiences from ESRF

Location: **Tanzania**

Year formed: **1994**

Who we are

The ESRF is a policy research think tank based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The Foundation undertakes and facilitates research aiming at enhancing the understanding of policy options and development management in Tanzania. The ESRF was registered as an independent research institution in 1994.

What we do

The ESRF undertakes policy analysis in three major areas namely (1) policy and economic management research, (2) capacity development in different sectors and (3) knowledge management. The majority of ESRF's work revolves around supporting policy development processes in the central government, its line ministries and local government.

Key areas of focus

- Policy and economic management research
- Capacity development in different sectors
- Knowledge management



CONTEXT

Generation, dissemination and management of knowledge form the heart of ESRF's work. Traditionally, the Foundation generates expert knowledge through its strategic and commissioned research and presents findings for update by its stakeholder's especially the government. The ESRF has realized the potential of citizen knowledge as an important complementary to expert knowledge in evidence informed policy processes in Tanzania. The ESRF has noted that one of the notable stimulus of citizen knowledge include increased education among citizens and the need for their participation in policy processes. Similarly, increased technology through such platforms as social media has brought about a revolution in the way that people can directly engage with policy makers. The ESRF therefore resolved to leverage on these circumstances in advancing citizen knowledge as part of its portfolio of work.

WHAT WE DID

TAKNET is an online platform for exchange and sharing of information on various aspects of social and economic development. The ESRF moderates various topics and synthesizes and shares policy briefs with policy makers. Over the years, TAKNET has proved to be a useful platform for consolidating and synthesizing citizens knowledge for evidence informed policy making.

Between 2013 and 2017, the ESRF with the support of UNDP has supported establishment and running of community radios in six (6) districts of Tanzania. The community radios run programs which brings together citizens and experts for live discussion. Examples of radio programs include Shamba Darasa "demonstration farm" and Wanawake na maendeleo "Women and Development" both broadcasted by Bunda FM.

The ESRF has also been organizing public meetings as part of efforts of engaging with members of the general public. For example on 22nd July 2017, the ESRF organized a one day public meeting aimed at sharing with the general public knowledge on commercial fish farming particularly recirculation aquaculture. This meeting was attended by over 400 participants. The meetings not only disseminate knowledge to citizens but also facilitate reaction and feedback to policy actors.

CHALLENGE

Over the years, the Foundation has come to realize that there is more collection of data from citizens for analysis and sending research findings to policy makers. There is a lack of feedback mechanism from policy makers and researchers to citizens.

OUTCOME

It is difficult to differently associate research activities and policy outcomes leave out particular kinds of research such as citizen knowledge. Nevertheless, the sheer number of people reached by ESRF's engagements indicates some potential outcomes. For instance, the outreach of 6 community radios in 6 districts is over 1 million people. TAKNET discussion forums tend to reach over 1,000 people whereas public meetings are usually attended by 400 to 700 people.



A cross section of participants attending agribusiness workshop at ESRF in Dar es Salaam



Consultations with the disabled people on post MDG Development agenda in Tanzania