



Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education



Ministry of Finance and Economic Development



UNICEF CHILD BUDGETING SERIES

High-Level Policy Dialogue on Education Financing in Zimbabwe

REPORT

25 January 2023



Introduction

The Child Budgeting Series, co-created by UNICEF and the Zimbabwe Economics Society, is a high-level dialogue and knowledge exchange platform to discuss how macro- and microeconomic policies and investments impact children. The series aims to explore policy issues

and influence policy developments related and of importance to children in Zimbabwe including on education, health, protection, water, hygiene, and sanitation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and social protection.



Panellists for the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Education Financing

This report captures the policy discussions and recommendations emanating from the third of the Child Budgeting Series held on 25 January 2023. The dialogue focused on education financing in Zimbabwe and was jointly convened by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE), UNICEF and the Zimbabwe Economics Society. The objective was to exchange knowledge and generate recommendations that contribute towards shaping and improving national and subnational policy interventions and investments and financing in the education sector.

The dialogue was conducted through a live panel discussion and participation of delegates in-person and virtually. Participants came from Government Ministries and Departments, development partners, civil society, the general public, and United Nations agencies.

- Ms. Jessica Dawson, Counsellor, Embassy of Canada to Zimbabwe.
- Mr. Justin Spelhaug, Vice President and Global Head, Tech for Social Impact, Microsoft, represented by Mrs. Jaye Richards-Hill, Director, Education Industry for Middle East and Africa, Microsoft.

Co-convenors of the Dialogue

- Mrs. Tumisang Thabela, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.
- Dr. Tajudeen Oyewale, UNICEF Representative, Zimbabwe.
- Dr. Nigel Chanakira, President, Zimbabwe Economics Society.

Panellists for the High-Level Policy Dialogue on Education Financing in Zimbabwe

- The Hon. Dr. Evelyn Ndlovu, Minister, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.
- The Hon. Prof. Mthuli Ncube, Minister, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, represented by Mr. Clive Mphambela, Chief Director, Communication and Advocacy.
- Mr. Robert Jenkins, Director, Education and Adolescent Development, Programme Group, UNICEF.
- Ms. Geraldine O’Callaghan, Development Director, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Embassy of UK to Zimbabwe.



Co-convenors of the Dialogue

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
GDP	gross domestic product
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
MOPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
UK	United Kingdom
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

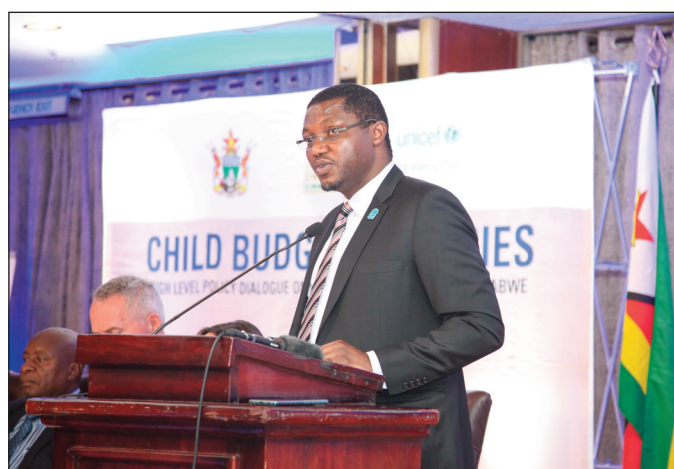
WELCOME REMARKS

UNICEF Representative, Dr. Tajudeen Oyewale

The UNICEF Representative, Dr. Tajudeen Oyewale, welcomed participants to the third High-Level Policy Dialogue under the Child Budgeting Series focusing on Education Financing. He highlighted that the Child Budgeting Series is a platform initiated jointly between UNICEF and the Zimbabwe Economics Society to promote dialogue, exchange and engagement around key social sector issues for children and to influence the direction of policy.

He highlighted the two previous High-Level Policy Dialogues that have positively resulted in identifying key areas of improvement, partnership and support. The maiden Dialogue on Health Financing held in 2021 has yielded results as evidenced by the launch of the Health Resilient Fund by the Vice President and the Hon. Minister of Health and Child Care, Dr. C.G.D.N. Chiwenga on 23 January 2023. In 2022, under the leadership of the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, the second High-Level Policy Dialogue on Child Protection Financing looked at a broad array of issues that make children vulnerable in the protection sphere. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the social welfare sector budget from 0.6 per cent of the total national budget in 2022 to 2.2 per cent in 2023.

Dr. Oyewale further noted that to help make the goal of free basic education a reality, the third Dialogue on Education Financing provides a platform to explore opportunities, appreciate progress, and identify new ways of advancing results for children in the education sector. This follows the commitment made by the Government during the Transforming Education Summit, held on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2022. During the Summit, the Government of Zimbabwe declared its commitment on inclusion, access, quality and engagement in education.



UNICEF Representative, Dr. Tajudeen Oyewale

He expressed gratitude that education remains a top priority for the Government of Zimbabwe. He called on all stakeholders to look carefully at current investments and results in the education sector, and explore partnerships and what more needs to be done for future generations.

Overview of Basic Education Sector Policy and Financing in Zimbabwe

Mrs. Tumisang Thabela, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

Mrs. Tumisang Thabela presented an overview of the Basic Education Sector Policy and Financing in Zimbabwe. She emphasized that MOPSE strives to ensure access to quality, inclusive, relevant and equitable education for all children and adults in Zimbabwe as enshrined in Section 75 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, and Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Ministry's key focus is to provide a sound foundation for the nation's human capital development,

which is one of the key pillars under the National Development Strategy 1. The Government fully subscribes to the view that education is a fundamental tool for the sustainable development of the country, and thus strives to provide an education product that will enable the country to reach optimal developmental potential and contribute to the vision of becoming an upper middle-income country by 2030. The Ministry also subscribes to the need for partnerships with the other government agencies in fulfilling this mandate and therefore recognizes the efforts being made by all stakeholders in discussing how to provide the best education for learners.

Supply does not meet demand in education services and requires deliberate investment in education infrastructure in light of a growing population and emerging settlements. The demand for education in Zimbabwe is huge, but the supply of educational services continues to be a challenge. According to the latest census figures, the country currently has an estimated 6.69 million children aged 3–18 years, of which 49.77 per cent are boys and 50.3 per cent are girls, representing the demand for educational services. The estimated number of schools required for this population is 13,100, but the last educational census (the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) Statistics Report of 2021) recorded only 10,147 schools, representing a deficit of 2,953. New settlements, emerging as a result of new demographic realities, have given rise to satellite schools currently numbering 1,963, of which 1,087 are in the primary sector and 876 secondary. These satellite schools need substantial investment in the improvement of infrastructure to meet the minimum standards of functionality as set by MOPSE for their registration as standalone entities.

The Government is to continue increasing domestic financing of the education sector and is committed to meet the 20 per cent internationally agreed target by 2025. The Government continues to give considerable support to education in terms of budget allocation. To fulfil the internationally agreed 20 per cent target, the Government is continuing to increase the education budget and in 2023 the education sector was allocated almost 15 per cent of the total national budget. As a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP), the education budget represents 2.3 per cent in 2023 compared to 2.1 per cent in 2021. Despite this increase, however, it is lower in absolute value compared both to previous years and what the sector requires.

MOPSE notes the need to improve the education budget expenditure mix in favour of capital investment and infrastructure development. Over 90 per cent of the budget is devoted to recurrent expenditure (largely for the remuneration of teachers and learner support services), leaving less than 10 per cent for capital investment.

Strengthening partnerships. MOPSE has called upon other stakeholders in the education sector to mobilize additional funding from alternative sources in order to increase capital expenditure and implementation of a competency-based curriculum, aimed at equipping learners with knowledge and critical hard and soft skills.

Key Funding Priorities for 2023 and beyond

Considering the above, the following are the education sector's priorities for 2023 and beyond:

1. Provision of adequate and appropriate education infrastructure.
2. Establishment of technical high schools to enhance the acquisition of skills that fit the demands of industry and further education and training.
3. Construction and building the capacity of laboratory workshops and specialist rooms for secondary schools, and procurement of mobile laboratories for primary schools.
4. Establishment of additional libraries in schools, including e-libraries.
5. Prioritisation of investment in foundational learning in order to improve education results.
6. Digitalization of primary and secondary schools through electrification, internet connectivity, procurement of information and communication technology devices, and increasing the capacity of personnel.
7. Curriculum development, review, implementation and assessment.
8. Development of open and distance learning and teaching materials in order to adopt blended learning as a normal mode of providing education services to enhance resilience, especially considering recurring emergencies.
9. Development and expansion of learning assessment products.
10. Promotion of indigenous languages in schools.
11. Provision of adequate safeguarding and learner support, including provision of school feeding and nutrition to ensure access, retention, survival, completion and positive outcomes.
12. Improvement of resilience of schools through entrenching disaster risk management and resilience.
13. Enhancement of the capacity of teachers through continuous professional development, including in-service training.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

The Government vision of and milestones for free basic education in Zimbabwe

The Government of Zimbabwe has made a commitment to introduce free basic state-funded education in 2023 using a phased approach. What is the Ministry's strategy in achieving this important policy objective and, in doing so, what are the key milestones it aims to achieve, and by when?

The Hon. Dr. Evelyn Ndlovu, Minister of Primary and Secondary Education

The Hon. Dr. Ndlovu began by highlighting some of the critical areas to improve education outcomes, which include the need to invest in education infrastructure; strengthening foundational learning; introduction of information and communication technology in schools as a basic need in the 21st century; and the provision of teaching and learning materials and assistive devices for children living with disabilities. She also stressed the importance of school feeding and nutrition programmes, stating that “a hungry child cannot perform in school.”

Dr. Ndlovu reiterated the Government's commitment to fund education in line with Section 75 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe, which stipulates that every citizen and permanent resident has a right to basic education. This is supported by the Education Act that provides for basic state-funded education from early childhood development to form four. However, she also noted that to complement the efforts of the Government, parents are also expected to pay levies.

The Government of Zimbabwe has also put in place social safety nets to cushion orphans and vulnerable children. In 2023, the Government is supporting approximately 1.8 million children through the Basic Education Assistance Module. This will also be enhanced by the Grant-in Aid of tuition, which the Government started to pilot in 2020, starting with 20 schools in selected districts.

In 2022, the President, His Excellency E. D. Mnangagwa announced the introduction of state-funded basic education, which will take various approaches, and Dr. Ndlovu stressed the need for a phased rollout, with priority given to rural schools considering the level of vulnerability and poverty in those areas. Out of school children and orphans and vulnerable children in urban areas will also be prioritized.



The Hon. Dr. Evelyn Ndlovu, Minister of Primary and Secondary Education

The Government is also set to recruit 7,000 additional teachers, which is why the largest share of the education budget is allocated for the remuneration of teachers.

Opportunities to strengthen collaboration towards free basic education and building long-term sustainability

The UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has been an important partner in supporting schools and learners through the Education Sector Support and instruments such as the School Improvement Grant. Given the continued deficit in education financing and the declining levels of support by development partners, what opportunities do you see for strengthening collaboration to achieve free basic state-funded education and building long-term sustainability?

Ms. Geraldine O'Callaghan, Development Director, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Embassy of UK to Zimbabwe

Ms. O'Callaghan reiterated that the Dialogue is a useful platform for policy focused discussion, providing the opportunity to come together and think practically and collaboratively about how to address the serious challenges around financing. Although not unique to Zimbabwe, sustainable financing is one of the most important issues in the education sector. Several other countries, including those from the developed world, are also facing acute challenges in public service delivery.

However, the risks and opportunities around sustainable financing are perhaps more acute in countries that use both taxpayers' money and assistance from development partners to fully fund their budget.

What do we mean by a minimum level of financing required for sustainability? Ms. O'Callaghan referred to the Global Education Summit 2021 for the replenishment of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) that established the global benchmark for the minimum level of funding that would ensure 12 years of quality education for all children. A consensus was reached as part of the Kenyatta Declaration that at least 20 per cent of government budget should be spent on primary and secondary education each year. She thanked the Government of Zimbabwe for being a signatory to that declaration.

The aspirations of the Kenyatta Declaration set against the backdrop of significant economic challenges around the world, including in Zimbabwe.

This pressure is compounded by the fact that there are now far fewer donors providing bilateral funding to the education system across Africa than there were a decade ago. There has been a shift in bilateral donor priorities, for example to address emerging issues such as climate change, and responding to humanitarian crises such as those in the Horn of Africa and Ukraine. In addition, we have also seen a shift from bilateral to multilateral funding, which in education largely means supporting education through the GPE. The reduction in funding is also a reality in Zimbabwe as we have observed fewer donors supporting the Education Development Fund from seven in 2012 to just the UK today. The combination of global and domestic economic pressures and a reduction in donor funding makes the question of strengthening collaboration for sustainability even more important.

Ms. O'Callaghan also highlighted the following six areas or approaches that the UK considers opportunities for effective collaboration:

i. **The UK aligns their limited resources behind the priorities set by the Government of Zimbabwe.** With limited external resources and chronic needs, all partners must point in the same direction, including civil society organizations, development partners, multilaterals and the private sector. The synergetic direction needs to be focused on the priorities of the Government of Zimbabwe to improve outcomes that ensure all children leave school with 12 years of quality education. She paid tribute to MOPSE in its focus and its drive in setting clear priorities and policies, highlighting that the Ministry has undertaken evidence-based analysis in the development of the Education



Ms. Geraldine O'Callaghan, Development Director, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Embassy of UK to Zimbabwe

Act, the Education Sector Strategic Plan and the School Financing Policy. She also expressed the need for the Cabinet to review the School Financing Policy as this is key for achieving the goal of sustainable financing.

- ii. **A robust implementable government-led School Financing Policy is the backbone to strong collaboration amongst all partners in the education sector.** Ms. O'Callaghan highlighted that UK funding to the education sector in Zimbabwe augments the Ministry's clear commitment to increase domestic financing and its strong commitment to evidence-based policy making. The commitment has shown a clearly thought-out plan of action and the funds needed to commit to the planned actions.
- iii. **Strong collaboration mechanisms aligning external support behind an agreed consistent standard set by the Ministry is key.** With good collaboration such as that through the Education Coordination Group, we can also ensure that the partners' limited available resources are complementary. This collaboration has helped to determine who is funding what aspects of school leadership to ensure complementarity and better delivery.
- iv. **Foster a shared vision across all relevant government ministries.** Sustainable financing requires broader collaboration between all government ministries, departments and agencies. Ms. O'Callaghan noted that it is critical to have a shared vision across government and all relevant ministries. For example, it

is critical that the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development is an active participant in the Dialogue. The engagement in and collaboration on the Basic Education Assistance Module led by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare requires working together to ensure that these funds are delivered to schools to support wider education objectives. This is still an area where more can be done in terms of harmonization and ensuring an effective whole-of-government approach.

v. **Moving forward, the UK aims to use its resources to strategically address the most acute needs in the sector.**

Ms. O’Callaghan noted that the UK has been providing education sector support to Zimbabwe since 2012, amounting to over US\$300 million. Globally, education has remained a high priority for the UK despite the increasing pressure on its development budget around the world. This is because it recognizes the fundamental importance of ensuring 12 years of quality education for all children as the absolute bedrock of growth and development in any country. In Zimbabwe, the UK will continue to prioritize education within its broader development portfolio. The strong collaboration with MOPSE and other partners will enable the allocation of resources where the Government needs them most. However, she raised the concern that in 2023 approximately 87 per cent of all government funding to the education sector is directed at teacher salaries, leaving little room to fund other development activities including capital and infrastructure investments. As such, the UK will be prioritising these under-funded areas: provision of school improvement grants to the poorest schools, supporting solarization of 150 schools, teacher training, and technical assistance to systems strengthening and policy.

vi. **The importance of combining bilateral and multilateral efforts.**

In addition to the bilateral support it provides to Zimbabwe, Ms. O’Callaghan noted that the UK is the second largest donor to GPE globally and acts as a coordinating agency for GPE in Zimbabwe, working closely with grant agents. This is to ensure GPE resources remain focused on supporting MOPSE priorities. There is clear alignment of the bilateral priorities of the UK and those of the GPE.

vii. **Building awareness, and generating consensus and momentum on the need for increased domestic financing.**

Ms. Geraldine O’Callaghan highlighted that the Government of Zimbabwe’s commitment to the Kenyatta Declaration in 2021 was a positive step towards increased domestic financing to education that rose from 12.4 per cent in 2022 to 14.9 per cent in 2023

even though it remains slightly below the anticipated 16 per cent indicated during the Global Education Summit. Considering the budget is focused on the basic wage bill, matching the commitment up to the target of 20 per cent by 2025 is essential to ensure sustainable financing for quality and relevant education.

Canada’s experience in supporting the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the implication for Zimbabwe

What is Canada’s experience in supporting the GPE and what lessons can be learned in Zimbabwe?

Ms. Jessica Dawson, Counsellor, Embassy of Canada to Zimbabwe.



Ms. Jessica Dawson, Counsellor, Embassy of Canada to Zimbabwe

Ms. Jessica Dawson began by highlighting that the right to quality education is a catalyst for improving human dignity and is the means through which all other rights can be realized. Education is a powerful tool for the empowerment of individuals, families and nations, and it is a portal through which economic, political and social progress takes place.

Education is the foundation for prosperity. Education allows young people to know and exercise their rights, to transform harmful social norms and behaviours and to address unequal power relationships including gender inequality, to develop critical thinking skills that benefit their

families, communities, and their nations, to learn tolerance and appreciation of diversity to foster peace and security, and to raise awareness about climate change and environmental sustainability.

Despite major progress globally in access to education and reducing the number of out-of-school children, significant challenges do remain in access to learning, quality, equity, governance, and financing in education, particularly for women and girl children. These challenges have been exacerbated in recent years because of the significant effects of the global Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on education. We are going through an unprecedented learning crisis globally. In Zimbabwe for example, the number of children that were able to access online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic was particularly low.

Now is the time for us as donors and as nations to refocus our efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4. There is a need to ensure that we work together to transform education and that no child and no learner is left behind.

Canada has a Feminist Foreign Assistance Policy and places the empowerment of women and girls at the centre of its all-development efforts including in education financing. The Government of Canada has always and will continue to champion girls' education, everywhere, every time, including in situations of conflict and crisis. It is committed to ensuring access to safe, inclusive, equitable and quality education for all, particularly the most marginalized.

Canadian education programming seeks to remove and reduce barriers to access education particularly those faced by the girl child, which are often rooted in power dynamics and inequalities, sexual and gender-based violence, child early and forced marriage, inaccessible school buildings, and absence of toilet facilities and hygiene products, among others. These barriers are also evident in Zimbabwe. In addition, Canada is also working to improve the quality of education, including through teacher training, curriculum development, learning materials, and other school resources, and focusing on ensuring that we have safe and adequate school infrastructure for learners.

Ms. Dawson noted that Canada's approach hinges on country ownership of the education system, participatory programming and partnerships with governments and communities. She highlighted that Canada is one of the leading countries supporting education globally. In 2018, when it assumed the G7 presidency, US\$4.3 billion dollars was raised for girls' education, including Can\$400 million from Canada.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to widespread school closures, is going to be felt for years to come. As such Canada has allocated Can\$1.6 billion for COVID-19 development programming, including Can\$78.9 million to be channelled specifically to education.

Canada's approach to education financing is focused more through multilateral than bilateral funding. Ms. Dawson indicated that Canada now focuses its efforts through multilateral partners in education and particularly GPE. GPE is the world's largest multi-stakeholder partnership fund dedicated to improving education in the world's poorest countries. Through the GPE, Canada - along with 25 other donor countries and foundations - seeks to bridge the gap in ensuring that every child, everywhere has access to quality education. Canada has been a supporter of the GPE since 2007 and has contributed over Can\$400 million. Its latest pledge is Can\$300 million over five years commencing in 2021 through to 2025. By working through partnerships such as the GPE, donors such as Canada can leverage limited donor resources and collective strengths. The triple threat of climate change, conflict, and health emergencies such as COVID-19 present an urgency that needs to emphasize partners strengthening their collaboration and coordination. From a donor perspective - and this is very much Canada's approach - funds like the GPE are key to build better, more resilient and inclusive education sectors.

In Zimbabwe specifically, the GPE has been a partner since 2013 with a total grant support of US\$75 million. There are currently a few active grants in Zimbabwe through the GPE including US\$7 million for a COVID-19 response through UNICEF as the grant agent. This grant supports continuous learning, teacher training, preparing schools for better and safer reopening, and psychosocial support.

Financing basic education in Zimbabwe

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has increased allocations to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to nearly 15 per cent of total budget allocations and 2.9 per cent of GDP. However, initial analysis suggests that the costs of basic free state-funded education will require more than 4 per cent of GDP to be allocated to this sector. What are the financing instruments and options that the Ministry can utilize to further increase resources for the education sector?

Mr. Clive Mphambela, Chief Director, Communication and Advocacy, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

Mr. Clive Mphambela, Chief Director, Communication and Advocacy, participated in the Dialogue on behalf of the Hon. Professor Mthuli Ncube, Minister of Finance and Economic Development. He gave a broad overview of the financing framework for basic education in Zimbabwe. He also highlighted that the Government of Zimbabwe is highly committed to meeting its obligations to education financing and has always prioritised education since independence.

He indicated that **macroeconomic challenges, which peaked between 2000 and 2008, negatively impacted government social sector expenditures on health and education and resulted in a decline of more than half.** However, through the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (2018–2020) and National Development Strategy 1 (2021–2025), the Government is prioritising macroeconomic stability to provide a strong base for sustained economic growth, and spillovers to all sectors including the education sector.

The demand for adequate infrastructure in the education sector continues to increase and school facilities require renovating and upgrading. Furthermore, Mr. Mphambela stressed the importance of prioritising investment to address the needs of children with disabilities and orphans and vulnerable children, as school attendance and completion rates have over the years been lower amongst this group. Recurring natural disasters have left many children vulnerable, placing a huge toll on the education infrastructure and resulting in a loss of learning time, negatively impacting the sector. The Treasury also emphasised the need to improve the resilience of the education sector infrastructure by embedding disaster risk reduction mechanisms in construction, maintenance, and daily school routines.

While the country has made significant strides in achieving universal primary education, a key challenge remains access to quality, equitable and inclusive education across all education levels as measured by net enrolment ratios. During the timeframe of the National Development Strategy 1, additional attention will be directed to broadening access to and participation in quality, equitable and inclusive education by marginalized populations in remote places and over-crowded urban areas. For this to take place, a whole-of-government approach will be adopted in the implementation of various strategies to improve education service delivery throughout the country, with all government institutions also implementing projects that directly impact on the education sector.

Free basic education requires substantial resources, estimated by the Treasury at around 4 per cent of GDP. Careful analysis of demand- and supply-side funding needs

is required to assess what both the Government and parents are currently providing to finance education and how the supply side can be improved. In addition, sequencing of interventions, starting with the most disadvantaged communities is key.

The importance of devolution as a funding mechanism to advance education outcomes. Devolution is an important pillar under the National Development Strategy 1, and the Government has been indirectly funding education through the use of devolution funds that the Treasury hopes will contribute to more positive results in 2023. There is also a need to strengthen and expand public private partnerships for infrastructure development in the education sector.

Achieving more with less. While the Government strives to increase the education budget from the current 15 per cent to 20 per cent, efforts should also be placed on value for money through improving spending efficiency. In that regard, in 2022 the Government thrust has been on increasing efficiency in procurement to improve the fiscal space.

Call on the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to improve budget utilization. The Treasury has raised concerns that all government ministries, including MOPSE, are facing challenges in budget execution. This is an area that needs improvement in order to deliver more. In that regard, the Treasury is working with MOPSE, UNICEF and other partners to improve execution. The Government has also taken a performance-based approach and adopted programme-based budgeting with clear results frameworks to enhance budget efficiency and accountability and reduce waste, both of which are critical for increasing fiscal headroom. As such, the functionality of the Budget Committee under MOPSE is key.

With regard to improving access to education and to improve quality by reducing the pupil-teacher ratio, the Government has made an allocation for the recruitment of 7,000 teachers in 2023.

The role of technology in education

Microsoft's work helps to ensure that all children and young people, particularly in remote rural areas, are ready for a digital future. In 2020, only 6.8 per cent of children in Zimbabwe had access to online learning. What are the needs to scale up digital education?

Mrs. Jaye Richards-Hill, Director, Education Industry for Middle East and Africa, Microsoft

Mrs. Richards-Hill started by highlighting that Microsoft's involvement in education is not only in technology but also policy and strategy, to ensure equity and access to education services. She also stressed that to have great learning and teaching there is a need to have excellent teacher education. In that regard Microsoft has an Online Professional Development Platform for Teachers. The role of teachers changed significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and therefore the type of skills they require for them to remain relevant in the 21st century is also shifting from face-to-face to online, which is a challenge for many teachers globally. We therefore need to reflect on how to make teachers more effective in this global digital age.

The digital economy is being driven by connectivity. Microsoft also invests in connectivity infrastructure to provide low-cost affordable access. The digital economy we are living in is being driven by the power of connectivity. Connectivity brings the world into classrooms and takes the classroom out to the world, and helps children to learn digital skills that are relevant to the wider economy and are also transferable across different jobs and roles in life. Mrs. Richards-Hill called on donors to seriously consider supporting an education connectivity programme, particularly for Africa. Microsoft's work to develop connectivity infrastructure includes:

- Dynamic Spectrum Access Technology is a TV-wide space that sends internet signal through the spare capacity in the spectrum. This is a cheap means to improve broadband connectivity to schools.
- Microsoft is working on satellite connectivity for education.
- Microsoft is working with telephone companies to help extend their networks into areas where it is difficult or where it is not economically feasible to lay broadband, working with existing infrastructure and helping to extend that for the benefit of education and health centres.
- Microsoft also develops several learning platforms, learner management systems, and Windows low-cost devices specifically made for education.

Microsoft is also working on skills programmes to support education, including digital literacy for teachers and learners, experts technical cloud certifications that are globally recognized to help upskill nations and systems.

Learning Passport as a game-changer. Mrs. Richards-Hill also recognised the importance of the Learning Passport as a game changer and the need to leverage it further to deliver education services. The Learning



Mrs. Jaye Richards-Hill, Director, Education Industry for Middle East and Africa, Microsoft

Passport is built on Microsoft technology and has many interesting features including an in-built offline functionality that allows it to operate in low bandwidth situations or where there is no internet connectivity at all. Work continues to further develop the Learning Passport to add new functionalities.

In conclusion, Mrs. Richards-Hill emphasized the quality of teachers and teachers' professional development, and the availability of infrastructure and internet connectivity as some of the critical elements that will help to improve learning, and engagement with children in classrooms.

Global trends in free basic education and implementation (roll-out) to promote sustainability

What are the global trends in addressing sector financing for free basic state-funded education? What lessons can be drawn to promote sustainability in the context of Zimbabwe?

Mr. Robert Jenkins, Director, Education and Adolescent Development, Programme Group, UNICEF

Mr. Jenkins began by thanking the Hon. Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Dr. Ndlovu, for the hospitality and for the vision and leadership of the education sector. He commended the Government for the commitment to take action and made reference to the Transforming Education Summit held in September 2021

when heads of states and governments made commitments related to education financing, girls' education, and reducing disparities, among others. However, he noted that despite commitments at global fora, the challenge remains to translate global commitments into practical actions, delivering on those commitments and realizing that vision.

How do we measure how global commitments are translating into action? In his remarks, Mr. Jenkins elaborated on the various means of measuring how a country is translating its commitments into actions in line with the global practices.

i. **First, the country's overall budget allocation to the education sector.** The commitment to increase funding for basic education is absolutely critical. He commended the Government of Zimbabwe for being an impressive example of putting this commitment into action by increasing the absolute amount of funding for basic education. He emphasized that if a country is below the minimum of what is needed for basic education, it will be more talk and less action.

ii. **Second, there is need to examine how the money is being spent.** Is it being spent effectively or not? Globally, there are different ways of measuring whether the funding is being spent effectively in the education system that include:

- **The share of the budget allocated for foundational learning.** Foundational learning includes basics in reading, writing, mathematics and digital skills. It provides the foundation to succeed in school as children progress in their learning trajectory. Mr. Jenkins highlighted that there is a global learning crisis around foundational learning, with 88 per cent of 10-year-olds in Africa not able to read at that critical point. However, he commended the Government of Zimbabwe for its commitment towards foundational learning through increased public spending to ensure children are school-ready.
- **The amount of resources allocated to early childhood education to ensure children are school-ready when they enter first grade.** Mr. Jenkins noted that evidence shows that investing in early childhood education has the highest return on investment. He also stressed that some studies have shown that starting school ready is positively correlated with lifelong earnings



Mr. Robert Jenkins, Director, Education and Adolescent Development, Programme Group, UNICEF

and will determine how much money one will make as an adult. This is a very important indicator of measuring spending effectiveness.

- **Skills to work transition.** This refers to whether youth, adolescents and children are acquiring the skills that enable them to contribute to their families, society and communities as they are entering adulthood. These include problem solving, digital, communication and entrepreneurship skills and other transferable skills critical in the 21st century. It is very important that children and youth acquire these skills as they exit the school system.

iii. **Third, the level of equity in the allocation of resources in the country.** One way of measuring this is the proportion of resources that is allocated in the education sector to the poorest children. Mr. Jenkins indicated that evidence from recent studies shows that not one single country in the world allocates 20 per cent of public resources in education to the 20 per cent of the poorest children. He appreciated the efforts by the Government of Zimbabwe to provide additional funding through school grants to remotely located schools, specific assistance to marginalized children, and the focus on schools that require additional assistance due to certain characteristics. This shows how the Government is translating statements into action, which Mr. Jenkins commended.

In conclusion, he stressed two fundamental issues around financing in education:

- **Leadership is key.** Leadership's commitment to investing in children's future. He congratulated the Government of Zimbabwe for its leadership and showing other countries what is possible.
- **Partnerships are crucial.** UNICEF is one of the partners, both globally and at a country level, that continue to support the ambitious and bold leadership of the country.

Statement by the Zimbabwe Economic Society

Dr. Nigel Chanakira, President, Zimbabwe Economics Society

Education sector spending is increasing, though the expenditure mix is worrisome. Dr. Chanakira began by highlighting that Zimbabwe is back on course to having education as a fundamental pillar, returning to internationally comparable levels. He reiterated that education spending had decreased in real terms, though aiming at a 15 per cent allocation of total budget for the education sector in 2023 is commendable. However, he raised concerns regarding the education budget expenditure mix as it is heavily skewed towards recurrent expenditures, with 90 per cent allocated to salaries and other non-wage recurrent expenditures, with only 10 per cent to infrastructure development.

Call to re-orient the education sector expenditure mix in favour of capital. Dr. Chanakira noted that, with a current deficit of 3,000 schools, as a society Zimbabwe is aware of the demand for new schools. It is therefore important to look at the rehabilitation, repair, upgrading and modernization of existing schools, taking into account disaster risk reduction.



Dr. Nigel Chanakira, President, Zimbabwe Economics Society

Historically, Zimbabwe has delivered quality education and has a diaspora population that competes internationally, evidence of a successful education sector.

Make the education sector attractive to private capital.

Dr. Chanakira asked the question "Where does the private sector come in regarding filling the gap of 3,000 schools?" and expressed the need to attract private sector capital investment in the education sector. He hoped one day there could be a listing of education sector companies in the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange, as observed in other countries.

Areas for potential private sector investment. As the private sector and as the Zimbabwe Economics Society there is interest in investing in technology, digital solutions and financial literacy, and empowering children in entrepreneurial skills. Dr. Chanakira also highlighted the need to increase the return on investment in education spending: What skills have been given to children? How employable are they? How many businesses are being started?

PANEL DISCUSSIONS



Question and Answer Session

Facilitator: Dr. Tajudeen Oyewale, UNICEF Representative

How much is the Government allocating per child to support education in Zimbabwe?

The Hon. Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Dr. Ndlovu, commented that the Grant-in-Aid was still a pilot. The issue of foundational learning hinges on the language of instruction of the child at entry level and it is critical to use the child's native language so that it becomes very easy for the child to understand. However, currently there is a shortage of teachers who can teach in children's native languages and MOPSE is working with the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education to increase the number of teachers who can teach in all 16 official languages.

In addition, the Deputy Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, the Hon. Edgar Moyo, indicated that funding education covers a very wide area including salaries, infrastructure development of schools, learning and teaching materials, etc., and cannot be easily disaggregated to get an allocation per learner. Nonetheless, the policy thrust remains that the Government is committed to support education.

What actions are being taken to expand Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) in rural schools?

There has always been a policy within the Government to promote teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. To transform this policy into action, the Government with the support of development

partners is working on converting some classrooms in rural areas into laboratories to facilitate the teaching and learning of sciences.

What are the barriers excluding Zimbabwe from accessing the International Finance Facility for Education?

The International Finance Facility for Education is still a work in progress and the mechanisms and modalities of how it works are still being developed.

A youth advocate enquired whether the financial support to students such as Grant-in-Aid and the School Improvement Grant are benefiting schools in rural areas and not only in Harare?

In response Mrs. Thabela, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, highlighted that, with the School Improvement Grant and other similar interventions, priority is given to the poorest and marginalized segments of the country. She also confirmed that all government interventions are equity-based to ensure that no one is left behind.

Why is government both a responsible authority and a regulator?

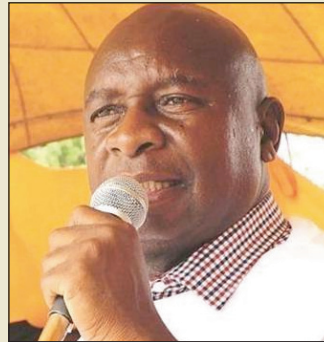
In her response, Mrs. Thabela indicated that approximately 85 per cent of all schools are owned by Rural District Councils who themselves are part of government. Central government only owns some 5 per cent of schools, providing education in urban spaces. Traditionally, the Government does not want to own schools but intervenes where it sees necessary to address a gap. For instance, the current shortage of school infrastructure is forcing the Government to take an active role. It is Government's primary responsibility to offer education.

CONCLUDING REMARKS



**Ms. Jessica Dawson,
Counsellor, Embassy of
Canada to Zimbabwe**

On behalf of the Government of Canada as a donor, she appreciated the commitment exhibited by the Government of Zimbabwe to support and transform education. She highlighted that Canada will continue to partner with the Government of Zimbabwe and support its vision.



**The Hon. Edgar Moyo,
Deputy Minister, Ministry
of Primary and
Secondary Education**

He thanked participants for their time and valued contributions and stressed the need to look again at the education financing architecture in Zimbabwe given the glaring funding gaps.



**Mrs. Jaye Richards-Hill,
Director, Education
Industry for Middle East
and Africa, Microsoft**

The COVID-19 pandemic caused us to be introspective in what did or what did not work in education. Coming out of the pandemic we have a real opportunity to re-imagine what education could look like. She further indicated the need to be very intentional about how we look at the digital transformation journey as it is not only about digital systems but human capacity and making sure that the technology available serves the purpose of driving better and exciting teaching and learning in the classroom.



**The Hon. Dr. Evelyn
Ndlovu, Minister,
Ministry of Primary and
Secondary Education**

The Hon. Minister Dr. Ndlovu emphasised the importance and centrality of the gender dimension to the discussions and debates on transforming education in Zimbabwe so that the girl child remains in school. She also noted that although Zimbabwe has a clear policy on the need to retain pregnant girl children in school, there is no clear laid out mechanism on how they return to school after delivery.



**Mr. Robert Jenkins,
Director, Education and
Adolescent
Development,
Programme Group,
UNICEF**

He appreciated the alignment of views across stakeholders on how to transform education. On strengthening foundational learning, he reiterated UNICEF's readiness and availability to support the Government.

The Hon. Minister noted that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education will benefit from the High-level Policy Dialogue deliberations. In that respect, the Government will continue to work on prioritizing the financing of education. She also acknowledged and appreciated the support that the Government is receiving from development partners, including from Canada and the UK. She reiterated that the reconstruction of schools destroyed by Cyclone Idai is still a work in progress and called upon development partners to continue to support that effort. She also acknowledged the support that MOPSE continues to receive from the Government for the provision of social safety nets and assistive devices, the school feeding programme, development of infrastructure, and payment of teachers' salaries.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Mrs. Tumisang Thabela, Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

The Panel highlighted the continued commitment of all partners to further advance the education agenda in the country and channel further resources through strong collaboration amongst all partners. The Government's commitment to free basic education was made loud and clear, as was the need for pragmatism and a gradual and sequenced approach to its introduction, focusing on the most marginalized.

Several recommendations have emerged from this third High-Level Policy Dialogue focused on education:

Enhance partnerships and collaborations. There is need to foster working relationships with civil society organizations. The private sector is key in providing both capital and technologies that can match the demands of the current global digital economy. It is therefore critical for the Government to establish more formal and structured engagements with civil society organizations and the private sector.

Leverage private sector financing and technologies. It is critical to package education services so that they attract private sector investment.

Improve how we assess and accredit in education. Focus should also be on the 80 per cent of the learners

who fail to proceed to university education - they need to be assessed for what they can do. This points to the need to review the assessment models and the structure of the curricula to take on board emerging issues.

Invest in low-cost but high impact technologies. Take advantage of technologies that can support quality education.

Invest in value for money. Build the capacity of personnel in the education sector to undertake value for money procurement, and in the implementation of programmes to broaden the fiscal space that can be used to fund other critical interventions including infrastructure development.

Investment in education infrastructure is the bedrock for access to and provision of quality education. Most importantly, given recurrent natural disasters, there is a need to invest in resilient infrastructure.

Call to increase investment in foundational learning. Foundational learning is the bedrock of education, and the first four years are critical. It is important to get things right from the beginning and hence critical to develop strong foundational learning.

Time	Item	Facilitator
	Opening Session	
09:45-10:00	Briefing of panellists and delegates	Mrs. Thabela, Dr. Oyewale and Dr. Chanakira
10:00-10:05	Calling the meeting to order and introduction of co-conveners	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
10:05-10:10	Welcome by the convenors and outline of the purpose of the Policy Dialogue	Dr. Oyewale
10:10-10:30	Opening Presentation - Overview of the Basic Education Sector Policy and Financing in Zimbabwe	Mrs. Tumisang Thabela, Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
	Panel Session and Question	Co-conveners
10:30-10:40	<p>Topic: Government vision of and milestones for free basic education in Zimbabwe</p> <p>Question 1: The Government of Zimbabwe has made a commitment to introduce free basic state-funded education in 2023 through a phased approach. What is the Ministry's strategy in achieving this important policy objective and, in doing so, what are the key milestones it aims to achieve, and by when?</p>	The Hon. Dr. Evelyn Ndlovu, Minister, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
10:40-10:50	<p>Topic: Opportunities to strengthen collaboration towards free basic education and building long-term sustainability</p> <p>Question 2: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK Embassy) has been an important partner in supporting schools and learners through the Education Sector Support and instruments such as the School Improvement Grant. Given the continued deficit in education financing and the declining levels of support by development partners, what opportunities do you see for strengthening collaboration to achieve free basic state-funded education and building long-term sustainability?</p>	Mrs. Geraldine O'Callaghan, Development Director, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Embassy of UK to Zimbabwe
10:50-11:00	<p>Topic: Canada's experience in supporting the Global Partnership for Education and the implications for Zimbabwe</p> <p>Question 3: What is Canada's experience in supporting the Global Partnership for Education and what lessons can be learned in Zimbabwe?</p>	Ms. Jessica Dawson, Counsellor, Embassy of Canada to Zimbabwe
11:00-11:10	<p>Topic: Financing basic education in Zimbabwe</p> <p>Question 4: The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has increased allocations to MOPSE to nearly 15 per cent of total budget allocations and 2.9 per cent of GDP. However, initial analysis suggests that the costs of basic free state-funded education will require more than 4 per cent of GDP to be allocated to this sector. What are the financing instruments and options that the Ministry can utilize to further increase resources for the education sector?</p>	Mr. Mphambela, Chief Director, Communication and Advocacy, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
11:10-11:20	<p>Topic: The role of technology in education</p> <p>Question 5: Microsoft's work helps to ensure that all children and young people, particularly in remote rural areas, are ready for a digital future. In 2020, only 6.8 per cent of children in Zimbabwe had access to online learning. What are the needs to scale up digital education? (Note: reference to the Learning Passport, especially in Zimbabwe).</p>	Mrs. Jaye Richards-Hill, Director, Education Industry for Middle East and Africa, Microsoft
11:20-11:30	<p>Topic: Global trends in free basic education and implementation (roll-out) to promote sustainability</p> <p>Question 6: What are the global trends in addressing sector financing for free basic state-funded education? What lessons can be drawn to promote sustainability in the context of Zimbabwe?</p>	Mr. Robert Jenkins, Director, Education and Adolescent Development, Programme Group, UNICEF
11:30-11:50	Question and Answers	Co-conveners
11:50-12:00	Statement from the President, Zimbabwe Economics Society	Dr. Nigel Chanakira
12:00-12:15	Panellists' final remarks	Panellists
12:15-12:25	Summary of key messages	Mrs. Tumisang Thabela, Secretary, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
12:25-12:35	Final remarks by the Hon. Dr. Evelyn Ndlovu, Minister of Primary and Secondary Education	The Hon. Dr. Evelyn Ndlovu, Minister, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
12:35	Lunch and departure	UNICEF and Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education