

ZINECDA



ZIMECDVOICE

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ZIMBABWE ECD VOICE

PUBLICATION

ZIMBABWE NETWORK FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

Providing contextually relevant Early Childhood Development (ECD) information and ensure that the Zimbabwean ECD Voice is heard.

www.zinecda.org

WELCOME BY PUBLISHER

This third edition of the Zim ECD Voice is issued at a time when the world is still compounded by the COVID-19 virus. At the time of writing a new strain of the virus was discovered in South Africa. This strain is now spreading rapidly across the continent and around the world, posing another threat to our collective survival and wellbeing. Not spared are the livelihoods, way of life as we knew it and access to early childhood development for the young children. Regardless of the challenges that we face it is important for stakeholders in the early childhood development sector in Zimbabwe to come together and discuss alternative ways for children to access services. Stay safe!

#StrongerTogether

Patrick Makokoro

PATRICK MAKOKORO

Founder/Board Chair ZINECDA

Twitter: @PatrickMakokoro



Stay safe!

#StrongerTogether

A portrait of Naison Bhunhu, a man with glasses and a beard, wearing a light blue shirt and a dark tie. He is holding a framed certificate or award. The background is a solid magenta color.

WELCOME BY EDITOR

Welcome to 2021!

The year has started with schools remaining closed due to the resurgence of the COVID19 in Zimbabwe. The experiences in 2020 taught us what needs to be done in the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector, when faced with pandemics such as the current COVID-19. ZINECDA learned that continual alternative learning models for this sector need to be developed and implemented. This can be achieved when there are sufficient financial and in-kind investments made within the ECD sector. However, we continue to observe that ECD financing in Zimbabwe is not given highest priority despite the known advantages it offers to the learners, communities and the nation. More innovative advocacy is required, to not only prioritize ECD sector financing but, to ensure that it remains on the agenda of key decision makers. Despite the difficult beginning to the year, the ECD sector has to be innovative so that the current generation of ECD learners is not disadvantaged but is able to access this great foundation to lifelong learning.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Naison Bhunhu'.

Naison Bhunhu

National Coordinator

Twitter: @naisonbhunhu

ZINECDA's vision is a Zimbabwe where all young children from conception to 8 year old are treasured in such a way that their basic rights are met and their rights to survive and thrive are realized.

NEWS

Announcements

Schools reopening (2021)

The spike in COVID-19 infection rates and the threat of Cyclone Chalane led to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) delaying the reopening of schools. Initially, the 2021 school calendar was to commence on the 4th of January 2021 with all students having been projected to be back at school. This position was reversed with examination classes being the only ones that reopened with the decision to reopen for the rest of learners delayed indefinitely subject to the COVID-19 trajectory.

Reopening of ECD Classes

ECD classes opened on the 9th of November 2020 before taking a break for the holidays. This was part of the phased reopening plan in compliance with COVID-19 protocols that had been set by the government. The MoPSE, in consultation with its various development partners, agreed to reopen schools, commencing with the examination classes, middle stage with other grades ending with ECD classes of ECD A -Grade 5.

We applaud the efforts by the Government of Zimbabwe, the MoPSE and development partners to ensure that learners and teachers returned to a safe and healthy environment that supports learning. Additionally, during the reopening of schools, the Schools Psychological Department emphasized the need to assess the learning needs of learners. This was done by weighing the learning gaps as a result of the prolonged school closures. These learning gaps would then be used to design the catch up strategies to support students as the normal school learning resumes.

The effective success in the reopening of schools had many challenges, with the inadequacy of personal protective equipment for the schools as well as the financial resources to adequately provide the needed classroom spaces. The advent of COVID19 meant the need for resources for schools have increased immensely with the majority channelled for survival rather than for education.



ZINECDA observed that the need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and the reduction of class sizes to allow for social distancing in many schools was not adequately met for the third phase of schools re-opening in 2020. Additionally, the successful reopening of schools was threatened by the absence of teachers in schools due to incapacitation as a result of low salaries.

2020-21 National Budget allocation to ECD/Infant School Module

The Primary and Secondary Education sector received ZWD55.221 billion, about 13.09% of the national budget total. This allocation at 13% has dropped from the 16% average of the sub-Saharan Africa region. This falls short of the recommended Education for All targets of 20% of national budget or 6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The overall MOPSE budget is showing a declining trend over the years, both as a percentage of GDP as well as a total share of the national budget. The budget does not explicitly show a plan or provision for financing education in the event of the crisis or the worsening COVID-19 pandemic. The Infants Department budget as a percentage of the overall MOPSE budget also saw a significant drop from 27% in 2018 to 14.85% in 2021 with majority of funds 76.6% being for salaries. The Infants Department budget allocation showed that funding per infant child was at US\$64 compared to primary learners at US\$163.40 and US\$170 for secondary learners. This is particularly worrying especially when the ECD A and B are currently the most disadvantaged of the three MOPSE Schools Programs (Infant, Junior, Secondary). To put it into perspective, ECD has the lowest number of qualified teachers (56.9%), the highest qualified teacher pupil ratio (1:68), lowest net enrolment rate (32%) and least budget allocation and 42.78% learners are not attending ECD.

The Global Campaign for Education is launching a new campaign called One Billion Voices on January 25th, on the occasion of the International Day of Education. The COVID-19 pandemic is still affecting the education of more than one billion people.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Research on the Education Amended Education Act of 2020

ZINECDA commissioned a research that was designed to unpack the provisions of the Education Amendment Act. The research also intended to identify policy gaps and recommend effective advocacy strategies to improve the provision of accessible, inclusive, quality ECD in Zimbabwe. The research was to establish if the provisions of the Education Amendment Act 2020 was in sync with the Constitution Amendment Act 2013, and to identify policies and circulars aligned to or needing to be aligned with the Education Amendment Act. The study recommended for the completion of attendant policies that would significantly impact ECD such as the Inclusive Education policy, School Financing and the National Early Learning Policy. Additionally, the collaboration of multi-disciplinary stakeholders was encouraged. Most importantly too, the research noted the need to devise a proper plan for the free state funded basic education provision is to be a major focus of advocacy.

For a copy of this research send an email to zinecda@zinecda.org

ZBC Television Series

ZINECDA in partnership with Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI) and the Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC) filmed a 13 episode series on school readiness. Titled **School Readiness Conversations**, the series will be aired on the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation Network. The conversations focus on unpacking various tenets of school readiness which were discussed with representatives of ZINECDA member organizations and development partners. Send us an email if you wish to receive these episodes.

Video Production

A documentary filmmaker was contracted to produce a mini-documentary video to capture the work carried out by ZINECDA, ECOZI and other partners who include the Municipal Development Partnership (MDP), Child Protection Society (CPS) and Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED). Look out for this informative documentary on our social media channels and our membership groups.

Reflections on COVID-19 lockdown in 2020

The re-opening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic has been fraught with debate on the readiness of schools. A key consideration among policy and decision-makers is the prioritization of which cohort should open first. For ECD stakeholders, the debate was based on the very underpinning principle that ECD education is the foundation for life-long learning and thus should be prioritized. The following are some extracts of conversations ZINECDA staff had with the network members:

“When the re-opening of schools for ECD classes was announced and given a green light, both teachers and centre owners were excited and looked forward to going to do what they love, teaching children. However, the excitement began to wear off amidst rumours of possible COVID-19 related illnesses surging in the schools. This caused uneasiness and anxiety as parents hesitated to have their children back in class. Learning at Kwality Day Care Centre is going well, we cannot run away from the virus but we have to learn to live in the new ‘normal’.

Bongani Muthe

**Kwality Day Care Centre,
ZINECDA Harare Chapter**

“The greatest concern was based on scepticism on whether all children would re-enrol. At our centre, some children had gone to South Africa visiting parents during the extended lockdown period, these failed to re-enrol. The parents communicated that their children would only return to school in January 2021. As a result, almost 20 children did not return to school. The greatest challenge was the collection of fees. Most parents were not working during the lockdown so some fees are still in arrears crippling centre operations.”

Olivia Chingwara.

**Little Students Centre,
ZINECDA Manicaland Chapter**

“Most ECD Centres in Masvingo province were not able to reopen. Many parents did not realize the value of paying tuition fees for a few weeks of learning that were not even guaranteed because of teachers’ industrial action. However, Alpha Cottages preschool managed to open with limited resources in terms of PPEs provided for by parents and school management. Government allocation of PPEs has also not reached this area but hope is still alive that assistance will reach our region”.

Alpha Cottages Centre

ZINECDA Masvingo Chapter

Purple Hibiscus by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Purple Hibiscus is set in postcolonial Nigeria, a country beset by political instability and economic difficulties. The central character is Kambili Achike, aged fifteen for much of the period covered by the book, a member of a wealthy family dominated by her devoutly Catholic father, Eugene.

CONCLUSION

The fight against COVID19 is far from over. The effects have been projected to span for years but the work that we jointly do as advocates for Early Childhood Development wellbeing will make the difference between the severity of the current effects and aftermath of the pandemic. The information at hand, of a new strain or variant presents further challenges for the whole world. Therefore our ECD education approach has to be innovative, systematic and coordinated. We remain positive that together we can win against COVID-19!

Stay Safe, Social Distance and wear Masks! #StrongerTogether

Note from Editor:

We would love to hear from you and also highlight your ECD related events such as meetings, conferences and other opportunities.

If you also have your favourite Book or Journal article that you want to share with ZINECDA members and other stakeholders please feel free to contact us:



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www.zinecda.org



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Launch

25. 01. 2021

1:30 p.m. South African Standard Time (SAST)

One Billion Voices
Global Virtual Launch

Register here: bit.ly/1BillionVoicesLaunch