

Ensuring Access to Quality Education in a Post-covid Recovery Context

POVERTY, DISABILITIES, CHILD PREGNANCY AND EARLY MARRIAGE ARE AMONG SOME OF THE MAIN FACTORS IN ZIMBABWE PUSHING CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS OUT OF SCHOOL.

TWO OUT OF THREE CHILDREN AND HALF OF ALL ADOLESCENTS ARE NOT ENROLLED IN EDUCATION.

The situation

Zimbabwe has a high net enrollment ratio in primary school. Nine out of ten children of primary school age are in school (Multiple Cluster Survey 2019 and EMIS 2019). This figure has remained stable in the last decade. While the country should target universal enrollment of children in primary school, maintaining the current high level of enrolment is already a challenge.

Though the Government did commit - in its Education Sector Strategic Plan (2021-2025) and during the Global Partnership for Education Summit in 2021 - to increase the budget for primary and secondary education from 13.6% in 2021 to 15% in 2022, the 2022 budget allocation dropped to 12.4%.

This has resulted in challenges around key areas of access and quality of education and the strengthening of the education system. The lack of adequate supplies for teaching and learning and the decline or lack of infrastructure at schools has hindered learners in acquiring critical skills for the 21st century. Inclusivity is also lagging with only an estimated 10% of children with disabilities being in school,

despite the efforts to include children living with disabilities in education. Access to Early Childhood Development remains limited, with less than one out of three children aged 3 to 5 years old enrolled in pre-primary education, due to shortages of trained teachers and learning spaces. Also, each year 6,000 to 7,000 girls drop out of school because of pregnancy.

Meanwhile, the school-going-age population is estimated to double to 7.98 million children by 2030. Therefore, demand for education and infrastructure are increasing rapidly, necessitating many more resources for delivering on the rights of boys and girls to access quality education. Half of the adolescents in Zimbabwe aged 13 to 19 years old are not in school. By 2021, 11% of 15–17-year-olds had not completed primary school, and this percentage is increasing.

Humanitarian crises in Zimbabwe have intensified issues the education sector was already facing. Climate-change-induced disasters and the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted teaching and learning for a staggering 4.5 million students.



UNICEF Response

In response to these challenges, UNICEF and partners have been working with the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to address educational issues through reforming the curriculum, provision of the School Improvement Grant (SIG), and strengthening planning and policy formulation. Together, we are targeting 4,110 rural, low-income primary schools and secondary schools, representing 40% of schools in Zimbabwe.

Investments in education will enable UNICEF to further support the Government in taking a lifelong learning approach, from early learning education to higher education and training, harnessing the potential of digital learning and building digital competencies, while also bridging the digital divide.

UNICEF's main strategies include:

- Developing **innovative approaches to Early Learning**, including in-service training of teachers and parents in early learning to promote foundational literacy and numeracy skills.
- Rolling-out **Alternative Learning Approaches**, including digital learning (Learning Passport) through provision of devices, solarization and connectivity solutions (GIGA).
- **System strengthening interventions** to enhance a resilient education system through Innovative Early Warning Systems to identify learners at risk of dropping out, and emergency preparedness and response mechanisms.

Target beneficiaries

1,333,144 learners from 4,110 rural low-income primary and secondary schools

TOTAL BUDGET FOR 3 YEARS

\$29,947,815

Early learning development	\$2,132,360
Alternative learning approaches	\$21,000,000
System strengthening to enhance a resilient education system	\$3,370,200
Technical and programme support	\$3,445,255

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