

# ZIMBABWE ECD VOICE



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**PUBLICATION**

**ZIMBABWE NETWORK OF EARLY  
CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT ACTORS**


## WE MUST ALL RISE TO THE OCCASION!

Greetings to you the reader. Some say that with a new year, you get a new and fresh start but here at ZINECDA we know a new year brings a replenished zeal for advocacy, new opportunities for growth, and the capability to forge a nurturing future for every child in Zimbabwe and regionally. The Tashkent Declaration of November 2022 was a fantastic end because it reminded us that we all must rise to the occasion now. The consensus is that early childhood education and care are the very foundation for every aspect of human life, however, the action to ensure access to quality early childhood education and care services for all children is still lagging. We all have to rise to the occasion to increase access to these services.

There is a glaring gap within the SADC region with none of the 27 protocols specifically focusing on the rights of children. Accountability at the Southern Africa regional level is lacking due to the non-availability of an agreed framework to deal with child rights. Only when this framework is developed can we fully hold governments in the Southern African region accountable. The time to rise to the occasion is now, join the TRANAC alliance and the CRNSA team as they push the draft protocol for children to be included as an agenda at the SADC Ministers of Education meeting and the SADC Heads of State Summit.

The absence of age-appropriate infrastructure and the omnipresence of poverty due to the dire economic conditions in Zimbabwe has seen 55% of the ECD-going age scholars being out of school. We have heard stories of despair and lost opportunities in particular ECD children who have no access to ECD centres and the ones that are there are too far for ECD children to walk there. For ECD to have a lasting impact, we have to make sure that no child is left behind. As a nation, as duty bearers and civil societies, we have the mandate to rise to the occasion and reduce the number of children who are currently out of school

Through advocacy, knowledge generation, and knowledge sharing, we can drive our nation to be all-inclusive for all children. Let us give all children the safety, hope, and opportunity that early childhood education and care can provide. Indeed together we can, we must, and will rise to the occasion again and again until no child is left behind. We have no time to waste, the race can be won and it needs to be won now!!



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# THE IMPORTANCE OF ECD AS A FOUNDATION OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

In every journey, there is a defining watershed moment that ultimately determines the outcome for the future. As such, in human life, the period from 0-8 years is that defining moment. Early childhood is a fundamental stage that presents the opportunity to lay a proper footing for a child's development as it sets the trajectory for eventual success. During this critical stage, it is pivotal for children to have access to care, nutrition, protection, and responsive caregiving to ensure that there is an enabling environment for personality development, brain development, and potential unlocking. Research has shown that healthy development during these early years provides children with building blocks for educational achievement, economic productivity, responsible citizenship, and lifelong health and those that miss out may miss out on these building blocks. It may then perpetuate endless cycles of poverty which ultimately undermines the strength and capacity of our society.

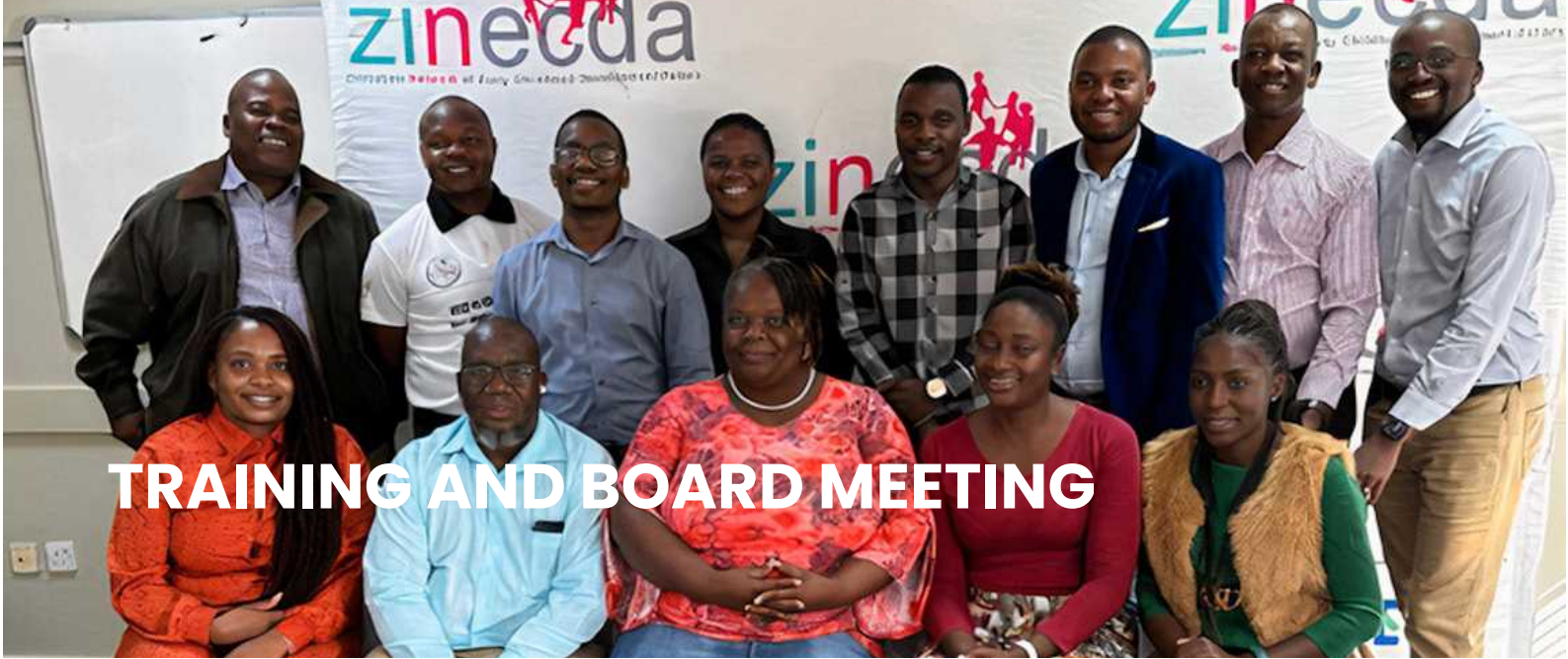
Have you ever wondered why children can learn so many languages and skills at once while adults have a much more difficult time? According to UNICEF, the first 6 years of a child's brain fully develops, with more than one million neural connections formed at each second, a pace never repeated at any stage of their life. Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between early childhood development and how successful that child will be in the future as whatever a child learns or experiences during the first years of their life, will have a lasting effect on them. The more positive experiences a child has early on, the more they will develop a positive outlook on things and be more optimistic despite their situations. It also will help them to develop confidence and incredible self-esteem. In some cases, where there are learning difficulties, early childhood provides the opportunity for early detection and thereby provides the possibility of treatment. Furthermore, when a child succeeds at something early on, it encourages them to try again and makes them feel good about themselves.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF ECD

To highlight the status quo in Zimbabwe, more than 50% of children are missing out on the benefits that quality early childhood care and education can provide. This is against the background where over the years early childhood care and education have since taken a centre stage, with many scholars and practitioners agreeing that the first 8 years in a child's life are the most critical window through which we can mould who they become in their later life.

Therefore, being at crossroads with such a vital phase of life, the question then becomes; what can we do during this incredibly important period to ensure that children have a strong foundation for future development? Awareness of such a phase becomes imperative among caregivers and stakeholders in the education sector for them to understand better ECDE. Secondly it raises a great need in investing in the early moments to ensure that children have a positive start as early childhood is the time to set the foundation for the rest of a child's life, not just in the social and emotional aspects, but all aspects of their life. Zimbabwe considers access to quality education as a basic human right which is a prerogative for every citizen. This is enshrined in the constitution of the land as it seeks to ensure that all citizens enjoy their rights in a dignified manner. With such fundamental aspects being contained in the supreme laws of the land, the country has further gone to work towards pushing the citizenry to an upper-middle-income economy. Thus as Zimbabwe works towards a middle-income economy, one of the key pillars for such a long-term vision is education financing under human capital development as it is a driver to unlocking key economic potential. This can only realize value when early moments are valued through investing in them. Human capital development can only be realized in the long term by starting with laying a firm foundation in ECD. Thus there is a need to access equitable education. Zimbabwe amongst many other African countries has gone further to acknowledge that early childhood development is the foundation for economic productivity and who the child will become. This can be seen through the embedding of ECDE as part of basic compulsory education. Though this is a great stride towards ensuring that every child has access to early childhood education, there is a glaring gap between policy and reality with a budget of 0.2% allocated to this fundamental stage. Therefore this serves as a clarion call to all stakeholders in the home and school environment to invest in the early moments as the early moments matter!!



## TRAINING AND BOARD MEETING

*Being a leader is not about being in charge but taking care of those in your charge. The ZINECDA Board Chair and founder took time to take care of the ZINECDA and Nhaka teams. Things that matter are difficult, if we want to do things that matter it is going to take effort, effort to eradicate deficit vocabulary and effort to remove the negative based mindset. To help the team do this he opened the session with a training on the appreciative inquiry and how best to use it in both the work life and the personal life. The appreciative enquiry has a 4 step-cycle which are the discovery, dream, design and destiny*

*Be specific and intentional on how you use your time at work even in your personal life. The session kicked off with check-in questions as an ice-breaker, the check-in questions allowed the team to get comfortable before the start of the training, this session allowed the team to get to know each other even more.*





## TRAINING AND BOARD MEETING

For the first time after a very long time the ZINECDA, managed to have an in-person Board meeting to strategically plan and assess where ZINECDA is in terms of its goals and vision going forward. The Programs Subcommittee Meeting, the Finance, Administration and Human Resource Committee were held at the ZINECDA Offices at Mukuvisi Woodlands whilst the ZINECDA full board was held at Cresta Lodge on the 23rd of March 2023.



The illustration shows a stylized house with a blue triangular roof, a pink rectangular window, and a yellow rectangular base. To the left of the house is a green triangular shape with a child sitting on it. To the right is an orange semi-circular shape with two children sitting on it. The background is a light yellow gradient.

## MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

### **World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WECCE) 13–16 November 2022– (Tashkent Declaration)**

The World Conference on Early Childhood Care and Education (WCECCE) was held in Tashkent City, Uzbekistan from 13th to 16th November 2022 to reaffirm the right of every young child to quality care and education from birth to age 8, and to urge Member States' renewed commitment to investing in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target number 4.2.

Over 77 countries and 2800 people participated in the conference. The ZINECDA TRANAC Alliance participated in the conference through the Malawi ECD Coalition office where the National Coordinator attended the conference. Participation of different officers from countries should benefit advocating for the implementation of the key messages of the conference. The conference's objectives were to assess how well Member States were doing in achieving SDG 4.2 and other early childhood-related SDG targets, share knowledge about key enablers, new research findings, best practices, and innovations, reaffirm the importance of high-quality ECCE as a fundamental right of all children, find opportunities, create a list of priorities and strategies, and come to an agreement on these strategies. The conference's key conclusions included the necessity for states to provide at least one year of free and mandatory quality pre-primary education for all children in the ECCE age group and a rights-based approach to ECCE as a human right for young children.



## MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

### Key issues from the conference

Early childhood care and education (ECCE) must be taken from a rights-based approach as a human right for young children thus it must be a universal service, provided to all children of the ECCE age group

- On early childhood education, for preschool, states need to encourage at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education for all
- Quality ECCE program must include high-quality infrastructure in terms of a qualified workforce and conducive physical infrastructure
- Thus adequate financing is key for the implementation of a quality ECCE program. Government financing is key for sustainability and governments must finance quality universal ECCE
- Innovations have proven successful in increasing access to ECCE such as the use of existing structures to provide ECCE services at Primary Schools, special government projects on construction of ECCE centres; and the establishment of ECCE centres in places where children are found such as hospitals, markets, prisons; and use of digital innovations such as radio also promote the provision of inclusive equitable quality ECCE services.
- Development and approval of legislation and policies that are key in enforcing the provision of ECCE.
- Multi-sectoral service provision is based on collaboration between the government and different stakeholders including different ministries, households, communities, development partners, civil society organisations, and the private sector.

Every dollar invested in ECCE can give a return of between 5 to 17 percent making it a smart and worthwhile investment hence universal access to ECCE is an important investment for a country to fight poverty and the social well-being of the citizenry.





## MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

### 1) School Readiness Systematic Change and Advocacy Workshop

Together with non-governmental organizations from Namibia, South Africa, Lesotho, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, ZINECDA paused to consider the SRI project's first phase's lessons learned, remove any significant obstacles to school readiness, and chart a course for future opportunities in 2023 and beyond.

Here are some of the golden nuggets from the SRI project

- 1) Smart Tablet for early learning Assessment (STELA) is a novel technology that offers fast, reliable, efficient, and effective ECD learner assessments through guaranteed data protection
- 2) Partners supported communities, parents, and teachers to guarantee that young children could get high-quality early childhood development services.
- 3) Making toys and playground equipment from easily available materials with the help of communities and parents significantly improves the learning and teaching environment for kids.



***School Readiness Initiative  
Partners celebrating the 20th  
anniversary of SRI.***



## MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

After recognizing these outstanding accomplishments, the team took some time to consider potential opportunities for 2023 and beyond. The team came to the conclusion that the region and its partners needed to come up with innovative ways to mobilize resources to reduce the gap between what is written down and what is done. This will increase the amount of money allocated to ECD from the national budget. The team also identified the need for a multi-sectoral strategy in which the interests of all significant stakeholders are aligned to provide a holistic environment for learning and idea sharing.





## 2) Technical Working Group meeting

Following the Road to SADC workshop on ECD financing attended by government representatives and the TRANAC alliance, a proposal was adopted to establish technical working groups in all the 3 TRANAC implementing countries (Zimbabwe, Malawi and Lesotho). The group consists of government officials from different ministries that would work as ECD champions, representing ECD in all advocacy and decision-making platforms. Zimbabwe held its first meeting in August 2022, where representatives from several line ministries came together and decided on the topics that would be discussed and added to the national agenda. Terms of reference were developed to direct the group's actions and responsibilities.

On February 23, 2023, the second technical working group meeting was held and a number of issues were discussed these include:

### 1. **Child Rights Protocol**

CRNSA spearheaded the unpacking of the Draft SADC Child Rights Protocol, which covers the identified gaps at SADC level where there are 27 existing protocols at SADC level but no specific document addressing the welfare and rights of children.

The Technical working group will assist in advocacy plights to ensure that the document will be included on the agenda of the SADC Ministers' Conference.

### 2. **Inclusive ECDE draft strategy presentation**

TRANAC Consortium engaged a consultant into broadening the already existing SADC Inclusive Framework and input ECD issues into it. The Southern Africa Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD) representative highlighted the scarcity of data on children living with disabilities have resulted in many children facing developmental delays within the region. Delayed identification of children living with disabilities, ignorance from caregivers, and fear from family often results into exclusion of most children into joining ECDE. During the discussions, it was highlighted that there is little mention of inclusion in the current policies, protocols, guidelines, and standard guidelines, necessitating the creation and completion of an inclusive SADC regional strategy on ECD.



## MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

### 3. **Presentation on the 2023 Education Budget in relation to ECD**

According to Mr. Chivore, the Parliament Director–Budgets Office, the allocated funds for education are not enough especially for the ECD Learners to have a child –friendly learning environment, and quality education. Given the current exchange rate, the ZWL 631 billion (\$972 million) budget that was approved by Parliament for basic education.

During the presentation, Mr Chivore noted that 151.2 million dollars, or 16 percent of the total education budget, is allocated to the infant education program. However, 93% of the budget goes toward employee expenditures, 2% is allocated to the capital budget, whilst 1% is allocated to current grants, and 4% is allocated to goods and services. Our budget for education is the largest in terms of sectoral allocations, yet it still falls short of the objectives outlined in the Dakar Declaration. Therefore, a specific regional protocol is necessary, one that requires states to reserve a certain percentage for ECD financing.

The following recommendations were made by the Technical Working Group.

- Stakeholder collaboration needs to be improved by organising special conferences of influential individuals, such as lawmakers and traditional leaders, and by coordinating strategies for gender-responsive child rights advocacy.
- Advocate in favour of the SADC approving a protocol on ECD issues.
- To work with the relevant Ministries of Foreign Affairs in the Region to engage the SADC Secretariat on ECD issues.
- To have a SADC coordination system for young children because SADC requires a venue to interact with them.



# MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS

**Technical Working Group meeting in pictures.**



**UPCOMING**



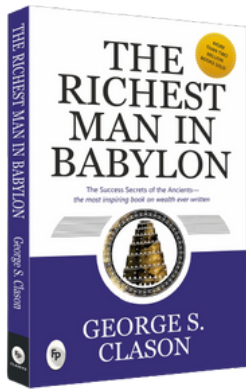
# EVENTS

1. **Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) 2023 Celebrations in Zimbabwe** will run from May 29 through to June 02 2023 under the theme “Decolonising Education Financing”. The event’s goal is to ensure that formal education is prioritized globally, even in remote places. At the core of the Global Action Week for Education is the promotion of SDG 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and encourage lifelong learning.

2. **Training of Editors-** The media is a crucial instrument in fostering positive change in influencing ECD legislation and financing in the SADC Region. Therefore, writing to influence ECD Legislation concerning education financing requires Editors to be trained on issues about ECD so that they have a comprehensive understanding of policy-related issues in general and public policy in particular. Therefore, ZINECDA with partner organisations in May trained Editors on ECD reporting as Editors determine what should be and not be in the media. The training is expected to influence Editors to put ECD on the national agenda and foster an understanding of their responsibility to hold governments and leaders accountable on issues relating to ECD.

# ZINECDA's Reading Corner: *The Richest Man in Babylon.*

Every gold piece you save is a slave to work for you. Every copper it earns is its child that also can earn for you. Using stories and parables from ancient Babylon, *The Richest Man in Babylon* offers sound financial advice that you may use today. Grab yourself a copy and invest in your financial proficiency.



Become a **ZINECDA** member

Unified voices have unprecedented power—a platform for networking, policy analysis, learning exchange, and knowledge generation. ZINECDA places ECD actors on authentic recognisable local and international stages. With 195 members in over a decade of policy advocacy, ZINECDA is the network to belong to. In over a decade, it has created partnerships with regional and global ECD advocates. Become a ZINECDA member today!!



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