

EDUCATION COALITION OF ZIMBABWE



The Civil Society Voice in Education

Right to Education Index-Zimbabwe Country Brief

Introduction

Education is both a human right in itself and a means for realising and promoting other human rights. Education is the building block of all nations which propels socio-economic and technological development of a nation to its full potential when the right to education is fully realised. In Zimbabwe, the yardsticks of the right to education are defined in the international, regional and national right to education frameworks which include United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children, Zimbabwean Constitution and the Education Act to mention just a few.

With support from Results Educational Fund, Education Coalition of Zimbabwe conducted the Right to Education Index (RTEI) pilot study to measure the national level progress towards realisation of the right to education as well as the obstacles being faced in Zimbabwe. The national level results will feed in to the construction of a global right to education index that compares progress made by countries in realising the right to education as stipulated in international frameworks. RTEI can be used to help civil society organisations to hold governments accountable to their commitments on the right to education through conducting evidence based advocacy. Civil society partners will be able to zero in on the most critical issues for their contexts and more strategically use RTEI to support their national campaigns, strengthen networks of Northern and Southern education advocates, and increase public and political support to realize the right to education. RTEI focuses on the minimum core obligations that are to be immediately implemented by governments and are not subject to resource constraints.

Data on RTEI was collected using the RTEI Questionnaire covering four themes of Governance, Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Adaptability.

Governance speaks to the legal structure of education in a State. This includes State ratification of international declarations or treaties, education financing, and education standards and regulations.

Availability speaks to the specific quantity of educational institutions available and the condition of such institutions.

Accessibility speaks to whether available institutions are accessible to all students regardless of their socio-economic, familial, or demographic status.

Acceptability speaks to the quality of available education. This moves beyond learning outcomes to also capture the cultural relevance and security of the educational environment as well as the aims and content of education.

Adaptability speaks to the ability of education to be flexible in meeting the needs of a diverse range of students.

Each of the five themes in the RTEI Questionnaire includes a mix of structural, process, and outcome indicators.

Structural indicators capture the domestic legal environment, addressing whether laws exist on the books that comply with the international right to education framework.

Process indicators capture the efforts of the State, addressing whether mechanisms have been put in place to aid in the realization of the right to education.

Outcome indicators measure the results of structural and process indicators in practice, addressing whether citizens are actually enjoying the right to education.

Project Objectives

(1) To strengthen networks of Northern and Southern advocates through action research, dynamic resources, capacity building, and joint advocacy

(2) To hold governments and institutions accountable to their commitments to improve basic education and realize the right to education

(3) To increase public and political support to realize the right to education from donor countries and developing country governments alike

(4) To equip civil society and education coalitions with greater knowledge of the right to education and capacity to use it in their advocacy

(5) To strengthen National-level advocacy on the right to education

Overview of RTEI Results

The RTEI findings, based on the 5 thematic areas, reflected the progress made by Zimbabwe in realising the right to education and the challenges faced. It was observed that Governance in the education system needs attention in Zimbabwe. The Governance theme scored the lowest score of 60.6 % among five other themes. Under that theme, the sub-theme on Plan of Action reflected that Zimbabwe does not have a national education plan that aims to achieve free compulsory primary education and the sub-theme has a score of 0 regardless of Zimbabwe being a signatory to international frameworks that speaks to provision of free and compulsory primary education.

The second theme on Availability of education scored 67, 4% and the sub-theme on Classrooms scored the lowest with 23, 5% followed by the sub-theme on teachers that had a score of 54, 6%. The theme on Accessibility of education scored 78, 7% and the sub-themes scored 73, 1% and above thereby reflecting a general realisation of minimum core obligations on the right to education by the government. The theme on Acceptability had an overall score of 79, 0% with the sub-theme on learning environment scoring 66, 6% being the lowest in

that category. The fifth theme on Adaptability scored 66, 6% with the sub-theme on Out-of-School Children scoring 33, 3 % thereby reflecting the areas that need focus and challenges faced to promote the right to education in Zimbabwe.

Issue Area 1

Theme: Governance

Sub-Theme: Plan of Action

According to RTEI pilot study findings, there is no plan of action that reflects national commitment towards providing free and compulsory education and the indicator scored 0% indicating total absence of the commitment.

Zimbabwe is a signatory to the regional and international frameworks which include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNESCO Convention against Discrimination on Education and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children which states that primary education should be compulsory and free for all. Article 28 of the UNCRC clearly stipulates that, “States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular: (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all.¹ African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children Section 3 clearly states that, “States Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures with a view to achieving the full realization of this right and shall in particular:(a) provide free and compulsory basic education.² These provisions were domesticated in to the Zimbabwean Constitution under Section 75 (1) (a) which stipulates that every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has a right to a basic state funded education including adult basic education.³

However this is contrary to the provisions of the Zimbabwe 2011-2015 Education Sector Plan which does not have a plan of action to provide free and compulsory primary education. The Education Sector Plan gives direction (plan of action) on the implementation of education programmes and reforms in tandem with the international education legal frameworks to promote the right to education. The 2011-2015 Education Sector Plan states that children should pay fees for them to access education and this is in line with the Education Act Education Act [Chapter 25:04] requires school fees to be maintained at the lowest possible levels. This has been worsened by the introduction of examination fees at Grade 7 to cushion the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council which is resource constrained. There is no harmony between the Constitution and the National Education Legal Frameworks such the Education Act.

Lack of a plan of action to provide free and compulsory primary education in Zimbabwe have immensely contributed to school dropouts thereby hindering access to education especially for girls. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education has enacted a policy of non-expulsion of learners with arrears, but leaving authorities to deal with the parent who defaults payment. Such practices continue to take away the right to education for children as the

¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children Article 28

² African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children Section 3

³ Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Act (20) Section 75 (1) (a)

MoPSE will be using the “carrot and stick method” and may gradually move towards privatisation of education.

Recommendations

- ❖ There is need to harmonise the Education Legal Framework with the Constitution for the right to education to be reflected.
- ❖ Civil society need to actively participate during the development and monitor implementation of Education Sector Plans to promote the provision of free and compulsory education.

Issue Area 2

Theme: Adaptability

Sub-Theme: Out of School Education

According to RTEI pilot study findings the indicator scored 33,3% reflecting the nation’s non-adherence to minimum core obligations to the right to education. Zimbabwe is a signatory to the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education in which Article 3(e) urges all member states to “eliminate and prevent discrimination in education by giving foreign nationals that reside within their territory the same access to education as their own nationals.”⁴ However the right to education is not being universally applied as migrants and those in detention receive education of different quality with those in the conventional education system. According to the RTEI pilot study findings accessibility of education in refugee camps is limited by the fact that refugees are assisted with a scholarship program for them to access education however the scholarships cover a limited number than those in need of support. Scholarships take long to be processed and parents for those children will be asked to pay fees for their children to access education hence that limits access to education for the poor refugee families. This is aggravated by the unavailability of a plan of action on the provision free and compulsory basic education in Zimbabwe regardless of being a signatory to international education frameworks that stipulates that member countries should provide free and compulsory education. According to UNICEF, in 2009, Zimbabwe had 281,000 IDPs primary aged children out of school.

The right to education is not fully enjoyed by prisoners as the curriculum is different from that of learners in the mainstream schools. According to the RTEI pilot study findings prisoners are offered courses in agriculture, woodwork, music, peace keeping, nonviolence and human rights, meant to promote their self-esteem, tolerance and conflict management skills. Zimbabwe prisoners are denied the opportunity to study in conventional institutions during their time of serving. This is because conventional institutions do not have special education facilities to reach out to people behind bars (Chigunwe, 2014).⁵ Academic education is provided in the form of general education or literacy classes. This shows that Zimbabwe have not met the minimum core obligation in promoting the right to education considering that there discrimination on promoting access to education between migrants/refugees, prisoners and those in conventional system. UNESCO Convention against

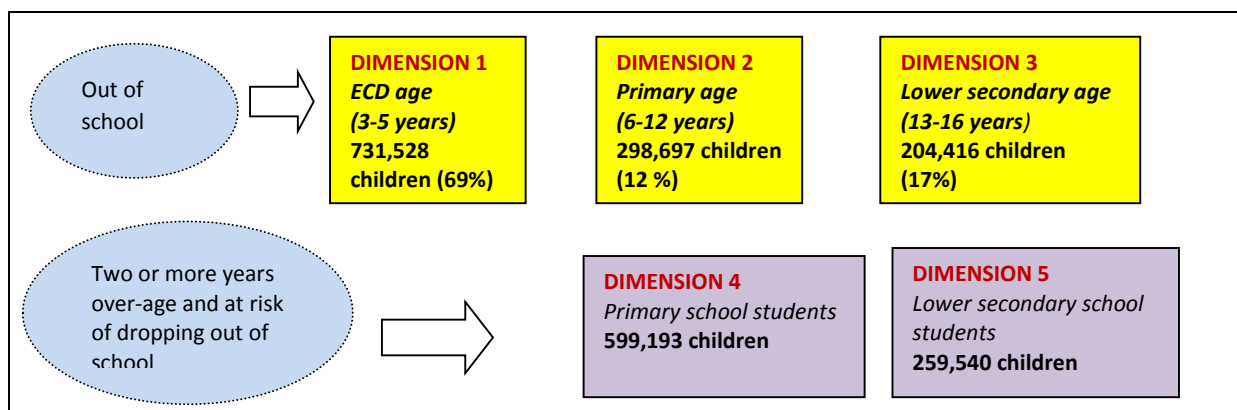
⁴ UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education in which Article 3(e)

⁵ Chigunwe G (2014) ,Access and Inclusion of Inmates to Education through Open and Distance Learning Mode page 8 paragraph 2

Discrimination denounces the discriminatory practices in promoting the right to education among member states. Refugees/migrants and prisoners constitute a significant number of the total population hence depriving them the right to education significantly negatively impacts on the attainment of national development goals and the global Sustainable Development Goal number 4 at large.

According to the National out of School Children Report (2015) there were 4,696,061, children of school going age between 3 and 16 years in Zimbabwe in 2012. Out of these, 1,234,641 or 26.3 per cent, more than one quarter of children between 3 to 16 years were classified as being out of school, according to the National Census of 2012. Slightly more boys, 50.8 per cent, than girls, 49.2 per cent, were out of school⁶.

Summary of education exclusion in Zimbabwe using the Five Dimensions of Education Exclusion Framework



Source: ZIMSTAT National Census data, 2012; EMIS data, 2012

In addition, there were more than half a million children in primary school and a quarter of million children in secondary school who were two or more years over-age for their grade and potentially at risk of dropping out of school. Out of school children occur in all provinces and districts, rural and urban, although some areas, in particular remote marginal areas, with high poverty levels and vulnerabilities, are more seriously affected.⁷ Many children drop out after completing primary school and do not make the transition to secondary school. Evidence indicates that the highest prevalence of dropping out occurs in Grade 7. Of concern are the primary school children who do not transit to secondary school, particularly the poor who cannot afford the costs of secondary education, which is more expensive than primary school, and those in remote communities as well as orphans and vulnerable children.⁸

Recommendations

- ❖ Remove the financial burden for ECD and primary education to increase access.
- ❖ Increase investments in early-childhood education, especially for poor children. Evidence suggests that ECD has long-term benefits, including educational attainment

⁶ National Assessment on Out of School Children in Zimbabwe Report (2015) page iv

⁷ National Assessment on Out of School Children in Zimbabwe Report (2015) page v

⁸ National Assessment on Out of School Children in Zimbabwe Report (2015) page ix

that will help children escape from poverty as adults. For that reason, increasing investment in infrastructure and teachers for ECD is particularly important as it has substantial educational, social, and economic benefits for all children.

- ❖ Strengthen social safety nets such as Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) with more resources to assist all the children who require assistance to attend school.
- ❖ Civil society organisations should conduct advocacy to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the international education legal frameworks to which nations will be signatories. This can be achieved through civil society organisations participation in consolidating Universal Periodic Review reports and alternative reports to United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children and African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to hold the government accountable.

Issue Area 3

Theme: Availability

Sub-theme: Classrooms

According to the RTEI pilot study findings the pupil-classroom ratio for primary schools was 42, 6% in 2013 and 46, 3 % for secondary schools. The indicator score an overall of 23,5%. To cope with the number of students, 41% of primary schools and 36% of secondary schools in urban areas are running double sessions which however limits the classroom time for learners. In other cases classes are conducted under a tree or a shed where learners will be exposed to harsh weather conditions. RTEI pilot study findings further revealed that Zimbabwe is in need of 2 056 new schools. An additional 33,636 classrooms are needed in existing schools, 83,268 classrooms need minor repairs, 25,443 classrooms need major repairs and 3,554 classrooms are dangerous. The available infrastructure in schools is not disability friendly hence hindering the attainment of inclusive education in Zimbabwe.



Learners learning under the shed and trees

Recommendations

- ❖ Due to the high cost of building to meet the School Functionality Standards, it is suggested that alternative/low cost building materials be adopted.
- ❖ Government should devote more resources from the fiscus meant for infrastructural development.
- ❖ Ministry of Public Works, responsible for the construction of public buildings, schools included, should relax terms and conditions for partners interested in constructing schools (currently the Ministry charges 7% of the total construction cost

on the stakeholders (whether private or public) interested in constructing schools). This is a restrictive measure which kills the confidence of development partners.

- ❖ The government should continue with the Joint Venture Partnerships, which is private-public partnerships in school construction, as long as these do not pass the button of repayment to the children

Issue Area 4

Theme: Adaptability

Sub-Theme: Children with disability

According to the RTEI pilot study finding the indicator scored 50% indicating moderate commitment by the nation in promoting the right education of children with disability. Zimbabwe National Education for All Review (2015) highlighted that facilities for disabled children such as the hard of hearing, the physically impaired are either inadequate or do not exist at all in the majority of primary schools in Zimbabwe.⁹ Facilities such as classroom blocks, toilets, sports kits and general equipment is not user friendly to children with disabilities. Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) records that only 2.7% of primary schools have facilities for children with special needs and 0.9% of schools have facilities for pupils with disabilities. Failure to provide suitable and adequate facilities for pupils with disabilities poses as a challenge to the achievement of universal primary education for all Zimbabweans. Data from MoPSE Annual Statistical Reports are not disaggregated by disability status.

Recommendations

- ❖ The government should allocate more resources towards the development of infrastructure that is friendly to children with disability.
- ❖ Civil society should lobby for Ministry of Finance to prioritise infrastructure development for children with disability.
- ❖ Children with disability tend to have multiple disadvantages and challenges, including additional costs of dealing with disability as well as lack of inadequate school infrastructure and learning resources. All schools should have the required access facilities and materials for children that have disabilities, as well as teachers trained in handling the needs of children with disabilities.

Data Availability

Data unavailability was very common during the RTEI research. 2013 data from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was the most recent data. 2014 and 2015 Annual Statistical Reports were not yet publicly available. The available 2013 data did not have some information on indicators that were in the RTEI questionnaire which are very vital in national education planning. Unavailability of data was very common on the following indicators:

⁹ Education for All 2015 National Review page 32

- i. Private education enrolment.
- ii. Primary and secondary schools Gross Enrolment Rate disaggregated by rural and urban schools, students with disability and quintile levels.
- iii. Gross Enrolment Rate for Technical and Vocational training disaggregated by males, females, urban, rural and quintile levels.
- iv. Net Enrolment Rate disaggregated by rural and urban schools, disability and quintile levels.
- v. Completion rate for public primary and secondary schools disaggregated by rural and urban schools, disability and quintile levels.
- vi. Public tertiary school completion rate.
- vii. Private primary and secondary school completion rate.
- viii. Completion rate for private technical and vocational training programmes.
- ix. Passing score on national examination for primary and secondary schools disaggregated by rural and urban schools, disability and quintile.
- x. Percentage of students receiving passing scores on national mathematics disaggregated by sex, rural and urban schools, disability and quintile levels.
- xi. Literacy rate disaggregated by rural and urban schools, disability and quintile levels.
- xii. Percentage of teachers trained to teach children with disability.

Recommendations

- ❖ The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Zimbabwe National Statistical Office should consult relevant stakeholders to get input on the type of indicators to collect data on.
- ❖ The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should regularly conduct researches and make the findings available for public consumption. This will help players in education to make informed interventions and highlights progress made in the education sector as well as areas that needs attention.
- ❖ The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should disaggregate data on disability, sex, quintile level and by location (rural or urban location) for purposes of equity.
- ❖ Civil society and other relevant stakeholders in education should conduct independent researches which inform programming.