



african monitor

African voices for Africa's development

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PRESS STATEMENT

GRASSROOTS VOICES INFORMING POLICY AND PRACTICE IN AFRICA: LAUNCH OF THE GRASSROOTS FOCUS INDEX

The grassroots poor are not adequately prioritized in development by development actors including government, and donors. This emerged from pilot findings conducted in Cameroon, South Africa and Nigeria, by African Monitor using the Grassroots Focus Index (GFI) tool. On a GFI scale of 0 to 100, with 0 representing no grassroots focus and 100 representing total grassroots focus, the grassroots communities scored Cameroon at 43, Nigeria at 39.7 and South Africa at 38.5.

The Grassroots Focus Index (GFI) is an index that determines the extent to which the grassroots are prioritized in development. It is an instrument that allows development actors to listen more closely to the grassroots perspectives in a systematic and methodologically sound manner. The GFI approach is unique in that it takes the perspectives of the poor as the starting point in development of the index. It then uses these perspectives to define grassroots focus, to define development progress and to construct the indicators to measure these elements. The GFI reminds us that it is not enough to measure development from the perspective of the elites and those in power, but that the realities and aspirations of the grassroots poor should be the starting point. As such the GFI provides a solid base for alignment of policies and interventions to the realities and aspirations of the grassroots communities as a way of enhancing impact and sustainability on the ground.

The Grassroots Focus Index (GFI) approach shows and enhances our understanding of what matters to grassroots (through revealed perceptions of grassroots focus). Some of the revealed issues that constitutes "grassroots focus" and regarded as important by grassroots communities include; opportunities and an enabling environment for grassroots to realize their capabilities, alignment of development policies and interventions to the realities and aspirations of grassroots, skills development, access to

information that prompts action from grassroots with focus on amount, quality and language, enhanced access to policy makers, improved accountability for development policies and interventions, enhanced mechanisms and channels for resource flows to grassroots, enhanced capacity to influence and be involved in development policy chain, among others.

Against the background of an increasing perception among development actors that Africa is on the brink of a major development breakthrough, variously referred to as the “African Moment”, “Africa’s star is rising”, etc; the GFI shines the light on the realities and aspirations of the grassroots communities as the bedrock of unlocking, realizing and sustaining this African Moment.

To date the GFI has been received with great excitement and enthusiasm by development actors ranging from policy makers, donors, civil society as well as the private sector. Its utility has also been confirmed by academic institutions as well as international bodies such as the African Development Bank, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Development Bank for Southern Africa, among others. This points to its relevance and wide applicability in addressing development challenges.

Background Note for editors

African Monitor was established in 2006 as an independent continental body to monitor development funding commitments, funding delivery as well as the impact on grassroots communities. It works towards bringing strong additional African voices to the development agenda. African Monitor’s vision is a continent rapidly achieving its development potential, whose people live in dignity, in a just society where basic needs are met, human rights are upheld, and good governance entrenched. As such, over the years African Monitor has done considerable advocacy work at both the grassroots and policy level.

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