

ZIM ECD VOICE 10TH ISSUE

ZIMBABWE ECD VOICE

2
0
2
3

PUBLICATION:

ZIMBABWE NETWORK OF EARLY
CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT ACTORS



www.zinecda.org



[@zinecda](https://www.facebook.com/zinecda)



[@zinecda](https://twitter.com/zinecda)

DEAR READERS,

We are delighted to bring you the 10th issue of the Zimbabwe ECD Voice, a publication that witnesses the remarkable milestones achieved by Zimbabwe Network of Early Childhood Development Actors (ZINECDA). This issue is particularly special as we celebrate the approval of the National Early Learning Policy by Cabinet and the Amendment of the Children's Act by the Parliament of Zimbabwe. These significant achievements mark a turning point for early childhood development in our country.

The journey to obtain these approvals was not without challenges, and it took longer than anticipated. However, ZINECDA's unwavering dedication and tireless advocacy efforts paved the way for the successful outcome. We engaged in stakeholder policy engagement meetings, courtesy call meetings, draft consultative policy meetings, and position paper submissions, all aimed at ensuring that the voices of ECD learners were heard and their rights protected.

Additionally, ZINECDA has been bestowed with the responsibility of coordinating the Foundational Literacy Thematic Committee. This committee brings together various ECD actors to discuss, advocate for, and submit recommendations for the enhancement of the ECD learning environment to the National Education Coordination Group. This role further solidifies ZINECDA's commitment to driving positive change and fostering collaboration among stakeholders.

In this issue, ZINECDA provides a glimpse of the research work it is conducting to shed light on the state of early childhood development in Southern Africa. The studies delve into crucial areas such as the need for comprehensive costing of ECD, the significance of disaster risk reduction and management in ECD, and the importance of effective aid to support ECD. These research findings serve as valuable resources for policymakers and practitioners, guiding them in their efforts to improve the quality and accessibility of ECD services.

As we reflect on the progress made and look forward to the future, let us remember that the work of early childhood development is a collective effort. It requires the dedication and collaboration of policymakers, educators, parents, and communities to create an enabling environment where every child can thrive and reach their full potential.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our readers and supporters who have been instrumental in our journey so far. Together, let us continue to champion the rights of ECD learners and work towards a brighter future for the children of Zimbabwe.



NAISON BHUNHU



TWITTER:

[@zinecda](https://twitter.com/zinecda)



MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE QUARTER

Parliament of Zimbabwe passed the Children's Amendment Bill

The passage of the Children's Amendment Bill by the Parliament of Zimbabwe is a crucial development in aligning the existing Children's Act of 2001 with the country's Constitution and international conventions. This amendment aims to establish a comprehensive legal framework that safeguards children from neglect and abuse, ensuring their safety and well-being. Once the Bill is signed by the President, it will become law, providing the following key provisions, as reported by [veritaszim](#)[1]

Definition of a Child: The amendment clarifies the definition of a child, specifying that it refers to any person below the age of 18 years. This aligns with the internationally recognized definition of a child and ensures consistency with the country's Constitution.

Protection from Child Marriages: The Bill strengthens protections against child marriages by explicitly stating that no person under the age of 18 can enter into a marriage, regardless of any custom, religion, or consent. This provision aims to combat the harmful practice of child marriages and safeguard the rights and well-being of children.

Protection from Child Labour: The amendment seeks to address child labour by prohibiting the employment of children under the age of 18 in hazardous work or any work that interferes with their education, health, or development. This provision aligns with international standards and reinforces the importance of protecting children from exploitative labour practices.

Child Participation: The amendment recognizes the importance of involving children in matters that affect them. It promotes the participation of children in decisions and processes that impact their lives, ensuring their voices are heard and their rights respected. This provision acknowledges children as active participants in society and encourages their meaningful engagement.

Strengthening Child Protection Systems: The Bill aims to enhance the child protection system by establishing mechanisms for reporting and responding to cases of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation. It emphasizes the importance of timely and appropriate interventions to safeguard children's well-being and promote their rights.

1] Veritas Zimbabwe: Parliament Information Hub



MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE QUARTER

Zimbabwe Cabinet Approves the National Early Learning Policy

The approval of the National Early Learning Policy by the Cabinet of Zimbabwe is indeed a significant milestone for the country's early childhood development education. This policy serves as a guiding framework that sets out essential guidelines and principles to ensure the provision of quality ECD for all children in Zimbabwe.

One of the key objectives of the policy is to guarantee that every child in the country has access to affordable, equitable, and inclusive ECD programs. This commitment reflects the understanding that early childhood education is a fundamental right and lays the foundation for lifelong learning. By ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, the policy strives to eliminate barriers and provide equal opportunities for all children, regardless of their backgrounds or circumstances.

The policy also emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach to early childhood education. It recognizes that children's development encompasses various aspects, including physical, cognitive, emotional, and social domains. By addressing all these dimensions, the policy aims to foster well-rounded development and prepare children for future learning and success.

Equally significant is the recognition of the critical roles played by parents, caregivers, and communities in supporting children's learning and development. The policy acknowledges that the involvement and engagement of families and communities are vital for creating a nurturing and supportive environment for young children. By strengthening these partnerships, the policy seeks to enhance the overall quality of early childhood education and ensure that children receive the necessary support both at home and in their communities.

With this policy in place, Zimbabwe is taking a significant step forward in creating a brighter future for its children and fostering a society that values the importance of early childhood education. According to Cabinet, the Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy will be implemented over a 5- year period spanning 2023 to 2027 and is supported by a detailed and costed Implementation Plan that aims at attaining the following objectives:

- 1.guaranteeing that all children learn in a healthy, safe, child-friendly environment
- 2.Strengthening the governance and coordination of the Infant School Module;
- 3.Mobilizing for increased allocation and prudent management of resources;
- 4.Enhancing the quality of early learning services for improved learning outcomes.



MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE QUARTER

ZINECDA selected as the lead for the Foundational Literacy Committee

Congratulations to ZINECDA on being selected as the lead for the Foundational Literacy Committee! This is indeed a significant milestone for the organization and speaks to its recognized expertise and influence in the field of early child development. As the lead, ZINECDA's responsibilities for coordinating and organizing periodic meetings for early child development will have a positive impact on advancing literacy initiatives and promoting quality education for young children. ZINECDA will also be responsible for identifying and highlighting current trends in ECD, compiling updates, and sharing them with partner organizations. These updates will serve as valuable information for partner organizations to engage in lobbying efforts at the national level, advocating for policies that positively impact ECD. The Foundational Literacy Committee has a range of activities aimed at influencing ECD policies. One of these activities is to unpack educational policies. By delving into the details of these policies, the committee aims to gain a deeper understanding of their implications for early childhood education and development. This understanding will enable them to provide informed recommendations and suggestions for the improvement of such policies.

In addition to policy analysis, the committee also engages with the media to raise awareness and promote discussions around ECD. This includes engagements in both print and online media platforms. By utilizing these channels, the committee aims to reach a wider audience, including policymakers, practitioners, parents, and the general public. Media engagements serve as a means to disseminate information, share research findings, and advocate for the importance of ECD in society.



MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE QUARTER

ZINECDA PARTICIPATES IN THE CURRICULUM REVIEW PROCESS

ZINECDA's active involvement in the Curriculum Review process demonstrates its commitment to advocating for quality early childhood education in Zimbabwe. Participation in the curriculum review process allows ZINECDA to take strides in ensuring that all imperative aspects of Early Child Development are adequately incorporated into the new curriculum that will be operational for the next seven years. By actively engaging in the review process, ZINECDA can contribute to shaping an inclusive and comprehensive curriculum that addresses the diverse needs of young children in Zimbabwe. As part of this process, ZINECDA developed a [Curriculum Review Position Paper](#), which incorporated the perspectives of various ECD actors and civil society organizations from all ten provinces of the country. This inclusive approach ensured that a diverse range of voices and experiences were represented in the paper.

The development of the position paper followed national consultations conducted by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE), which sought input from different sectors. ZINECDA's paper documented the identified gaps in the current curriculum, highlighted the achievements of the existing curriculum, and most importantly, provided recommendations for the new curriculum. By compiling this information, ZINECDA members provided constructive feedback based on their experiences working with young children. By drawing on their practical knowledge; they contributed valuable insights to the curriculum review process, advocating for a more comprehensive early childhood education curriculum that addresses all aspects of child development.

The Curriculum Review Position Paper was physically handed over to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education officials, ensuring direct engagement with the relevant authorities. Additionally, it was shared via email, and the Chief Director for the Curriculum Development Unit acknowledged receipt. This acknowledgment signifies the recognition of ZINECDA's efforts and the importance of its input in the curriculum review process. One of the key issues addressed in the position paper is the alignment of the ECD curriculum with global benchmarks, regional commitments, and local declarations. This ensures that the curriculum reflects international best practices and takes into account the specific context and needs of Zimbabwean children.



MAJOR HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE QUARTER

ZINECDA PARTICIPATES IN THE CURRICULUM REVIEW PROCESS

The Position Paper now serves as an advocacy tool, raising awareness about the importance of early childhood education and promoting the adoption of a more effective and holistic curriculum. It provides a solid foundation for ongoing discussions and engagements with stakeholders to advance the quality and impact of early childhood education in Zimbabwe.





INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

The Africa Education Hub: Bridging the Information Gap in Education Across the Region.

The Africa Education Hub is an ECD and education information broker acting as a bridge between educators, students, policymakers, and educational institutions across the region. The hub, as administered by ZINECDA, facilitates the sharing of information among education stakeholders, providing access to educational resources and materials on education financing, advocacy, education planning, and curriculum, just to mention a few.

The target audience for the Africa Education Hub is diverse and includes educators, students, policymakers, and educational institutions across the region looking toward the future, the Africa Education Hub is committed to expanding its services and reach across the region and beyond. The hub is working on several initiatives that aim to further improve the quality of ECD in Africa and beyond.

Harnessing the Power of Artificial Intelligence in Early Childhood Development

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly prevalent in our lives, it is important to consider its potential impact on early childhood development. AI as defined by Educause [1] refers to computer systems that undertake tasks usually thought to require human cognitive processes and decision-making capabilities. It has the potential to revolutionize early childhood education by providing personalized learning experiences and more engaging educational resources. However, it is important to carefully consider the potential risks and challenges associated with using AI and to ensure that ethical considerations are taken into account. By doing so, we can help ensure that AI is used in a way that supports positive outcomes for all young learners.

[1] Educause library



INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

Harnessing the Power of Artificial Intelligence in Early Childhood Development

One area where AI is being used in early childhood education is in personalized learning. By analyzing data on a child's learning progress and preferences, AI algorithms can provide tailored recommendations for learning activities and resources. This can help identify learning gaps and provide targeted interventions, which could improve learning outcomes.

Another application of AI in early childhood education is in adaptive assessments. By using AI algorithms to analyze student responses, assessments can be adjusted in real-time to provide more challenging or easier questions, depending on the student's performance. This can help ensure that assessments are aligned with a student's current level of understanding.

AI can also provide more engaging and interactive learning experiences for young children. For example, virtual assistants can be used to provide interactive storytelling experiences or to answer questions about a particular topic. This can help make learning more fun and engaging for young children, which could improve their motivation to learn.

However, there are also potential risks and challenges associated with using AI in early childhood education. One concern is around data privacy and security. As AI relies on data to make recommendations and provide feedback, there is a risk that sensitive information could be collected and used without proper consent or safeguards.

Another concern is around the potential for AI to exacerbate existing inequities in education. For example, if AI is only available to students from more affluent backgrounds, it could widen the achievement gap between different groups of students.

It is therefore important to consider the ethical implications of using AI in early childhood education. This includes ensuring that data is collected and used in a responsible and transparent manner, and that AI systems are designed to be accessible to all students, regardless of their background.



COMMEMORATIONS OF THE LAST QUARTER

1. Global Action Week for Education

The collaboration between ZINECDA, partner Civil Society Organizations, and the media campaign during the launch of the 2023 Global Action Week for Education (GAWE) had a significant impact on raising awareness about education financing and advocating for change in Zimbabwe. The media campaign organized by ZINECDA and its partners reached a wide audience, with 1,930 views and 30 engagements. This indicates that the campaign successfully captured the attention of individuals and fostered meaningful discussions around education financing. The campaign's reach of 1,524 demonstrates the extent to which the message was disseminated and amplified, contributing to increased awareness of advocacy issues related to early childhood development (ECD), such as financing and curriculum development.

As a result of this advocacy effort, the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education, Evelyn Ndlovu, reaffirmed the government of Zimbabwe's commitment to education funding. The government pledged to protect and increase the share of the national budget dedicated to education, aiming to reach the 20% Global Benchmark. This commitment demonstrates a dedication to prioritizing education and ensuring adequate resources are allocated to support quality education for all.

Furthermore, the Minister highlighted the government's efforts to address the challenges faced by teachers affected by the pandemic. By committing to providing liveable wages for teachers by 2025, the government acknowledges the importance of supporting educators who play a crucial role in delivering quality education.

The Minister also emphasized the government's commitment to the Competence-Based Curriculum and the Assessment framework called Continuous Assessment of Learning Areas (CALA) which aims to foster the development of well-rounded individuals capable of making meaningful contributions to the country's development.

The Minister acknowledged the significance of the GAWE campaign and its alignment with the country's journey toward increased, equitable, sustainable, and efficient financing for education. This commitment aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) education agenda and underscores the government's efforts to fulfill these goals.



COMMEMORATIONS OF THE LAST QUARTER

Day of the African Child

The Day of the African Child commemorations, focusing on the rights of the child in the digital environment, facilitated a regional discussion involving Members of Parliament and Government officials from Malawi, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe. During the discussion, it was recognized and acknowledged that funding for ECD in the region was below the global benchmark. As policymakers, they agreed to advocate for increased funding to ensure that all children, particularly those from marginalized communities, have access to digital learning even during times of disaster.

The broadcast of the discussion on the Day of the African Child reached 1,450 views, with a reach of 1,493 and 17 engagements. These numbers indicate that the discussion successfully reached a significant number of individuals and generated interest and participation through online platforms. By engaging policymakers from multiple countries in the region, the discussion not only raised awareness but also fostered collaboration and shared responsibility in addressing the educational needs of children. It provided a platform for policymakers to exchange ideas, learn from each other's experiences, and work together to advocate for improved funding and digital access for early childhood education.

Overall, the Day of the African Child commemoration and the regional discussion served as catalysts for policymakers to prioritize ECD funding and advocate for increased access to digital learning. By leveraging digital platforms, these discussions reached a wide audience, creating awareness and fostering dialogue around the rights of children in the digital environment.





RESEARCH

Highlights on the completed research work

1. Research on the cost of educating an ECD learner

This research aimed to benchmark the major cost centres of accessing a child to quality public ECD education from age 4–6 years and to provide a robust way of determining the cost of accessing a child to quality public ECD education (4–6 years) in Zimbabwe, Malawi, Lesotho, Eswatini, Zambia and Mozambique. Currently, ECD is mostly provided through the private sector with participation in ECD being quite low and inequitable (28 percent of 3–5-year-olds). The research observed that most SADC countries have not yet conducted robust costing for the provision of ECD. The costs identified in some cases are based on attempts by various researchers to identify the costs of ECD, these researchers make use of varied assumptions and specific cost centers, and hence results from the surveys are quite different. In Malawi with an average of 66 children per preschool, an amount of US\$243.10 per child per year was benchmarked as the individual cost of ECD. In Lesotho, preschools continue to receive the lowest share of the education budget with only about 0.4 percent of the budget of the Ministry of Education and Training allocated to early childhood care and development over the past years. In Zimbabwe, the cost centres presented in the results from the study show that the major cost centre at the school-term level is textbooks which account for 21.8% of all recurrent cost centres for providing high-quality ECD in Zimbabwe, and the second cost center is issues around sanitation which constitute 20.7%.

The grand total expenditures used to purchase and/or pay for various costs centres needed for offering high-quality ECD in the country is US\$14,623 per each school term and the figure increases to \$25,188 for the whole year, with a total cost per child per year being \$1,639. With such a situation, identifying the costs of providing quality ECD in SADC countries requires a systematic approach that will ensure that policies are informed by accurate estimates of costs.

2. Research on the ECD Disaster Risk Reduction Management (DRRM) status and framework

This study aimed to produce an ECD DRRM policy framework document guiding on how to prevent, respond to, and manage the effect of disasters on ECD which can be adapted by SADC countries and also produce a well-articulated summary of the national situations on the ground in terms of ECD DRRM preparedness for presentation to policymakers in the SADC region. The study found that in all the six southern African countries studied, there is no unified and elaborate ECD DRRM



Highlights on the completed research work

This is despite the fact the region has in the recent past been subjected to disasters such as malnutrition, diseases, floods, cyclones, and droughts. These disasters have made a huge impact on children between the ages of 0-5 years. As a vulnerable group, children at the ECD stage have continued to lag behind in terms of health, nutrition, and academic development. At the regional level, a regional ECD DRRM policy is also lacking despite southern Africa being subjected to several natural disasters in the recent past. The regional ECD DRRM policy that governs early child education for all its member states needs to safeguard the interests of children by setting up a corresponding disaster fund. This generalized regional DRR fund can be used as a model to develop a customized ECD DRRM fund that specifically addresses the education, health, and nutritional needs of children in the region. A regional ECD DRRM fund will enable countries to benefit from the fund in the event of a natural disaster or in terms of preparedness.

3. Research on Aid Effectiveness for ECD in Southern Africa

This study is aimed at tracking the current aid channelled towards ECD by the donor community in the region from 2017-2022, including all active programs, tracking the expenditure of donor funds being channelled towards ECD by the donor community and private players in the region.

Findings revealed that the Governments and communities participate in the design and implementation of donor-funded ECD programs thereby strengthening ownership. High operational costs of some programs limit coverage in monitoring and evaluation. In some countries, access to ECD is inequitable, especially for children with disabilities and those living in vulnerable communities. While the ECD sector is funded by institutions such as UNICEF, the World Bank, USAID, and FCDO among others, it is evident that there is a grave need for increased ECD-related donor aid to sufficiently address nutrition, health, safety, and protection, early learning and responsive caregiving, as key ECD components. Considering that the Governments of Lesotho, Swaziland, Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe commit little investment into ECD programming – averaging 0.68% in 2020, a boost in ECD-related funding would go a long way.

4. Research on SDG4 target 4.2 status in Southern Africa

The purpose for the study of SDG 4.2 was to establish the status of SDG 4.2 implementation in six Southern African countries namely Zimbabwe, Malawi,

Highlights on the completed research work

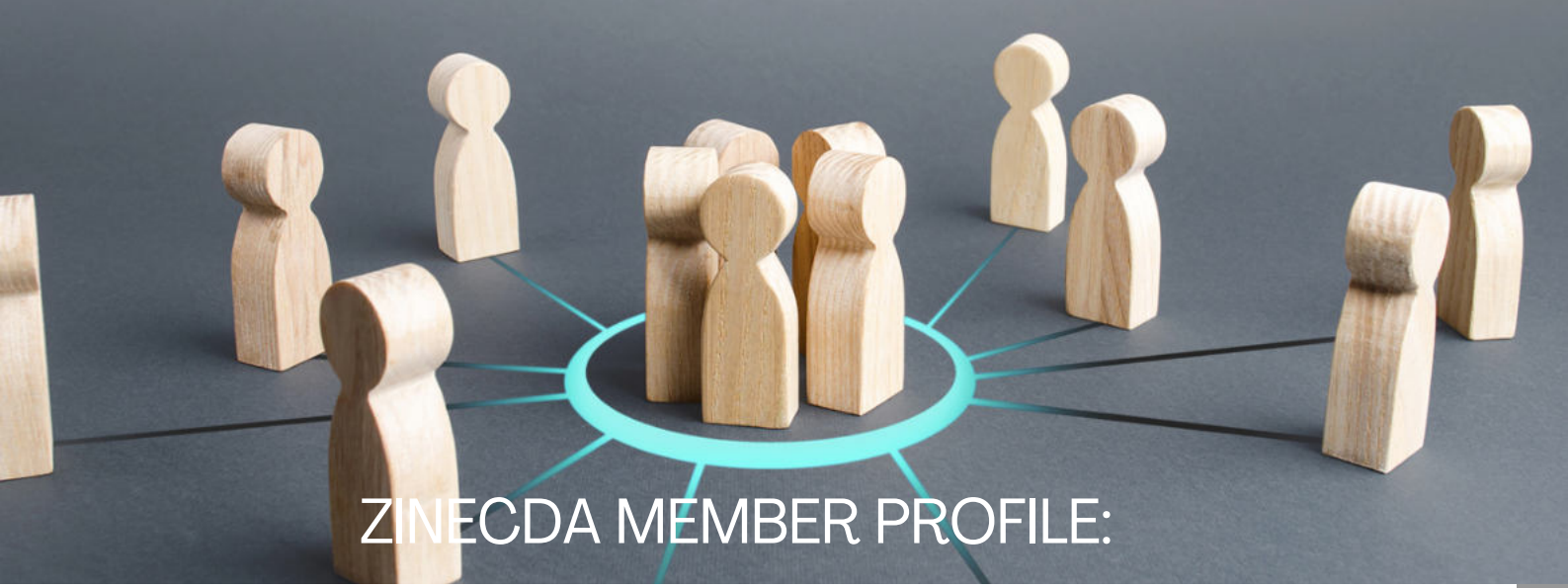
Lesotho, Zambia, Eswatini, and Mozambique, to track legislation, policies, information systems adequacy, accuracy, and timeliness implemented in support of SDG4 target 4.2 achievement while also gathering and suggesting how organized information will be used for influencing informed policy formulation, implementation and oversight related to SDG 4.2 target. The study results found that 4 out of 6 Member States (Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, and Zimbabwe) have reported at least 75% of the required indicators for SDG 4 target 4.2. Considering the aspects of SDG 4 targets in Early Childhood, most Member States have data on participation rates and enrolment ratios.

However, the study found that there are data gaps in readiness for primary school and home learning environments. On Net Enrollment rate (NER), the latest available data shows that Eswatini is lagging behind its regional peers on ECD attendance. Among children aged 3-5 years in Eswatini, only 28% attend an organized ECD program compared to 46% in Lesotho and 39% in Malawi. In Eswatini, participation in ECD is very low and the capacity of the system to accommodate all eligible children is far from adequate. The 627 preschools enroll just above 21,000 children, which accounts for 24% of the eligible age cohort.

This shows that substantial investments will be needed for the education system to be able to accommodate all eligible children. Zimbabwe recorded its highest number of learners who participated in organised learning environments in 2019 with 81% a number that dropped to 67 % in 2022 owing to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the figure remains way above the 2015 figure, which was less than 50%. Likewise, the available figure for Malawi shows that the country had 72.75% of children participating in organised learning in 2020 compared to 62.75% in 2016. For Mozambique and Zambia, UNICEF only shows data for 2019 with 6% for Mozambique and 26% for Zambia. Participation rates for Zambia in 2019 were 29.4 %, 48.9 percent were boys and 51.1 percent were girls. While the rising number of pupils admitted to ECE classes is commendable, there are learning environment challenges that have been recounted.





ZINECDA MEMBER PROFILE:

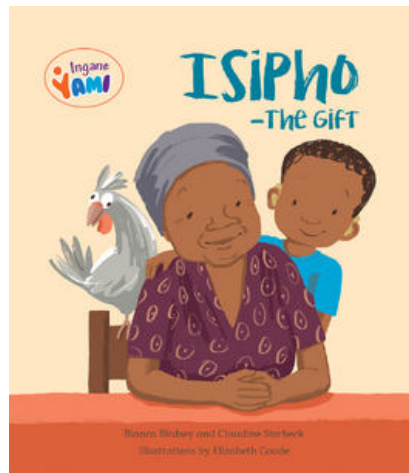


Nhaka Foundation climate change mitigation measures

Children between 0-8 years are the most vulnerable to climatic crises. Changes in weather, environmental degradation, and disasters can disrupt the developmental processes of children. Climate change has an impact on health, learning and educational opportunities, and social-emotional skills of children as well as on the families' ability to provide safe and stable homes. Droughts which negatively impact yields in the field can result in less income and poverty to the family which then affect the food security of the families resulting in poor health and nutrition status of children also negatively impacting their developmental milestones. As responsive measures to the effects of climate change, Nhaka Foundation has established solar-powered boreholes which are used in the establishment of nutrition gardens at schools. [Read all Nhaka's intervention.](#)

ZINECDA READING CORNER

Isipho the Gift explores the world of deaf children and how the intervention of families, friends, and the community is critical for early detection and for deaf children to learn that they are just like other children. Enjoy the reading.



info@zinecda.org



www.zinecda.org



[@zinecda](https://twitter.com/zinecda)