

# Stakeholder Review Findings: The Zenex Foundation's Response

The Zenex Foundation commissioned a stakeholder review in 2023 which included an online survey (167 respondents) and telephonic interviews (17 participants). Focus group discussions with 19 respondents representing NGOs, government, donors and researchers helped deepen the review findings and strengthen the recommendations. This document provides the Foundation's response to the survey findings in four categories:

Thought Leadership

Strategy: Systems Approach

Strategy: Evidence-based Approach

Grantmaking Approach

## RESPONSE

### THOUGHT LEADERSHIP



#### FINDING

The Zenex Foundation is recognised as a thought leader but does not utilise its leadership courageously and boldly enough to influence policy and key stakeholders, particularly government and donors.

The Foundation is not visible enough and it is difficult to access reports and information about its partnerships. Regular prompts, social media posts, stakeholder workshops and networking events can be used to share findings, lessons and recommendations.

This is a priority area going forward. We established a dedicated Research and Thought Leadership Unit which will be guided by a distinct thought leadership strategy.

We developed a social media and communications plan to inform our audiences and alert them to new research.



### STRATEGY: SYSTEMS APPROACH



#### FINDING

The Foundation's theory of change does not consider systemic change or institutionalisation.

The Foundation is not engaging sufficiently with government in the design of projects. This sometimes hampers systemic uptake.

## RESPONSE

We are developing a more comprehensive theory of change which will be explicit about systemic change.

Through our thought leadership strategy, we will continue to engage government on collaboration opportunities around uptake, while being mindful of budgetary and capacity constraints in government.



### STRATEGY: EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH



#### FINDING

The Foundation does not sufficiently support M&E capacity within NGOs. It should encourage its partners to build an M&E mindset into the implementation of projects.

The Foundation should work towards expanding its pool of service providers rather than using the same implementing agencies and evaluators all the time. It could utilise its influence and experience to help mentor emerging partners and build the capacity of small and start-up NGOs.

## RESPONSE

We will continue to commit resources to stakeholders like NASCEE, SAMEA, IPASA and NPOs (project providers) to build their organisational and individual capacity in areas such as M&E and project monitoring systems. We will be more intentional about highlighting the successes of these programmes through social media.

We designed a range of capacity-building initiatives to support both individuals and organisations, drawing on lessons from past projects.



### GRANTMAKING APPROACH



#### FINDING

The Foundation is not open to receiving unsolicited proposals and, as a result, does not stimulate innovation in the sector.

The Foundation's projects forefront research and evidence building. This has the unintended consequence of customisation which fails to take contextual differences into account.

The Foundation does not consider teacher perspectives in its programme design and implementation.

## RESPONSE

We don't accept unsolicited proposals but decided to set aside 10% of our budget for open calls to encourage innovation.

Our programmes will remain evidence-designed, but we will include stakeholders (such as NPOs, school communities and subject specialists) to ensure that projects are grounded in contextual reality.

We will create regular channels of communication to share design decisions.

