

# International Landscape Scans on the Current State of the **'Feedback Field'**



Country: **TANZANIA**

Submitted by:

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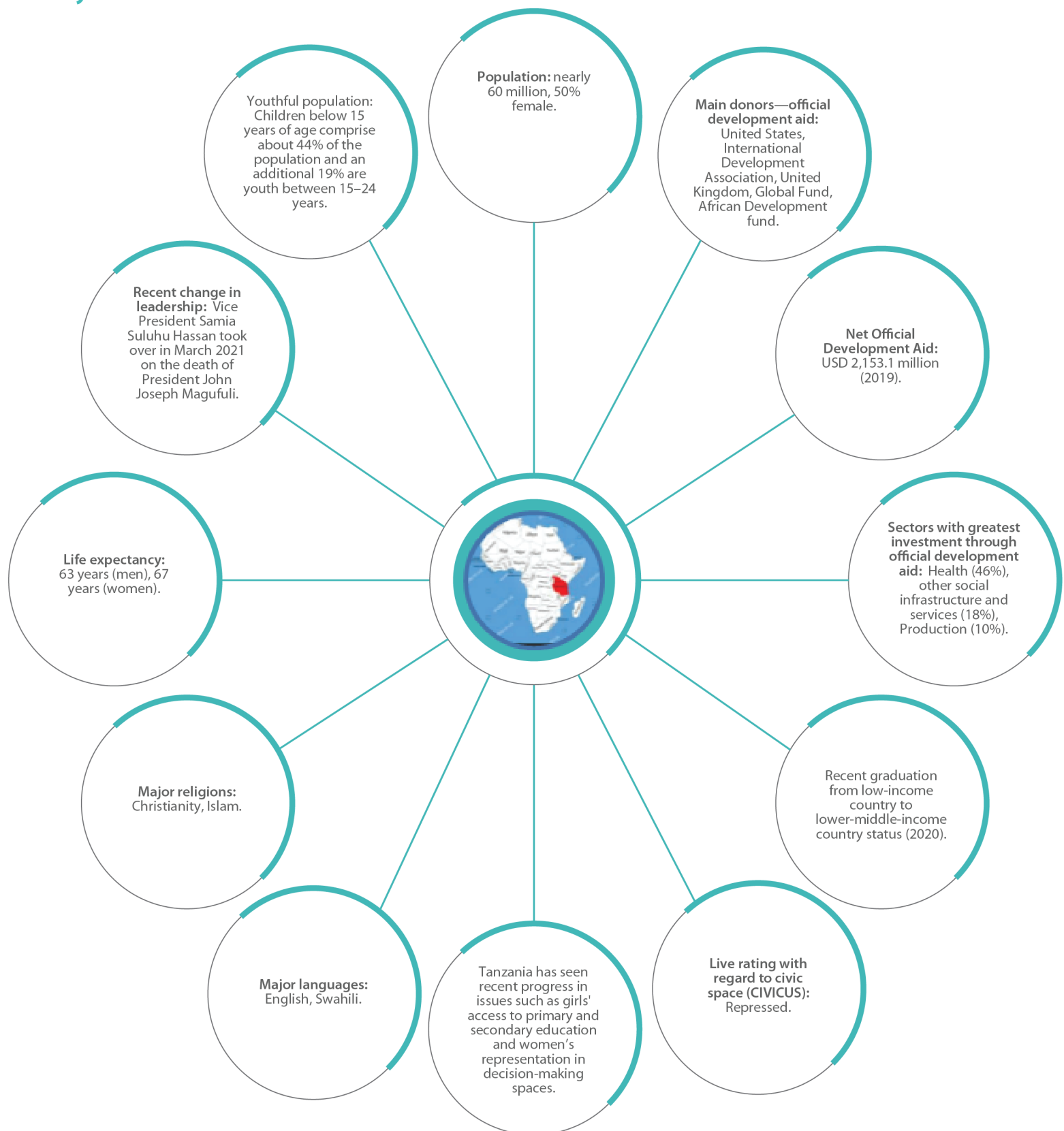
## Acronyms and abbreviations

NGO: Non-governmental organization

## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation to all individuals and organizations who provided input on their experiences with the feedback field in Tanzania. The information provided was essential to understand the listening culture in the country, as well as to identify opportunities for improvement.

## Key facts about Tanzania



## Executive summary

Fund for Shared Insight is a funder collaborative that seeks to improve philanthropy by promoting high-quality listening and feedback in service of equity and justice. Currently, Shared Insight is poised to work more deeply in a handful of places around the world where people are already investing in an infrastructure for feedback, and support could help them accelerate and improve the feedback ecosystem for non-profits/NGOs and funders. Tanzania is one potential country of interest.

In 2021, [IWORDS Consulting](#) was commissioned to conduct a landscape scan of the current state of the “feedback field” in Tanzania. The landscape scan involved a desk review of over 20 publications, key informant interviews with 20 representatives from NGOs, International NGOs, public officers, and funders. Their input was critical to answer 10 critical questions and provide recommendations into whether and how additional funding from Shared Insight might advance that work and laying out different high-quality options for where grant investments would support and accelerate feedback and listening practices.

### Key Findings

We would like to express our appreciation to all individuals and organizations who provided input on their experiences with the feedback field in Tanzania. The information provided was essential to understand the listening culture in the country, as well as to identify opportunities for improvement.

- In Tanzania, the word ‘feedback’ has either a negative connotation for the general population or it is understood simply as sharing an opinion.
- For some, the term feedback is a subtle way to introduce the concept of freedom of speech in their work.
- For some NGO’s ‘feedback mechanisms’ and ‘social accountability mechanisms’ are synonyms.
- Not all NGOs have feedback mechanisms in place—however, those that do, use a combination of alternatives, adapted to the specificities of the context and the needs of different populations.
- Organizations use installed capacities to collect feedback—for instance, social media, apps, volunteers who are community-based.
- International NGOs based in Tanzania tend to have more structured mechanisms for feedback—which may be explained by the fact that many of these groups have access to larger grants and also to donors with more strict requirements on evaluation.
- There is room for improvement around confidentiality and storage of feedback collected.
- Closing the loop in the feedback process is seen as important, but the mechanisms are not necessarily in place.
- NGOs use feedback for multiple purposes: improving programming, ensuring the implementation of their policies (e.g. safeguarding, antifraud), positioning the work of the organization.

- Language does not seem to be a significant barrier for high quality feedback in Tanzania—except for individuals with disabilities that require language adaptations (e.g. visual impairment).
- Gratitude towards the projects or the NGOs in areas that are traditionally underserved or overlooked, or the fear of consequences can become barriers for individuals to provide feedback.
- The power implicit in donor-grantee relationships affects the motivation to collect and share feedback, particularly when feedback demonstrates “failure”.
- There are positive practices regarding provision of feedback by youth—this is of particular value, taking into account that Tanzania has a very youthful population.
- Gender inequality and poor inclusion mechanisms present as barriers for the collection of high-quality feedback in the country.
- The government uses similar mechanisms for the collection of feedback (compared to NGOs); however, how that feedback is acted on remains a challenge.
- A less repressive environment is needed to support improved feedback and listening mechanisms between the government and civil society organizations.

In this context, NGO’s identify four critical areas of focus to accelerate and improve high-quality feedback work: capacity-building; culture transformation at all levels (leadership of the organizations, society, public sector, funders); provision of information about the goal of collecting feedback and its use to all relevant stakeholders; and access to more resources.

## Conclusion and recommendation

The landscape scan allows the consultancy team to conclude that there is already an infrastructure for feedback in Tanzania, which could be enhanced through investments from the Fund for Shared Insight. There is interest, previous pilot initiatives, and other opportunities such as interest from a large pool of donors in the country, and recent changes in leadership in the country. The consultancy team recommends sharing resources with Tanzanian NGO’s; creating or supporting platforms for dialogue on feedback and listening mechanisms; building on lessons learned from NGO’s that have already piloted and documented similar work; engaging with a wide range of actors (including development and humanitarian stakeholders); and ensuring that investments do not leave behind individuals with disabilities, and enhance the critical phase of ‘closing the loop’.

## 1. Introduction

Fund for Shared Insight is a funder collaborative that seeks to improve philanthropy by promoting high-quality listening and feedback in service of equity and justice. While Shared Insight has worked primarily in the United States, it has a growing set of international grants and projects. For instance, since 2015, Shared Insight has engaged in conversations with funders and NGOs in different parts of the world and pursued a handful of projects. The common thread among them is that each seeks to build infrastructure for high-quality feedback and engage a combination of non-profits and funders in increasing and improving their listening practices.

With this handful of strong projects to date and a great committee of funders who do work all over the world, Shared Insight is poised to work more deeply in a handful of places around the world where people are already investing in an infrastructure for feedback, and the support could help them accelerate and improve the feedback ecosystem for non-profits/NGOs and funders. Tanzania is one potential country of interest.

In 2021, [IWORDS Consulting](#) (IWORDS Global unit)—a leading provider of solutions for social mission-driven organizations, networks, and collectives—was commissioned to support the process of selecting potential geographies of investment by conducting a landscape scan of the current state of the “feedback field” in Tanzania, offering recommendations and insights into whether and how additional funding from Shared Insight might advance that work and laying out different high-quality options for where grant investments would support and accelerate feedback and listening practices.

This report offers an analysis of critical input gathered from the scanning process. The document is structured as follows:

- Methodology: a summary of the guiding principles and concepts, and an overview of the data collection methods used as well as of the limitations encountered during the process.
- Findings: building on the input from key informants, survey respondents, and the literature available, the consultancy team answers 10 questions related to how NGOs, governments, and funders address feedback in the country.
- Conclusion and recommendations: this section highlights the opportunities and ideas accelerate and improve the feedback ecosystem in the country.
- Annexes.

## 2. Methodology

The landscape scan methodology was guided by the principles of inclusion and participation, rigor and flexibility, protection of all parties involved, and intersectionality.

The concepts of feedback and high-quality feedback loops used by the [Fund for Shared Insight](#) guided the landscape process, including the development of the data collection tools.

*Feedback is a simple yet powerful tool for including the perspectives and valuing the lived experience of the people most impacted by the work of non-profits and philanthropy. Done right, it can lead to meaningful change in the way organizations make decisions, deliver services, and relate to clients. It can also enhance an organization's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.*

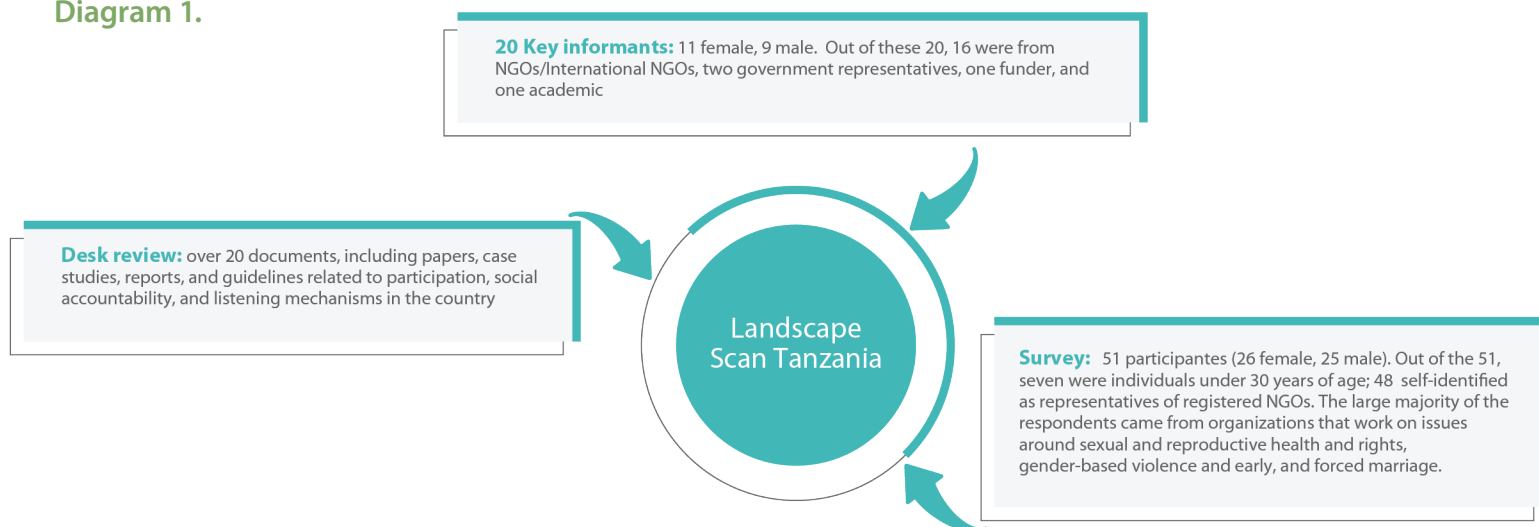
*A high-quality feedback loop is one in which you: design your data collection, collect data, analyze the results, act on feedback where possible, and 'close the loop' with those who provided feedback.*

## 2.1. Data collection methods

The landscape scan involved implementing a mixed-methods approach to fully capture the characteristics, challenges, and opportunities for the feedback field in Tanzania. The process combined desk review, key informant interviews, and an online survey. The selection of potential informants was guided by a thorough mapping exercise. The starting point was existing connections of the consultancy team in the country (focusing on members of four platforms: Coalition for Addressing Maternal Mortality and Morbidity due to unsafe Abortion and its Complications (CAMMAC), Tanzania Ending Child Marriage Network (TECMN), SHE Decides Movement Tanzania, and Tanzania Coalition for Demographic Dividend Awareness and Action (TCDA). Then, the consultants included organizations profiled in authoritative websites, such as ReliefWeb, United Nations (ECOSOC status), Civicus, among others. Finally, IWORDS Global used a snowball approach during key informant interviews by asking informants about their recommendations for stakeholders that could have valuable insights.

The types and number of participants in the data collection process are detailed below:

**Diagram 1.**



To learn more about the documents reviewed, see Annex 1. Bibliography



## 2.2. Limitations

Limitations in the process of implementation included:

- *Mobility*, transportation, and assembly difficulties for field work due to the COVID-19 health crisis.

**Mitigation:** considering the evolution of COVID-19, the IWORDS Global team prioritized the implementation of KIIs via remote means and the use of an online survey.

- *Interest among stakeholders.*

**Mitigation:** we selected and invited 20 stakeholders in a first round. When stakeholders did not express interest, we added invitations for other stakeholders identified in the mapping exercise or through the snowball technique. The survey was anonymous, close-ended, short, available in Swahili, and widely disseminated through our existing channels of communication, in order to generate more interest.

- *Limited sample to reach conclusions.* This is a limitation of a landscape scan of this nature, not a limitation encountered under the implementation process as such. Focusing on 20 interviewees, desk review, and an online survey provides relevant, robust, and accurate information about the context. However, the consultants acknowledge that the findings may not reflect the reality of how some NGO's, governments, and funders manage feedback.

## 2.3. Data storage and confidentiality

For this assignment, IWORDS Global fully complies with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), implementing all relevant measures to reduce concerns related to data confidentiality and storage and to protect the interests of all parties involved.

The following measures have been implemented to reduce concerns related to data confidentiality:

- a) Prior to starting any interview, participants were informed about the objectives and expectations of their participation. The team explained that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to stop participating at any time, without needing to justify their decision to the consultants.
- b) Prior to starting any interviews, the data collectors explained their intent to record the session and ask for verbal consent from participants. All participants consented.
- c) All information has been safely stored in a central drive, to which only selected people have access. Personal identifiable data (e.g., voice records) will be kept no longer than necessary and will be deleted within three months following the approval of the report.

## 2.4. Data analysis and triangulation

During the data analysis process for report drafting, the consulting team analysed the consistency of the data generated

by the same data collection method and by different data collection methods. When data is not consistent or there is contradictory information, the consulting team highlights this as a finding in the report.

### 3. Findings

This section answers ten questions related to the feedback field in Tanzania. For each question, the consultancy team highlights one to five critical findings, building on the input from key informants, survey respondents, and the literature available. Selected testimonials and mini case studies obtained from the literature are used to exemplify the findings.

#### 3.1. In your local country context, do people use the term 'feedback' or some other term? And when they use that word, what do they mean by it?

##### Finding 3.1.1. Feedback has either a negative connotation for the general population or it is understood simply as sharing an opinion

While the word feedback (both in English and its closest Swahili equivalent) is used in the Tanzanian setting, informants indicate that the general population often associates it with the opportunity to share the negative experiences or less positive traits of someone or something. Feedback, therefore, is a term closely connected to words such as 'fault-finding,' 'criticism,' 'recriminations,' or 'denunciation' instead of words that indicate a process of shared examination, appraisal, or assessment.

The negative understanding of the word has three potential consequences according to the input received during the landscape scan:

- First, it prevents some individuals and organizations from collecting feedback or it impacts the motivation of NGOs' staff to engage in setting up feedback processes. However, as it will be demonstrated in question 3.2., organizations are still trying to adopt mechanisms to listen to the populations they serve.
- Second, it translates into target populations only giving input when their needs are not being met or when there are problems. Their voices are not heard to provide ideas on how to strengthen what is working or determine what could work, only to report what is failing. While providing input when things are not functioning as expected is extremely important, the belief that feedback is only valid when there are problems disempowers communities, leading to their absence from the table for the development, shaping, or reshaping of solutions that affect them.
- Third, there are missed opportunities to identify success through collective exercises, and to build cohesion, trust, and long-term relationships through the celebration of things that work or people who make a difference. For instance, as feedback is rarely seen as an opportunity to share the positive, staff, volunteers, or locally-based implementers do not get words of recognition about their work—which for many includes working long hours, under difficult conditions, and with limited access to resources. The input provided often focuses exclusively on the criticism they receive the moment their performance may not be up to the expected standard.



*People do not take the word feedback in a positive way; some think that you want to learn about weaknesses. So, people tend to use such words as 'what can we do differently,' 'what were the challenges' to avoid saying 'give me feedback.'*

Key informant

*Here in Tanzania, we have a problem, because we interpret it differently. Most people think it's a way to get back at someone in a bad way, so people don't feel like they need to report because feedback is some sort of reporting.*

Key informant

In those instances when the word does not have a completely negative connotation, feedback is seen just as an opportunity to share an opinion. While sharing perceptions or thoughts is part of the concept, informants acknowledge that limiting feedback to expressing an opinion means individuals and communities do not necessarily feel entitled to demand a high-quality feedback loop, where they also access information on how their opinions are influencing change in project or program activities or in practices.

*Most of the time individuals would use the word 'opinion' rather than feedback when engaging with the communities.'*

Key informant

The literature review process also revealed that some organizations have faced challenges with the most literal word for feedback in Swahili, as it has a disempowering meaning.

*During context analysis training in Tanzania, we realized there was a mistake in how feedback was translated into Swahili as it was seen more as information extraction from beneficiaries. We conducted back translation and used a more appropriate word which translated as 'opinions' and which is still used to date.'*

World Vision UK, Programme Manager, Initiative Beneficiary Feedback Mechanisms Pilots

### **Finding 3.1.2. For some, the term feedback is a subtle way to introduce the concept of freedom of speech in their work**

As it will be further discussed in section 3.9, over the past few years (under the previous president) civil society in Tanzania has faced several restrictions to freedom of expression. In that context, the word 'feedback' has become a tool for some stakeholders. The word is considered less 'threatening' than 'freedom of expression' as it does not connect specifically to the human rights framework. Using the word 'feedback' has helped some actors to obtain input from communities and organizations and to keep promoting participatory practices despite the repressive context.

*I feel like if we flip the language from 'freedom of expression' to 'giving feedback' potentially both the government and the people will be more open to hearing each other out. The government will not approve a project on creating spaces for freedom of expression but will approve those for providing feedback, hence terminology matters.'*

Key informant

### Finding 3.1.3. For some NGOs there is a thin line between the concepts of ‘feedback mechanisms’ and ‘social accountability mechanisms’

Some stakeholders report the use of the word feedback, however, as a synonym for social accountability or ‘the process of holding actors responsible for their actions.’ When the word is used to describe social accountability, setting up feedback mechanisms requires a comprehensive set of actions: sensitization, training, advocacy to change gender norms and practices that undermine the participation of some citizens, work with local leaders and governments, establishing local committees and/or platforms to monitor the work of the government and other stakeholders, among many others. When feedback means social accountability, feedback mechanisms are not a component or tool within a project. The establishment of feedback mechanisms becomes the entire focus of the initiatives led by the non-profits or funders. The authorities are seen, primarily, as the recipients of the feedback (not the NGOs) and, therefore, as the ones responsible for improving the situation or generating change by building on the input from the communities and NGOs.

*Feedback informs the policies and strategies that are developed for example changing the age of consent for getting an HIV test from 18 years to 15... this is due to the feedback gathered from stakeholders... Another example is the establishment of the gender-based violence desk at the police posts and training done to police officers due to feedback shared by stakeholders on its importance as a result of the rise of HIV/GBV cases in the community.*

Key informant

*We have a youth initiative... It is a forum where young peoples' capacity is built in order to make them better advocates. Through this forum the youth members are able to take part in village, district, regional, and national committees, conferences and platforms for youth development.*

Key informant

## 3.2. What does feedback look like between non-profits, community-based organizations, and NGOs and the people they serve?

The landscape scan reveals that NGOs and other stakeholders engaged in the development and humanitarian sectors in Tanzania are already investing in an infrastructure for feedback. As it will be explained below, feedback mechanisms exist, although the characteristics of such mechanisms, their scope, the frequency of use, and their quality varies from organization to organization.


### Finding 3.2.1. Not all NGOs have feedback mechanisms in place—however, those that do, use a combination of alternatives

Most key informants and online respondents (88.24%) confirm the existence of mechanisms to listen and receive feedback from the populations they serve within their organizations. Individuals often cite the use of more than one mechanism, depending on factors such as the type of project, the availability of resources, the type of work being executed, and donor requirements. Mechanisms are diverse, being the most common ones, according to online respondents (see Diagram 2.), ‘conducting a needs assessment before the starting to work in a certain community/area’ and ‘engaging beneficiaries during the designing of proposals.’ Suggestion boxes, while available in some settings, seem to be more common among those involved in healthcare provision or provision of services in general (i.e. helpdesks). The perceptions on the frequency and quality of these feedback mechanisms will be explored in section 3.3

Diagram 2.

**Select all the mechanisms used by your organization to listen and get feedback from the populations you serve?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Needs assessments before starting work in a community/area	88.37%	38
Engagement during the design of proposals	72.09%	31
Beneficiaries' committees	53.49%	23
Suggestion boxes	32.56%	14
Engagement in mid-term or final reviews/evaluations	65.12%	28
Engagement of beneficiaries in governing bodies of the organization	46.51%	20
Email/Social media/other digital platform dedicated to receive feedback	69.77%	30
Other (please specify)	18.60%	8
Total Respondents: 43		

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Most examples identified by informants and online respondents refer to alternatives for solicited feedback. That is, mechanisms that prompt target populations to share their views, through a structured set of questions or activities, about specific aspects of the project performance (human resources, quality of actions, etc.). In other words, it seems that, in many cases, the agenda for feedback is often set by the NGOs or those managing the projects, and not by the communities.

Key informant interviews and the desk review process also revealed that some NGOs have formalized their feedback mechanisms by integrating all efforts under a specific model or approach. Below, some promising practices identified:

#### Community engagement and accountability model—Tanzanian Red Cross

*Community engagement and accountability (CEA) is an approach to Red Cross Red Crescent programming and operations. It is supported by a set of activities that help put communities at the centre, by integrating communication and participation throughout the program cycle or operation. CEA is the process of and commitment to providing timely, relevant and actionable life-saving and life-enhancing information to communities. It is about using the most appropriate communication approaches to listen to communities' needs, feedback and complaints, ensuring they can actively participate and guide Red Cross Red Crescent actions.'*

In Tanzania, the CEA approach has been put into practice by combining activities aimed at listening (community meetings, zonal leaders' meetings, village meetings, helpdesks), enhancing community participation in assessments (i.e., of cash programs), community score cards (scoring of health services by policy makers, community leaders, opinion leaders, service providers, and community groups), and developing an agreed action plan monitored by all participants in the process.

Engaging communities in Tanzania, Red Cross Society Tanzania

#### Plan International child-friendly feedback mechanism

Plan International defines a feedback mechanism as capturing and reporting the viewpoint of children, young people, community members, and other partners about Plan International's work in order to improve it. In Tanzania, these mechanisms, known as "feedback and complaint mechanisms" include suggestion boxes, community engagement meetings, participation in refugee camp meetings, surveys and evaluations, helps desks, and home visits. There is a particular emphasis on making the mechanisms child-friendly by promoting gender- and age-appropriate, inclusive, safe, and confidential ways for children and young people to engage.

Good Practice —Feedback Mechanism —March 2019

### Accountability reviews

Back in 2014, Oxfam Tanzania implemented an “Accountability review” of its project *Informed, Speaking and Heard*. Accountability reviews are processes that examine Oxfam’s accountability to partners, and Oxfam and partners’ accountability to communities. Using a participatory approach (focus groups, observation, interviews), the communities and implementing stakeholders get the opportunity to provide input about their experience and the performance of the project. The accountability review involves scoring Oxfam and its partners on their transparency, their feedback mechanisms, and the participation promoted through the project implementation. The accountability review leads to recommendations for improvement.

Accountability review in Tanzania: Informed, Speaking and Heard Project —Effectiveness Review Series

### Engender Health—Adaptive programming

Engender Health has been pursuing the use of adaptive programming in Tanzania. This requires changing the initiatives and actions based on changes in the environment, emerging needs, or as a result of the input obtained from the communities. The successful implementation of adaptive programming involves, among other things, conducting consultative meetings with the target populations for the design of the interventions and regular meetings to assess progress. These discussion spaces take into account social inclusion.

### Finding 3.2.2. Organizations use installed capacities to collect feedback

NGOs engaged in the landscape scan have provided examples of how installed capacities are used to collect and manage feedback. For instance, organizations are using, to different extents and with varying degrees of success, their existing social media pages, mobile tools, physical infrastructures (e.g., offices/helpdesks), and volunteers, not only to execute the projects but also to channel feedback from the target communities.

*We have a digital tool called Bunge Forum. It is an online platform that brings together the people and the members of parliament so that they can have discussions and dialogues in order to have a parliament that is people driven and people centred... With digital tools every day is a learning process and we collect feedback on a daily basis about the behavior of the system, challenges people are facing, and potential opportunities to upgrade it.*

Key informant

*Among the school youth, we have peer educators. We recruit them and facilitate their capacity-building sessions so that they are able to take part in project implementation. They work with other young people at community level and are able to get feedback from them.*

Key informant

*After we are done with activities, we normally give them evaluation forms for them to advise us on areas we should improve next time. We also use social media, our website, emails and WhatsApp groups. We use such platforms for feedback.*

Key informant



*We use our health facilities to collect feedback. We implement client interviews at service delivery level which measure client satisfaction and service quality.'*

Key informant

### Finding 3.2.3. Networks or taskforces tend to incorporate feedback more easily in their day-to-day activities

Organizations dedicated, primarily, to serving other groups (e.g., networks) and which do not have direct involvement with the community, tend to have feedback mechanism in place that are used and that are widely known by those intended to provide input. These organizations often have a secretariat or committee in charge, which has the mandate to support members' efforts around a specific topic or to create consensus around strategies or priorities. Therefore, all work is guided by consultative processes and, as a result, feedback is embedded in daily work. This does not mean that the mechanisms work for every member of these structures. Capturing the perceptions on how useful feedback mechanisms are for members of these structures was beyond the scope of the landscape scan. However, this is useful to highlight that not all organizations have the same starting point when it comes to feedback mechanisms—for some, it is part of what they do, for others, a more proactive action is required.

*Whatever that we are doing is coming from member organizations who are making the network to be alive. we normally have quarterly reports and annual general meetings. Through which we evaluate ourselves as a network and we discuss what we want to do next in different regions. There is representation of different regions through mapping. This planning gives us a direction on what we should consider when we are preparing our general work plan of the coming year and which activities young people want on that particular region.'*

Key informant —Network

*We have different target populations, our primary target population is the network members because our aim is to come together and contribute to ending child marriage, so we've come together as a network to strengthen our coordination... The members are involved in all network decisions, from the early planning stage to the implementation stage, so their contribution helps us in one way or another in enhancing our activities based on the members' views and experience.'*

Key informant —Network

### Finding 3.2.4. International NGOs based in Tanzania tend to have more structured mechanisms for feedback

Access to resources and to information on good programming practices as well as connections to donors with more structured requirements in terms of monitoring and evaluation means that international NGOs operating in Tanzania may be having more opportunities to put in place formal and regular mechanisms for feedback and listening than grassroots or locally-led groups. This may also be linked to the fact that international NGOs acknowledge the information gaps they have when starting or implementing a project, as they are, in a way 'outsiders.' Grassroot groups may feel their 'community-based nature' makes them more knowledgeable of their needs and gives them privileged access to information about changes in the environment and unsolicited feedback on how other members are perceiving the benefits of an initiative and, as a result, may feel less inclined to have formal mechanisms.

### Finding 3.2.5. Organizations with large grants often incorporate feedback mechanisms that meet donor requirements

Large grants, in particular those offered by government cooperation agencies or multilateral organizations, tend to have strict requirements for project design and monitoring, evaluation, and learning practices. Common requirements for these grants, according to interviewees, include needs assessment, baseline/endline, mid and final evaluation, project launch meetings, and, in some cases, external audits. While it is true that these types of activities do not always open the room for high quality feedback—as they could be done using a top-down approach, build primarily on desk review, or be implemented in a way that is extractive—, when guided by a participatory approach, they help to collect input from the target communities at different points of the project management cycle. A potential issue with linking feedback mechanisms to these donor requirements is that the mechanisms put in place may vary from project to project to respond to donor requirements and that mechanisms to collect regular feedback beyond the critical implementation points (start, mid, end) may be absent.

*The community members get a chance to contribute to the solutions for the challenges mentioned in the feedback, especially during the end term evaluation, where the beneficiaries and the community members are involved to contribute to the solutions for various challenges. We usually have a baseline evaluation, then mid-term evaluation, then the end term evaluation.'*

Key informant

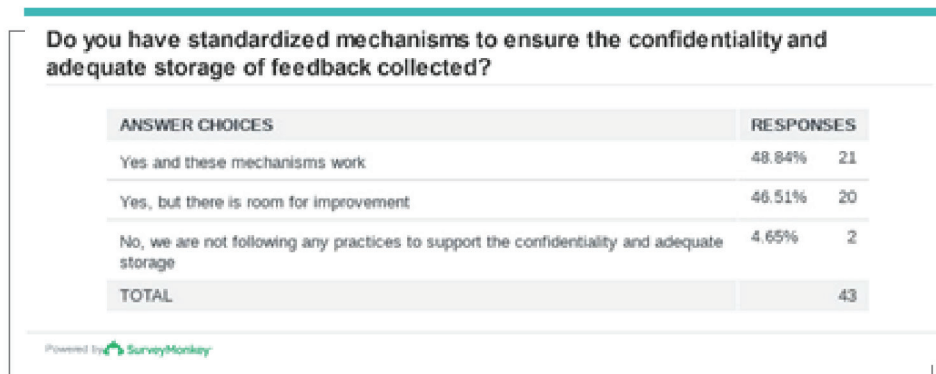
*The approach is different for every project, because in some projects it is a requirement while in others there is no need to go through such a process. It changes depending on the needs of the project.'*

Key informant

### Findings 3.2 6. There is room for improvement around confidentiality and storage of feedback

Informants and online survey respondents indicate the need to further invest in confidentiality and adequate storage of feedback. While it is positive to see that 21 out of 43<sup>1</sup> survey respondents have mechanisms in place that they consider satisfactory, 22 individuals see this as an area of improvement (see Diagram 3). Adherence to safeguarding policies and the principles of no harm and protection of target communities are guiding stakeholders in the implementation of procedures to maintain confidentiality.

Diagram 3.



<sup>1</sup>The survey had a total of 51 respondents. Forty-three out of 51 have feedback mechanisms in place. Therefore, all questions related to the quality, characteristics, etc. of the existing mechanisms have '43' as the sample.



*For example, if the community has complained about not getting certain services at the health facility, then we sit down with the respective council health management teams rather than airing it out in the media so as to avoid intimidation. Therefore, if it is something confidential, we keep it within the responsible bodies and we do not mention names of the ones providing the feedback.'*

Key informant

*We provide a number for anonymous feedback and we adhere to safeguarding guidelines/principles. We conduct training on safeguarding, confidentiality issues, child protection policies, including a do no harm framework. One of the aspects of this framework is that we are required to provide feedback to the community on what is going on and report on any harm that occurred in the intervention.'*

Key informant

*Plan International consolidates all collected feedback into a central feedback database that is password protected. This assists in recording, tracking of responses, and analyzing trends according to specific categories. Written feedback is kept in locked filing cabinets for future references and validation and discarded when feedback is closed and community satisfied with support.'*

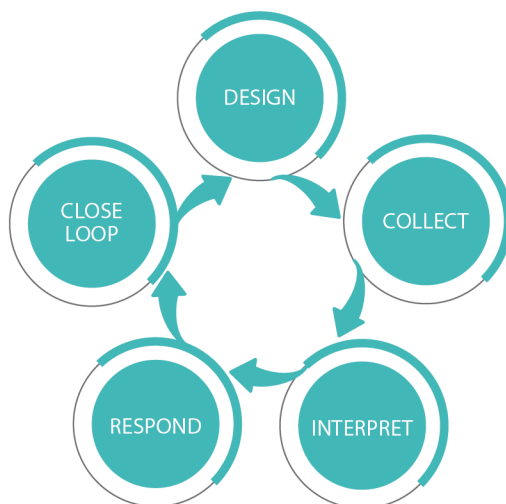
Plan International. Good Practice —Feedback Mechanism —March 2019

### 3.3. How common is high-quality listening and feedback?

#### Finding 3.3.1. There is room for improvement in listening and feedback practices

Most informants and survey respondents (86%) express the need to improve the quality of existing feedback mechanisms. The key areas of strength and weakness identified in current practices, following the feedback loop, include:

Diagram 4.



- **It is not common to engage communities in the *design* of feedback mechanisms:** the consulting team did not identify existing practices to co-design feedback mechanisms with the people served by the initiatives. Some exceptions may include cases in which the mechanisms are developed in collaboration with volunteers supporting the organization. These volunteers are often community leaders or have some deep connection with the community.
- **Collection practices are not always introduced to the communities:** for instance, information gathered in the process indicates that the poor success of suggestion boxes may be linked, at times, to the fact that the community is not informed about its availability, the intended use of the information to be collected, the frequency of collection, etc. In addition, local staff or volunteers may not invest time in encouraging people to actively collect feedback.

*We kept quiet and fear providing feedback on these issues because we thought that it is either the village chairman or the Village Executive Officer who is responsible for opening the suggestion box and that might put the person writing the feedback in trouble.*

Community member, Tanzania —CUAMM Endline monitoring report, Initiative 'Beneficiary Feedback Mechanism Pilots'

- **There are *interpretation and response* mechanisms in place:** organizations that have feedback mechanisms in place have identified positive practices for the interpretation of the data. These practices include but are not limited to assigning a person or team to consolidate the feedback, using online tools to compile the information and produce data, preparing action plans and briefs/reports on areas of improvement, and conducting review meetings to discuss findings. Response mechanisms are also in place with a focus on making adaptations to the project while keeping in mind the room for change accepted by the donor. (See section 3.4. to learn more on how NGO's are acting on feedback).
- **Closing the loop is the most significant challenge:** the literature review and key informant interviews indicate that some organizations in Tanzania have taken part in pilot experiences related to beneficiary feedback mechanisms. Those organizations are, as a result, showing positive practices regarding closing the loop as outlined below:

*Before being part of the feedback lab, we did not really care to go back to say if their feedback had been worked upon or not, as we felt that it is our information to work upon if we felt that it is important enough to work on. After participating in the feedback lab sessions, we now know the importance of going back and at our level we have tried make sure that we close the loop. As for the members of parliament what we do is to create an environment for them to come back and share feedback but it is entirely up to them whether or not to share feedback. We have also created other mechanisms for example, at the moment we have monthly live sessions between members of parliament and the people in the forum in order to give feedback and initiate conversations.'*

Key informant

*For those feedback providers that have included their names, home addresses or phone numbers with their feedback, Plan International Tanzania staff contacts them directly and provides an update and actions taken.'*

Plan International. Good Practice —Feedback Mechanism —March 2019

Most key informants, however, see this component of high-quality feedback as a ‘work in progress’ in Tanzania. Informants acknowledge the importance of closing the loop and the fact that there are some attempts to close the loop, but there are still gaps, which may be explained by factors such as:

- the assumption that beneficiaries will experience the changes resulting from the feedback once projects are adapted/improved and, therefore, having a formal mechanism to share this information is important but not essential;
- lack of resources to conduct this component in a systematic way; and
- the anonymity of feedback can be an obstacle to close the loop—even if the organizations invest time and effort reporting back to the community members, the affected individuals may not get access to that information. While in some cases this is not an issue as the feedback provider made a conscious decision to remain anonymous, for others, anonymity is their only choice as they fear the consequences of their comments (e.g., when reporting safeguarding issues or lack of compliance with policies by the NGO’s staff or volunteers).

*For closing the loop, the feedback is mostly shared with internal stakeholders and not the target population. So, at regional level this information would fall into the hands of the regional health management team while at district level it would be the council health management team. We believe that they will go on to take this information further down to our target population, each in his/her own capacity... but it is not a requirement.*

Key informant

*We do not go back to the population to let them know how their feedback has been used because the budget is not enough to cover this practice.*

Key informant

Despite the challenges mentioned by key informants, it is important to highlight that a significant number of survey respondents confirm having mechanisms to close the loop. A total of 72% of respondents indicate they have mechanisms in place to inform the populations they serve about how their recommendations and feedback has been used, including but not limited to sending a text message or email once they have completed analysing the information, organizing a meeting or webinar, sending a letter, or others.

### 3.4. How are they acting on that feedback?

#### Finding 3.4.1. Feedback is used by NGO’s in Tanzania to improve programming

Key informants and literature review confirm the use of feedback to strengthen programming. Some factors, however, influence the level of adaptation occurring because of the feedback obtained:

- **Donor flexibility:** while funders often talk about the importance of continuous adaptation and improvement to projects and programs, in practice, significant changes to an initiative are not easy to negotiate. That means NGO’s

have to 'limit' the scope of the feedback to be collected in order to avoid creating expectations of change that cannot be met.

- **Timing of the feedback:** when the feedback is collected as part of final evaluations, NGO's will use the feedback for future initiatives. The new actions may or may not include the feedback providers, as geographical areas of intervention could change based on emerging needs and other factors. In addition, most organizations seek to minimize gaps in intervention. Therefore, they start looking for new resources before their grants come to an end. The consequence of that is that the feedback obtained through final evaluations, which are often time-consuming and resource intensive, do not inform new proposals or projects in a significant way.
- **Resources:** responding to feedback can be expensive, although informants acknowledge the value added in terms of reaching outcomes and impact. However, it is not always feasible to adapt the actions as resources are limited to support specific activities.
- **Capacity to address the recommendations submitted by feedback providers:** taking feedback to those with power to make changes is not always possible either because of organizational hierarchies, culture, or internal work dynamics. In some cases, the feedback relates to the work of a third party, either a partner or the government, that may not be interested or open to receiving input.

*At the health facility board, they have the power to make staff changes when they receive feedback. For example, service users say that they do not prefer a particular service provider because of his/her less than average skill set and would like them moved to another facility, they could make the change. But this happens to a very small extent. Very rarely do you find these structures taking measures on people who compromise the quality of services.'*

Key informant

*We also work with the local government authorities, so depending on the nature of the feedback we might be able to solve it ourselves or we might need some assistance from the local government authorities. Since we collaborate with local government authorities, we normally share the feedback to see what can we do together to assist these vulnerable women and girls.'*

Key informant

*Government engagement has been one of the best practices and treating them as partners/allies and not as enemies to ensure that we receive positive collaboration. This also helps them prioritize issues that we raise in their planning and budget cycles which is key in ensuring the continuation of particular services.'*

Key informant

### Finding 3.4.2. Some NGO's are also using feedback to support the implementation of their policies

Some organizations report using feedback mechanisms as a tool to guarantee the implementation of safeguarding and/or child protection policies and other anticorruption/fraud frameworks. People served by the organizations not only provide input about project performance and quality but also takes advantage of the anonymity of some feedback mechanisms to share sensitive information.

*Feedback from child friendly spaces indicated alleged harassment by an incentive worker. The incentive worker was immediately removed and further training conducted for all incentive workers on child safe-guarding. Also, helpdesks uncovered misappropriation of start-up materials for vocational training graduates. As a result, we improved monitoring of distributions and stock management processes.'*

Plan International. Good Practice —Feedback Mechanism —March 2019

### Finding 3.4.3. Positive feedback tends to support organizational efforts to showcase the work

Some key informants have highlighted the use of positive feedback to support communication strategies and position the work of the organization within the community and in the dialogue with donors and partners. This helps to not only strengthen the organization but also channel new resources to serve specific communities.

*We get the feedback to address challenges and to document success stories. We normally use the feedback from success stories to show other vulnerable groups who are in a similar situation, so they can learn how others changed. When we started these Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) groups, some women were a bit sceptical on whether to join them or not, but when they heard about the success stories, more women came up to us.'*

Key informant

## 3.5. In how many languages does feedback collection happen?

### Finding 3.5.1. Language does not seem to be a significant barrier for high quality feedback in Tanzania

Key informant interviews, survey analysis, and literature review indicate that language is not the most significant barrier for feedback and listening in Tanzania. While this information is not cross-checked with the communities, the large majority of sources consulted show awareness about the importance of offering opportunities to provide input in Swahili, English, and/or vernacular languages. When feedback mechanisms are in place, NGO's aim to have them in all relevant languages. In some cases, however, this is not possible. Cost may be a potential explanation. For instance, four survey respondents (n:43) confirmed they do not have mechanisms to collect feedback in all languages relevant to the population they are serving.

### Finding 3.5.2. Population with disabilities that require language adaptations are not being heard

Inclusion (further analysed in section 3.7) requires, among many other measures, putting in place language adaptations to ensure all individuals can fully participate. Key informants engaged have confirmed this is an area of significant weakness for the feedback field in Tanzania. Alternatives for the provision of feedback—and sometimes even for engagement in the projects—are limited for individuals with visual or hearing impairment. Illiterate population, on the other hand, have access to community meetings and other similar alternatives.

*We do not reach everyone but we manage to reach many people. We reach people who are differently abled, but we are not yet 100 percent there. We have not encountered any challenges reaching young people, men, and women who are our target population. Specifically, deaf and blind populations are particularly hard to reach for feedback collection because we do not have trained people who can communicate with such populations.'*

Key informant

*We get challenges getting feedback from differently abled people since we do not have the proper skills and tools to communicate with them. We just concentrate on getting feedback from people who are not disabled because it is easier/more affordable and we do not at the moment have resources to put towards communicating with the disabled. They are very important but we really do not do them any justice but it is because we have not invested in them.'*

Key informant

### 3.6. How does power operate in these relationships?

#### Finding 3.6.1 Gratitude or the fear of consequences can become barriers to high-quality feedback

Highly underserved or overlooked communities, inevitably, will have feelings of gratitude towards the work of NGO's that are trying to meet their needs. This, combined with poor awareness of rights among populations subjected to overlapping and interdependent systems of oppression, discrimination, or disadvantage, translates into the existence of power dynamics. Key informants acknowledge this is an important consideration when collecting feedback. Therefore, implementing initiatives that strengthen agency alongside feedback mechanisms is a must.

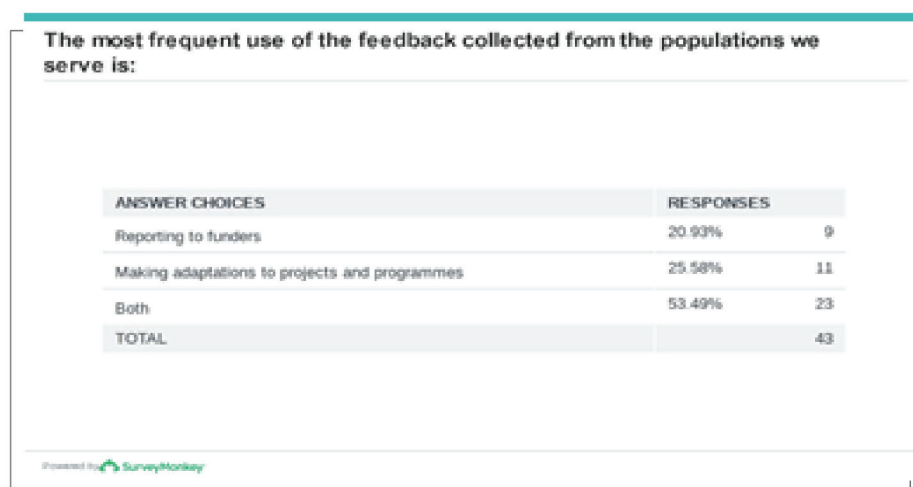
*It is a challenge to work in some communities because they do not provide feedback which is realistic/genuine. They do this thinking that if they share the truth then they will not be included in the program or even considered.'*

Key informant

#### Finding 3.6.2. The power implicit in donor-grantee relationships affects the collection and sharing of feedback, particularly when feedback demonstrates 'failure'

While key informants indicate that reporting to donors is one of the main uses of the feedback collected (e.g., over 50% of survey respondents affirm using feedback collected to report to funders), they also acknowledge that power dynamics with donors mean there is no motivation to collect and share the input of community members regarding areas of improvement. Funders do not always treat NGO's as partners or promote a collaborative relationship that focuses on mutual learning. Some funders also lack flexibility—particularly when adaptations to programs have budget implications—and understanding of the dynamics of the country. For instance, in addition to having to adapt based on the feedback of the communities they serve, in Tanzania, NGO's have to consider the government's feedback at all times to ensure the project's implementation is approved, which in the past few years has reduced decision-making spaces for NGOs. Donors do not always have an open mind about accepting this level of interference.

Diagram 5.



*Funders should emphasize on getting feedback from whom they are funding. The funders should be flexible and change their approach according to the needs of their target population as societal needs are ever changing.*

Key informant

### 3.7. How do issues of equity and justice play out in this context and how could high-quality listening and feedback advance equity and justice?

#### Finding 3.7.1. There are positive practices regarding provision of feedback by youth

Sources consulted for the landscape scan seem to have feedback mechanisms in place that meet the particular needs and characteristics of young people. While interviewees acknowledge further improvement is required, multiple examples of collaborative work with young people have been cited. This is of particular importance in a country with such a youthful population. Some factors that appear to be supporting these listening practices include:

- **adoption of technology:** use of social media, SMS, and other online tools by young people motivates key informants to test innovative ways of collecting feedback
- **youth focus in NGO interventions:** the demographics of Tanzania—a very youthful country (see ‘section Key Facts on page 4’)—mean that many organizations are prioritizing work with and for young people, across all sectors. Therefore, there are more opportunities to pilot and implement feedback mechanisms.
- **youth engagement as agents of change:** many interventions being implemented on youth rights and needs adopt strategies connected to youth volunteerism, peer education/support, and youth as champions. In this context, young people are playing a role in the collection of feedback (in addition to being feedback providers).



*We do not engage youth so much in program design because not all youth have the capacity to participate in proposal development. They however get a chance to discuss the possible solutions they have for the challenges they are facing and we also include them in the project inception meetings so that young people can think about the ways in which they can participate in project implementation.*

Key informant

### Finding 3.7.2. Gender inequality and poor inclusion mechanisms are a barrier for the collection of high-quality feedback

Sources consulted for the landscape scan acknowledge that gender inequality and other oppressive systems influence the participation of some individuals in existing—and potential—feedback mechanisms. Situations experienced by interviewees include:

- Challenges in getting feedback from women living with HIV, as they fear expressing their needs and being further stigmatized.
- In some communities, women's lack of access to mobile phones—therefore, initiatives hoping to get feedback through SMS or applications do not work.
- Minimal participation of individuals with disabilities as their characteristics are not taken into consideration (e.g., mobility to access meeting spaces, language, other).

### 3.8. What does feedback look like between funders and the people they ultimately seek to serve?

In order to answer this question, it is important to acknowledge that large NGO's (domestic or international) play a role in channelling resources to other organizations as part of their projects (e.g. when they are classified as lead grantees or main recipients). While they are only channelling resources offered by a donor, the subrecipients may see the NGO as a funder. It is also important to acknowledge that, in some instances, NGO's (particularly International NGO's) may have their own social enterprises or models to generate income and said income may be invested in supporting grassroots groups or other type of local organizations. In those cases, International NGO's may be fulfilling a funder role.

As the role of NGOs and International NGOs has already been analysed under previous questions, the finding below only refers to governmental donors or philanthropic organizations.

#### Finding 3.8.1. Some funders have limited access to the community and receive feedback through their grantees

Key informants identify diverse feedback practices between funders and the communities they ultimately aim to serve. Large donors (mainly, governmental donors/multilateral donors) often have embassies or representation in the country. Therefore, while at first they seem more bureaucratic and less likely to interact with the communities they intend to serve, their country-level presence gives them access to critical information about the needs of the populations. Visits to the field as well as participation in forums and taskforces mean there is a regular flow of feedback reaching this type of donor. On the other hand, private donors may only access community feedback through their grantees and available research, as they do not have presence in the country.

In general, interviewees feel that funders could play a more prominent role in supporting the creation and use of feedback mechanisms; and in monitoring the continuous use of listening practices to inform programs.



*Funders should not support initiatives that do not have a component of a landscape assessment so as not to fund something that is not effective. They should not just focus on national data but on specific data from the target population and project catchment area. Mechanisms for feedback should be part of the design of the intervention that has been submitted to them for funding and also appear as a term and condition for reporting. Funders should ensure that whoever is applying for funding has included mechanisms for feedback collecting from the beneficiaries and local government authorities so as to ensure that the intervention is a need of the community.'*

Key informant

### 3.9. What does feedback look like between the government and the people they ultimately seek to serve?

#### Finding 3.9.1. The government uses similar mechanisms for the collection of feedback; however, how that feedback is acted on remains a challenge

Sources consulted for the landscape scan identify that there are some mechanisms for listening and feedback, that are initiated by local authorities. Some of these mechanisms have been created in the context of governance policies and programs that focus on accountability i.e., village/neighbourhood (mtaa) assembly meetings, water management committees, school committees, public works project committees, agricultural/livestock extension contact group, etc. These structures may not be present in all settings but, more importantly, the majority of survey respondents indicate that, even if mechanisms exist, they are poorly used (69%)<sup>2</sup> both by the communities and the authorities. Key informants also confirm this apparent 'lack of interest' from the populations, which may be linked to fear, lack of understanding of how feedback will be used, among other factors.

#### Diagram 6.

Are there any formal mechanisms available for communities to provide high quality feedback to local authorities?		
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, they are widely available and used	6.52%	3
Yes, there are mechanisms available but poorly used	69.57%	32
No, there are no mechanisms in place	23.91%	11
TOTAL		46

<sup>2</sup>A total of 46 out of 51 respondents have answered this question in the online survey administered by IWORDS Global (therefore n:46).

*Formal ways and systems and structures exist but the only issue is how often do the public use these structures/mechanisms to provide feedback. For example, people rarely use the suggestion boxes which are found at health facilities, citizens have a right to provide feedback about the quality of health care services but very few people provide this feedback. People have the right to petition/mobilize action against or for something they believe is not well taken care of but we rarely see petitions or public demonstrations for the same.'*

Key informant

*What is happening right now is that we have very few people who are courageous enough to give feedback and we have the majority of people who are not speaking but just looking so sometimes you don't understand what they are thinking.'*

Key informant

*When an opportunity is available then the government will go back to let them know how their feedback has been addressed. We are not doing excellent in terms of the way we collect feedback, the way we use such feedback to shape the portfolios in service delivery, quality improvement, creating demand, etc. I believe there is still a lot we need to be doing in that area.'*

Key informant

### Finding 3.9.2. A less repressive environment is needed to support improved feedback and listening mechanisms between the government and civil society organizations

As mentioned in previous sections of this report, Tanzanian civil society organizations faced a period of shrinking space that saw their autonomy reduced, as well as continuous attacks and restrictions on their work (2015–2021). In this context, mechanisms for information sharing between the government and civil society organizations have been in place.

*We had a time before when the government was more open to listen... Then there came a point whereby all these things just disappeared... We had a moment when we had issues of shrinking space where whoever wanted to express themselves became a victim of violence.'*

Key informant

However, these mechanisms have not necessarily been collaborative spaces aimed at building consensus and shared workplans—on the contrary, many of these spaces focus on being 'approval' or 'scrutiny' spaces. As a result, fear and intimidation have become obstacles to move forward with the implementation of high-quality feedback practices.

*For example, we are working with the government from the inception of the project... we engage them because it is mandatory as far as the law is concerned. So, we work together from the designing, writing, implementation, and evaluation of the programs that we have.'*

Key informant

*A good practice that I would like our organization to adapt is a consolidated tool where all feedback can be sought and we do not have to perform many things like evaluations, monitoring, community dialogues, baseline surveys, etc., because getting approval for all these initiatives from the local government authorities is very challenging and even more challenging for sensitive issues... Sometimes the approval may delay to the point you are about to end the project.'*

Key informant

### 3.10. What do NGOs say about what is most needed to accelerate and improve high-quality feedback work?

#### Finding 3.10.1. Capacity-building is critical to improve high quality feedback work

Sources consulted as part of the landscape scan prioritize capacity-building as the key action to generate change in the listening and feedback field in Tanzania. Capacity-building should include but not be limited to:

- guidance on how to develop high-quality feedback mechanisms that support equity and inclusion, in a context of limited resources
- guidance on the development of feedback collection tools
- facilitation skills to support the co-development of feedback mechanisms
- soft skills (communication, counselling, assertiveness, etc.) to ensure NGO representatives are equipped to work with people from different backgrounds and ways of providing feedback
- access to good or promising practices from similar settings
- guidance on how to integrate feedback in long-term initiatives (e.g., governmental projects that are executed over long periods).

#### Finding 3.10.2. Culture transformation can support efforts to integrate high-quality feedback in the work of organizations operating in Tanzania

NGO's, government structures, and funders are very diverse; therefore, there is no single recipe that will work when it comes to creating a culture that welcomes feedback and uses that feedback to help improve programming and, in turn, increase the impact of the intervention. However, sources consulted as part of the landscape scan process understand that is important to start somewhere. Conducting and documenting pilot experiences, generating dialogue spaces

focused on feedback, and developing messaging on the added value of feedback mechanisms are potential interventions that can lead to cultural change. At the NGO level, sources highlight the importance of engaging the leadership of the organization in capacity-building and dialogue around feedback and listening practices, to ensure they set the tone from the top, promote a feedback-safe environment, and allocate the necessary resources to integrate these practices into projects.

#### **Finding 3.10.3. Information is key to support culture change around feedback**

Sources consulted as part of the landscape scan insist on the importance of doing a better job to inform communities both about the existence of feedback mechanisms and the process of interpreting and sharing the findings from the process. This will lead to increased trust in these listening practices; set clear expectations for frequency, practices, and limitations to the process; and generate more interest among the people served.

#### **Finding 3.10.4. Access to more resources is essential to improve high-quality feedback work**

Human and financial resources are critical to accelerate change in feedback work. Funders should increase allocations to cover these activities; however, organizations can also start documenting areas where they are managing to reduce costs as a result of implementing practices that are more accepted by community members and potentially more impactful.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

The landscape scan allows the consultancy team to conclude that there is already an infrastructure for feedback in Tanzania, which could be enhanced through investments from the Fund for Shared Insight. Not only there is interest among the stakeholders consulted, but some organizations have already piloted feedback and listening practices. In addition to having this incipient infrastructure in place there are many other opportunities in the context, which could accelerate current practices with the right level of investment:

- 1. Tanzania is still attractive to donors:** the country has recently moved up to the category of lower-middle income. Despite this positive achievement, the country still faces significant challenges on the path to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The installed capacities present in civil society combined with high levels of need, make Tanzania a country of interest for donors, as they see the value of their contribution but also the possibility of achieving impact. All this means that, in addition to the potential resources to be investment from the Fund for Shared Insight, civil society organizations would have other sources of funding to amplify the support received or would have opportunities to pilot feedback mechanisms within multiple projects financed by others.
- 2. Recent changes in government:** the recent change in leadership in the country may have a positive impact in the relationship NGO's-Government. It is early to affirm this with confidence, however there are positive indications of change. This means that any investment in Tanzania around feedback and listening would support this transition and become a tool to enhance the credibility of NGO's in the country.
- 3. Language:** the fact that English is a de facto language in Tanzania means that civil society organizations can easily benefit of the accumulated knowledge/tools/other developed by the Fund for Shared Insight. Although not being English speaking should not become a criterion to exclude other countries, it is important to highlight that the ability to work in English helps Tanzanian organization to rapidly access the available information.
- 4. Influence in the region:** Tanzania plays an important role in the East Africa region (i.e. hosting refugee populations; being a stable country; leader in emerging markets) and also have many commonalities with other neighbouring

countries. Lessons learned and examples from investments in the country have the potential to inform the work of other civil society organizations in Africa.

## Recommendations

- **Share information:** NGOs and other stakeholders consulted in Tanzania have shown significant interest in strengthening their feedback and listening mechanisms. Providing them with opportunities for capacity building would be ideal. In the meantime, sharing materials/tools and connecting them to global conversations (e.g. webinars) on feedback and listening can contribute to accelerating progress.
- **Bring together different stakeholders:** while there is interest, it was also evident that feedback and listening are not topics prioritized in forums, conferences or other dialogue spaces. Launching opportunities for focused discussions among stakeholders representing different sectors can support the generation and dissemination of local knowledge and catalyse interest from new actors.
- **Build on what is available:** pilots have already taken place in the country and some organizations have, therefore, higher expertise. Working with these organizations, in a champion role, will accelerate progress.
- **Focus investments in areas of significant weakness:** feedback and listening practices that bring to the table the voices of individuals of disability is a huge challenge. Closing the loop is another critical area of investment. It would be essential to ensure that, from the start, NGOs accessing resources to enhance their feedback systems consider alternatives to address such gaps.
- **Engage with both development and humanitarian actors:** some of the existing experiences have been led by organizations focused on refugees and other vulnerable populations. Working with a diversity of actors can generate lessons on how to adapt the mechanisms and practices under adverse circumstances—in other words, how to develop resilient mechanisms.

## Annexes

### Annex 1. Documents reviewed

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