

IMPACT EVALUATION

Zimbabwe Network for Early Childhood Actors (ZINECDA): 2012 to 2019



Report submitted to ZINECDA Management

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Technical Report

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List of Acronyms

ACDRC	Africa Community Development and Research Center
AfCEN	Africa Early Childhood Network
AGM	Annual General Meeting
BOT	Board of Trustees
CBO	Community—Based Organization
CPC	Child Protection Committee
CPS	Child Protection Society
DPO	Disability People’s Organization
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECOZI	Education Coalition of Zimbabwe
FBO	Faith—based organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IGP	Income—generating project(s)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoHCC	Ministry of Health and Child Care
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
MoPSLASW	Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare
MoWAGCSED	Ministry of Women Affairs, Gender, Community and Small Enterprise Development
NGO	Non—Governmental Organization
OSISA	Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
RDC	Rural District Council
RFF	Roger Federer Foundation
SDC	School Development Committee
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
USD	United States Dollar
VHW	Village Health Worker
ZINECDA	Zimbabwe Network for Early Childhood Development Actors

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Z

Background to the Evaluation

Zimbabwe Network for Early Childhood Development Actors (ZINECDA), the organization that commissioned this evaluation, is a national network and umbrella body of non–state and state actors comprising community–based organisations (CBO), non–governmental organizations (NGO), faith–based organisations (FBO), early childhood development (ECD) centres, research and academic institutions, and private entities to enhance the accessibility and quality of ECD in Zimbabwe. It was formed and officially registered as a trust in 2012 (Registration number: MA 974/2012). The network’s founding member organisations are Nhaka Foundation, Child Protection Society (CPS), Child Resource Institute of Zimbabwe and J.F. Kapnek Trust. These founders resolved to create ZINECDA after noticing inequalities in accessing ECD services, lack of standardization of professional ECD services, lack of, or poor infrastructure and inadequate nutritional and learning materials for the children to enjoy.

ZINECDA’s national mandate is to influence policies, legislations, guiding or framework documents, programmes and practice related to ECD by sharing information on experiences and generating knowledge and understanding on ECD. It leads in influencing policy, guidelines and legislations that concerns the rights and development of young children through direct participation in these processes, as well as through advocacy and lobbying.

2.1. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF ZINECDA PROGRAMS

ZINECDA’s aims for a world of ***thriving and holistically developed children (from conception to 8 years) enjoying their full rights***. To achieve this, the organization pursues the following objectives:

- i. To strengthen parenting and caregiving practices, thereby facilitating in and out of school ECD service provision
- ii. To generate and share new ECD knowledge in support of ECD policy advocacy
- iii. To build ECD programming capacity for ECD actors in the network
- iv. To strengthen ECD governance and management capacity of ECD institutions.

2.2. ZINECDA KEY ACTIVITIES

That table below enlists the key activity areas of ZINECDA, the impacts of which the evaluation of reference assessed.

TABLE 1: KEY OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES OF ZINECDA

Objective	Key activity/activities
To strengthen parenting and caregiving practices, thereby facilitating in and out of school ECD service provision	Creating platforms for leaders and stakeholders of ECD centers that are registered with ZINECDA to exchange ideas for improved ECD services
	Soliciting for resources from partners (e.g., learning and play facilities) for distribution to member ECD centers
To generate and share new ECD knowledge in support of ECD policy advocacy	Information gathering through research and national budget analysis to furnish members with evidence to inform their planning and programming
To build ECD programming capacity for ECD actors in the network	Building capacities of ZINECDA members
	Facilitating exchange programs for ZINECDA members
To strengthen ECD governance and management capacity of ECD institutions.	Promoting good ECD standards set by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE)
	Advocacy to promote ECD facility development among key government ministries, municipalities and residents associations
To represent ECD actors' interests at various platforms and within various strategic networks	Handling the ECD portfolio in other networks such as the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI)
	Using research and experiential evidence based on work with ECD centers to influence the government to formulate sound ECD policies or to revise existing ones.

2.3. SCOPE OF WORK

TABLE 2: EVALUATION'S SCOPE OF WORK

Evaluation criterion	Evaluation objectives and/or questions
Overall purpose	To assess the process of delivery, effectiveness, efficiency, value for money and impact of ZINECDA at provincial, national and regional levels.
Programs' impacts	What has been the impact both qualitatively and quantitatively of ZINECDA since 2012?
Value for Money	Has the organization provided good value for money for its investors, partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries?
Effectiveness	What has worked/not worked in improving ECD policy environment, capacity building and networking from subnational, national and regional levels?
Sustainability	How sustainable are project activities and has the project been successful in leveraging additional interest and financial investment to it?
Efficiency	Assess the levels in achieving targets, outcomes and ability to leverage community owned resources to support the broader work of organization.
Coordination and partnership	Explore the extent of coordination between membership, partners, different government agencies, beneficiaries and other stakeholders.

2

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used the multi—methods approach within qualitative research design — a system that entailed using several data collection approaches, all of them qualitative. This design is cost—effective and yet allows for depth, especially in explaining why a project may have achieved specific results or not. Within this design, the evaluation combined the following manipulations:

- a) **Primary and secondary data:** the evaluation gathered primary information from ZINECDA members, provincial chairpersons, heads of individual preschools, board members of ZINECDA, and Provincial chairpersons and ZINECDA staff. To triangulate against and validate with the data that was collected from the field, documents with relevant program information such as progress reports, minutes of meetings, financial reports, work plans and related others were reviewed to assess the organization’s progress towards its goals and achievements.
- b) **Mix of face-to-face and virtual or online data collection methods:** Considering the wide coverage of ZINECDA across the country, the evaluation used a combination of face—to—face and virtual interviews to collect primary data. While Provincial Chairpersons and ZINECDA members in the provinces were interviewed through online means like Skype, WhatsApp calls and emails, data from Harare—based stakeholders was collected through face—to—face group and individual interactions.
- c) **Individual and group engagements:** the research engaged ZINECDA members both individually and in groups. The team leader was enjoined to the ZINECDA WhatsApp group, which gave him the platform to engage the ZINECDA stakeholders collectively on the group platform and individually via inbox communications. Attending one of the ZINECDA meetings gave the Team Leader and his field assistants a chance to engage the stakeholders and staff members collectively.
- d) **Generalized and single case analyses:** the qualitative design that the evaluation applied allowed it to collect information on general trends experienced across the ZINECDA partnership and special cases experienced in specific provinces or ECD centers.

The targeted data sources of the research included the ZINECDA staff, stakeholders, Committee members of ZINECDA and relevant documents from the organization. Data collection was done within a participatory and consultative atmosphere where research tools that best suited different respondents were applied. The evaluation applied the utilization—focused approach which encompasses the following features:

Simple language: The report used simple language in communicating its findings. Some of the stakeholders who are going to use the report are not necessarily social scientist, therefore the use of technical rhetoric language was minimized as much as possible.

After completing the field work, a quick report of indicative findings was produced and presented to ZINECDA for instant feedback. The presentation enabled ZINECDA to advise the consultant on matters that needed more emphasis or less.

2.1. SPECIFIC DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND TOOLS

In line with target information sources above, the research held in—depth interviews, observed the participants during meetings (Participant observation), reviewed the organization’s key documents and engaged social media discussions.

2.1.1. Participant Observations

Some of the data was gathered through participatory observations, the Team Leader and his field assistant attended a meeting that was held by ZINECDA Harare Committee members at Child Protection Society (CPS). Sitting in the meeting allowed the Team Leader to observe what the committee was all about. It also allowed the consultants to engage the participants of meetings collectively and individually. Where there was need for clarity on the observations, the Team Leader would ask questions and the respondents would respond and give a clear insight. A clear picture on some of the benefits of being a member of ZINECDA was obtained through attending this meeting. Information like how the members exchange their ideas and knowledge was also obtained through attending the meeting.

2.1.2. In—depth interviews

All key stakeholders and key informants that is the ZINECDA staff members, committee members and Provincial chairpersons as well as the Ministry of Education relevant staff members (specifically District Schools Inspector) all partook in the impact evaluation of ZINECDA through in—depth interviews. The interviews were held face to face and virtually through internet and telecommunication channels that were available and suitable during data gathering (Skype, emails and social media platforms). To keep the research tool focused on the evaluation criteria a semi structured interview guide was used as reference. Every research respondent group had their own semi structured interview guide that contained matters that related to their association with the organization. For instance, the committee members of ZINECDA covered matters that pertained to the benefit and the impact of ZINECDA towards their ECD Centers and the recommendations for the organization while the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education covered matters pertaining to the policies that are related to what ZINECDA does as an organization.

2.1.3. Social Media Discussions

The Team Leader used social media platforms to gather some of the data presented in the report. The Team Leader is a participant in one of the WhatsApp groups of ZINECDA staff and Committee members. This provided him with a platform to provoke questions in the group which in turn allowed the group members to discuss the issue at hand in the group and inboxes. Some of the photos that were used in the report by the Team Leader were shared in this WhatsApp group.

2.1.4. Desk review

The documents related to the ECD program were reviewed to track the progress of the organization in implementing its programs. The findings from these documents were triangulated against or validated with the findings of the methods that were used to collect primary data.

2.2. SAMPLING

To collect data from the people with firsthand information and knowledge of the organization and its programs a purposive sampling was used. The Team Leader and his field assistant visited some of the ECD Centers whose owners are members of ZINECDA who had vast knowledge and exposure when it comes to the organization that was under study. ZINECDA committee members for the Harare Province were observed during their meeting and they were also engaged through one on one interviews after their meeting. This helped the interviewer to get clarity on some of the key issues he did not understand in the meeting.

2.2.1. Evaluation sample

The table below profiles the categories of participants that the evaluation engaged and the methods that were used to engage each of them.

TABLE 3: PROFILE OF EVALUATION PARTICIPANTS

Data Collection Method	Sample size per respondents					Total
	Program beneficiaries	ZINECDA members	ZINECDA staff	Stakeholders/Duty—Bearers	Key informants	
In—depth interviews	3	4	4	5	0	16
Social Media Discussions	0	7	0	0	0	7
Participatory Observation	6	11	1	0	2	20
Totals	9 (21%)	22 (51%)	5 (12%)	5 (12%)	2 (4%)	43

Table 2 above shows that 43 persons took part in the evaluation. ZINECDA members, who are an important information source considering that they are the ones who drive ZINECDA programs and experience the organization's impacts most directly, constituted the largest proportion of the sample (51%). Program beneficiaries, the managers and owners of ECD centers, made up 21% of the sample. These too directly participate in ZINECDA's programs and experience their impacts, being the ones at the very grassroots—end of the network. ZINECDA staff and stakeholders/duty—bearers, including board members and MoPSE officials constituted 12% of the sample apiece, followed by ECD technocrats or key informants (2%). As qualitative methods were used for primary data collection, complemented by secondary information from program documents, a sample of 43 respondents of in—depth interview was sufficient to achieve the rigor that was needed to reach a data saturation point. Results of this evaluation are therefore not generalizable to the entire world of ECD actors outside the ZINECDA network, but they authentically reflect the status of ZINECDA on the basis of the sample size and evaluation design presented in this chapter, above.

2.3. DATA ANALYSIS

A one day workshop was held to interpret the qualitative data that was collected during the research before it was classified into themes basing on the objectives of the evaluation. These themes are some of the headings in the report.

2.4. EVALUATION PROCESS

To make the above design possible, the evaluation took a consultative and participatory approach that featured the following processes:

- a) ***Inception meeting:*** the meeting was attended by the lead consultant and relevant ZINECDA staff members in order to harmonize the proposal with the latter's expectations to kick start the evaluation. The evaluation methodology, sample size, budget and the work plan were adjusted according to the practical realities in the field. Out of this meeting, the lead consultant produced an Inception report that was submitted to ZINECDA. The inception report included the methodology and the field itinerary that guided ZINECDA in mobilizing the participants and data collection tools. The inception report served as the blueprint of the evaluation against which the performance of the consultants' team was judged.
- b) ***Training of field team and sharing of roles:*** field assistants all received training from the experienced team leader to acquaint them with the evaluation techniques and strategies. Prior to that, the Lead Consultant had held two planning meetings with ZINECDA senior staff to agree on the modalities of collecting data and to exchange notes on the data collection tools. The training of field assistants was informed accordingly.
- c) ***Data collection:*** the field team collected the data from the field using the data collection methods mentioned elsewhere in the report. During the data collection, the team held end of day meetings to review the data collected, identify the challenges that were not foreseen before the evaluation began and address those challenges and come up with new strategies. Data interpretations was also done during these end of day meetings which enabled the team to quickly flexibly adjust to the challenges that were being faced during data collection
- d) ***Data analysis and report writing:*** Data that was collected through in—depth interviews, social media discussions and participatory observation was captured into relevant databases for onward analysis, which was guided by the evaluation objectives in the terms of reference. The report was written out of the outcomes of that analysis.
- e) ***Submission and presentation of draft report to board members:*** a PowerPoint presentation of the draft report was made before ZINECDA board members for feedback on 16th July 2019. Feedback received then became the basis for the evaluation report's finalization.
- f) ***Incorporation of stakeholder's comments to finalize report and submission of the final report:*** self-explanatory.

2.5. DATA QUALITY ASSURANCE MEASURES

Data quality was assured by consulting ZINECDA technical and managerial staff throughout the evaluation, with an inception meeting that kick—started the process serving as the central mechanism by which ZINECDA could share its expectations with the lead evaluator. Subsequent to this, ZINECDA personnel and stakeholders reviewed this report's first draft and their comments to it informed its refinement. The field assistants who collected data received prior training in the skills of applying the methods that were agreed

upon at the inception meeting. This training guaranteed standardized data collection procedures and data validity. In addition, the evaluation employed multiple sources of information and used a mix of different methods to facilitate cross—validation of data towards enhanced reliability. Meanwhile, during fieldwork, daily meetings during the evenings or nights were held for data collectors to exchange notes towards harmonizing interpretations of the data.

2.6. PROPOSED ETHICAL VALUES OF THE CONSULTANCY

The evaluation's ethical accountability measures included the following:

- a) Beneficiation – efforts were invested into maximizing benefits to the target beneficiaries, especially the ECD learners and evaluation participants.
- b) Informed consent – all evaluation participants gave written and/or verbal consent based on an understanding of the evaluation's purpose and usage.
- c) Confidentiality – the evaluation restricted the usage of evaluation data to the purposes in the terms of reference, not for third parties. Similarly, any information leading to the identification of evaluation participants (e.g., names) was not captured during data collection.

3

Evaluation Findings and Discussion

The valuation assessed the activities of ZINECDA and processes of their execution or delivery to determine the organization’s progress (i.e., how far it has managed to deliver on its planned activities), performance (efficiency, effectiveness, coordination and partnership) and significance (impact, sustainability and value for money). The first section of this chapter outlines the findings of the evaluations on the work of ZINECDA, focusing on what aspects of ECD it addresses with its activities. Within that section the structure of ZINECDA is presented and discussed to determine how its internal organization may have affected its progress, performance and significance.

3.1. FINDINGS ON ZINECDA’S MANDATE AND OPERATIONS

As a membership—based and networking organization, the best start to understand ZINECDA and its operations is its structure, which is illustrated below.

FIGURE 1: ZINECDA ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



As shown in Figure 1, ZINECDA's structure reflects national, provincial and district representation of ECD actors. The structure comprises elected officials for the network's corporate governance and a National Secretariat for the coordination of its activities. Elected units of the structure are responsible for oversight and guidance of the National Secretariat in line with (a) AGM guidance, Board of Trustees, (b) Strategic plan targets, and (c) Evidence from practice within provinces and districts. The Secretariat is composed of appointed substantive staff and interns because of budget limitations, which are discussed in detail in a separate section of this chapter. The evaluation assessed ZINECDA at the following levels as per organizational structure in Figure 1:

- › Corporate governance setup – Board of Trustees, National Steering Committee, Provincial Chapter Committees and District Chapter Committees
- › National Secretariat
- › Members (ECD Centers – owners, parents and stakeholders)
- › Programs and projects

3.1.1. Corporate governance setup of ZINECDA

The Annual General Meeting (AGM), which consists of ZINECDA's members, who represent all provinces and districts where ZINECDA operates, is the organization's highest decision-making body. Focusing on driving the national mandate of the organization, the AGM sets the tone of ZINECDA's operations by electing members of the Board of Trustees (BOT) to complement founding members of ZINECDA. However, because of inadequate funding, the organization's most recent AGM was held in 2015, which entails a four-year gap. Nonetheless national stakeholders, especially members are aware of the organization's business and they influence it through other consultative engagements that the National Secretariat organizes at provincial and national scale for its members.

BOT meetings are held as planned and these have been the central driving influence of the organization's national programming and strategic focus. The BOT oversees the general operations of the National Secretariat in pursuit of agreed strategic plans and the well-being of the organization. It specifically supports and oversees the operations of the National Secretariat, based on its reports presented thereto during meetings. These reports are based on strategic plan targets and AGM resolutions, which are converted into monthly and quarterly work plans. The BOT is composed of elected members and founding members, whose membership is mandatory (i.e., the first board members who supported the organization's founder during inception stages of setting up operations). Founding members qualify for board membership automatically because of their institutional memory and their known passion for the organization.

ZINECDA successfully set up Provincial Chapter Committees in all 10 Provinces of Zimbabwe using a grant received from the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA). The evaluation found nine of the 10 Provincial Chapter Committees functional, their vibrancy depending on the capabilities and connectedness of chairpersons to strategic advocacy platforms. Some provinces were therefore more active and making greater progress than others (e.g., Matabeleland North, Midlands, Mashonaland West and Manicaland

Provincial Chapters had set up district chapter committees where six other chapters had not. Chairpersons and Secretaries of Provincial Chapter Committees constituted the National Steering Committee, which technically supported and provided evidence—based guidance to the National Secretariat in implementing programs within the strategic plan. The National Steering Committee holds periodic meetings to discuss the technical aspects of the organization’s programs, especially on the basis of the experience gained in driving advocacy activities at national level, in the provinces and districts. They further spearhead and participate in national advocacy activities under the umbrella of the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI) to influence MoPSE policies related to ECD. ZINECDA is the member of ECOZI responsible for the ECD portfolio. Apart from advocacy activities with MoPSE, ZINECDA Provincial Chapters, with National Secretariat support, target other social ministries of government to influence pro—ECD policies, churning the general message that ECD is not restricted to the educational side of children’s lives. Their meetings involve discussions and exchanges of experiences and ideas on the work and challenges of Provincial Chapters to strategize improved approaches, especially in relation to advocacy work.

ZINECDA’s Annual report of 2018 reports of three regional and one national forum that ZINECDA facilitated to identify and prioritize policy issues at provincial levels and to feed into national policy processes. Seventy out of an expected seventy—five participants (delegates from the provinces) attended the workshop as shown in the table below.

TABLE 4: ATTENDANCE OF PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Region	Coordinating chapter	Attendance		Total attendance
		Male	Female	
Southern	Bulawayo	11	6	17
Northern	Harare	13	6	19
Midlands	Masvingo	6	8	14
Masvingo, National	Masvingo	10	10	20
Totals		40	30	70

The above table shows that 70 provincial delegates attended ZINECDA—arranged workshops in 2018 — an achievement to which the 2018 annual report attributes the organization’s ability to influence the focus of the development of the early learning policy in 2019.

Ideally two National Steering Committee meetings should be held per year, but these meetings were infrequent due to budgetary limitations. As a result, the social media, especially WhatsApp, was used as a coping strategy to sustain the momentum of information sharing and planning among members of the committee in the interim. The Communications Officer – an Intern within the National Secretariat – stimulates, moderates and facilitates these discussions, sometimes sharing feedback to members on the developments in her office. ZINECDA enjoined the lead evaluator to the WhatsApp group where he silently followed discussions thereon over a five month period and he observed that:

- (a) Participation was very high on that platform,
- (b) Updates of new developments were shared and discussed as they happened, supported by photographs and videos,

- (c) Deliberations on the platform were strictly ZINECDA business, and jokes or chain messages were not shared on the platform at all.

The following extracts from WhatsApp conversations of Provincial Chapter Chairpersons in ZINECDA's National Steering Committee exemplify this:

BOX 1: EXTRACT OF WJHATSAPP CONVERSATIONS OF PROVINCIAL CHAIRPERSONS

"Congratulations to Mr. Machowa and Midlands Province for being called for a radio interview on ECD issues after being recognized for a brilliant presentation at Parliament consultation session yesterday"

"It was indeed an honour to be invited and be able to represent our organisation at provincial chapter level and for the secretariat for promptly responding to my request to have someone represent national voice. Mercy (National Secretariat) represented us excellently as well, I was humbled by the fact that MP's came in their numbers after the bill proposals session to express appreciation for the factual submission, Thank you all"

"Indeed it was a great interview"

"Missed the submissions, Please share if you have"

"Congratulations Midlands, you made us proud. Thanks Mr. Machowa"

"Together we can"

"Good work, please story us briefly as well"

"Midlands will submit the informative radio interview audio for it touches on what we have accomplished and the role we have been playing for the past years briefly"

In Box 1 above, Provincial Chairpersons discussed Midlands Province's participation in a radio program, showing that the Communication Officer of the National Secretariat attended that event.

The evaluation found provincial chairpersonship and executive committee membership to be organizational rather than individual or personal responsibilities (i.e., the chairpersonship of provincial steering committees is in the hands of one of the local ECD—focused organizations with ZINECDA membership and a senior staff member thereof chairs committee meetings on its behalf). For instance, the Manicaland Provincial Chapter's Chairpersonship is the responsibility of Mwana Trust just as Harare Province's Chairpersonship is the responsibility of a ZINECDA member (ECD center owner) based in the city. This has made ZINECDA business a part of the natural mandates of the organizations involved, which creates scope for these organizations to mobilize resources for ZINECDA's provincial activities. All Provincial Chairpersons who were interviewed reported that their organizations count the business of ZINECDA as part of their core duties and organizational programs.

Ideally the National Secretariat should regularly visit Provincial Chapter teams to monitor and support their activities, but interaction is mostly virtual, online – less physical (budget constraints) because National Secretariat does not have suitable official vehicle(s) and supportive budget. As stated elsewhere in this section, the social media, telephone and email were the major channels of communication between the National Secretariat and provincial structures. In—depth interviews with ZINECDA staff and provincial chairpersons revealed that *“communication between the National Secretariat and Provincial Chapters is regular and effective”* (Provincial chairperson, Midlands), *“although there is room for improvement through holding face—to—face meetings according to the desired schedule”*.

According to the organizational structure in Figure 1, there must be District Chapters responsible for coordinating activities of ZINECDA members or the ECD actors at the grassroots and reporting the progress and results to the provincial chapter stakeholders. Chairpersons and Secretaries of these District Chapter Committees are expected to be the members of each Provincial Chapter’s Steering Committee. The evaluation found that there were thirteen district chapters based in three provinces, namely Midlands, Manicaland, Mashonaland West and Matabeleland North. These included Manicaland Province’s Mutasa, Chipinge and Chimanimani Districts, Midlands Province’s Shurugwi, Gokwe (work in progress) and Gweru Districts, Mashonaland West’s Chinhoyi, Kariba and Chegutu and Matabeleland North Province’s Hwange, Tsholotsho, Binga and Lupane Districts.

3.1.2. The National Secretariat (programs coordination)

With funding from OSISA, ZINECDA successfully established a functional National Secretariat based in Harare. A National Coordinator heads this National Secretariat, reporting to the Board of Trustees and participating in National Steering Committee as an ex—officio member. Within this National Secretariat there are four Technical Staff members (2 male and 2 female); one National Coordinator; one ECD Education Specialist; one Psychosocial Support Specialist and one Communications Expert for liaisons with Provincial structures. A Finance expert is employed on part time basis. The staff profile of the National Secretariat mirrors the key roles that it plays in coordinating the work of ZINECDA as shown in the table below.

TABLE 5: ZINECDA STAFF PROFILE AND ROLES

Position	Key roles	Comments
National Coordinator	Reporting to, and bearing primary accountability for the organization’s work before, the AGM, BOT and funding partners.	The National Coordinator has been the fulltime staff of the organization for long periods since end of 2016. His post is the foundation on which National Secretariat operations have been sustained because he alternates between serving as a volunteer and being salaried, subject to the availability of funding. Multi—tasking has been his other strategy of coping
	Representing the organization at meetings and all discussion platforms for national advocacy.	
	National Secretariat staff recruitment and supervision	
	Fundraising for National Secretariat operations and national programs.	
	Overseeing the production of all reports.	
	Relationship management in interfaces with stakeholders, partners, service providers, etc.	

Position	Key roles	Comments
	<p>Leadership in national and regional ECD policy advocacy engagements</p> <p>Coordinating and reviewing of ECD research on behalf of ZINECDA</p> <p>Spearheading organization’s strategic focus through initiating and guiding planning processes</p>	with the heavy demands of the National Secretariat.
Communications Officer	<p>An intern reporting to the National Coordinator</p> <p>Maintaining a diary of provincial programs and liaising with provincial stakeholders to assure that all planned events are implemented.</p> <p>Disseminating information to internal and external stakeholders as guided by the organization’s Communication Strategy and Policy</p> <p>Monitoring, evaluating and reporting on program activities happening in the provinces and districts as well as at the national scale</p> <p>Managing ZINECDA’s website and social media platforms, populating these with updated content from time to time.</p> <p>Overseeing processes of developing and reviewing communications strategies and policies.</p>	<p>Multi—tasking characterises the work of the Communications Officer, especially considering that in much of her work she takes instruction directly from a multi—tasking National Coordinator.</p> <p>An intern handles highly challenging tasks, which is good for the building of her capacity. However, a substantive staff member is needed for this role, whether the current intern can be promoted to the position or a new one is hired.</p>
ECD Officer: Education	<p>Development and management of all programs that address the educational aspects of ECD.</p> <p>Liaison with education—related stakeholders in the ECD sector for purposes of advocacy and information—sharing.</p> <p>Reporting to donors, BOT and other stakeholders on the progress and results of ECD educational programs</p> <p>Supporting fundraising for ECD educational programs.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation of ECD educational programs.</p> <p>Any other duties as assigned by the National Coordinator</p>	This is a part time position supported by a grant that was secured for a project in the field of ECD education.
ECD Officer and Psychosocial Support	<p>Development and management of all programs that address the psychosocial aspects of ECD.</p> <p>Liaison with psychosocial support related stakeholders in the ECD sector for purposes of advocacy and information—sharing.</p> <p>Reporting to National Coordinator and other stakeholders on the progress and results of ECD psychosocial support programs</p> <p>Supporting fundraising for ECD psychosocial support programs.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation of ECD psychosocial support programs.</p> <p>Any other duties as assigned by the National Coordinator</p>	This is a new fulltime post that illustrates ZINECDA’s recognition that ECD is not entirely about child education.

Position	Key roles	Comments
Finance, and Administration Officer	Providing financial guidance in the planning of programs	Multi—tasking is characteristic (e.g., Finance/Administration Officer may take part in fieldwork), which is cost—effective. The Finance and Administration Officer may switch to volunteerism when funding is limited, and in the absence of an Administrative Assistant, sometimes the National Coordinator assists the Finance & Administration Officer.
	Controlling the budget through making necessary payments in line with finance policy to keep expenditures within approved limits	
	Liaising with service providers for purposes of procuring essential products and services	
	Producing annual financial statements to guide planning	
	Financial reporting to donor partners and management as contractually required	
	Banking; deposits and withdrawals in line with budgets	

The table above shows that ZINECDA maintains a lean National Secretariat and copes with its national coordination responsibilities through multi—tasking, volunteerism and deployment of interns in senior positions. This has carried the organization across periods of financial limitations caused by limited funding. Scheduled routine meetings that the National Secretariat was supposed to convene and organise, notably the National Steering Committee meetings, have not been held at the desired frequency of two per year because of funding constraints. Social media engagements have been the organization’s coping mechanism, allowing provincial stakeholders to share information and experiences as well as to update the National Secretariat of new developments in their regions. The following extracts of a communication trail from a WhatsApp group that the National Secretariat created for purposes of coordinating provincial chapter stakeholders illustrates this:

“Hello ZINECDA Leaders, I hope you are all well and renewed after the holiday. Please keep us updated on your activities in your chapters. This platform is for us to share ideas and learn from each other. Wish all a good week ending”

“Morning all on this platform. Manicaland Chapter (Mwana Trust) and the Education Sector Team has finished doing the Cyclone needs assessment. We will share the report for public consumption once it’s official. What is ready is for Districts of Mutare, Chipinge, Buhera and Chimanimani. Those who want to do programmes in these districts let’s discuss here and see how best you can do it”

In view of the above, the evaluation identified a number of strengths and areas of improvements for ZINECDA’s National Secretariat. These are listed in the table below.

TABLE 6: ZINECDA STRENGTHS AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

Component	Strengths	Areas of improvement
Staff establishment vis-à-vis the	The four staff positions within the Secretariat mirror the organization’s key functional areas, which enables it to perform well across its mandates.	The lean National Secretariat staff thrives on multi—tasking, but this entails work overload for some staff members, especially the National Coordinator who handles fundraising and

Component	Strengths	Areas of improvement
work to be done	All staff are experts in their technical fields	administrative responsibilities in addition to his core duties. The evaluation found that as much as the ZINECDA generally handled all its business competently, there was room for improvement in its M&E and resource mobilization functions. Such improvement can be possible, if subject to funding, an additional staff member may be recruited and assigned to specialize in these functions and reduce the multi—tasking burden on the National Coordinator and his designates for technical programming work.
	All staff in the National Secretariat are versatile, able to do multiple tasks	
	Staff members in key positions (e.g., the Finance and Administration Manager and the National Coordinator) have remained loyal to the organization, switching to volunteerism when financial resources diminish.	
Financial status	The organization has well established financial management systems, with a clean audit trail.	Limited funding flows have compromised the profile of activities that the organization has implemented during the evaluated course. Of major concern has been its inability to hold an AGM to date, inability to hold two National Steering Committee meetings. As much as social media communications are a sound alternative, face—to—face meetings remain preferable.
	As part of multi—tasking, the finance and Administration Manager sometimes partakes in field activities with the programs team and received support on financial tasks from the National Coordinator, which is cost—effective and builds capacity.	
	The organization has been receiving activity—focused grants, which enabled it to set up its operations including the National Secretariat, Provincial Chapters, strategic plan and baseline research currently used as evidence to inform advocacy messages.	
Resources	The organization rents office space at nominal levels.	The organization does not have suitable vehicles for field missions, especially the types that suits rough terrains and roads in some provinces. Staff members relied on public or private transport, which is administratively and logistically challenging.

The strengths and areas of improvement in the table above underscore two key messages as follows:

- a) The team in the National Secretariat has been versatile, able to cope with and address challenges that affect their work without abandoning ship.
- b) Resource inadequacy has been the central cause of the National Secretariat’s inability to accomplish some of its intended targets, especially in coordinating national programs. Therefore, a look at the organization’s funding over the years from 2012 to date is important here. The table below shows

the amounts that the organization has been receiving and what purposes the grants were each meant for.

TABLE 7: AMOUNTS AND PURPOSES OF GRANTS RECEIVED (2016—2019)

Partner	Grant amount (USD)	Purpose of grant
Roger Federer Foundation (2018)	20,000	ECD Conference
OSISA through REPSSI (2016)	22,830	Mainstreaming psychosocial support into ECD
AfCEN (2016 and 2018)	10,000	Resources mapping and 5—year strategic plan development
OSISA (2018)	25,000	Strengthening the National Secretariat and Provincial structures
RFF (2019)	120,000	Improving school readiness (program) 2019—2020
Total received	197,830	

The above table shows that ZINECDA received USD197,830 over the evaluated period. These grants have been evidently short—term and activity—specific, allowing Secretariat to conduct two baseline researches that informed its ongoing advocacy messages, set up provincial chapters and strengthen the National Secretariat and produce a five—year strategy. Until 2020 ZINECDA is implementing a School Readiness Project using an RFF grants, which has allowed the organizations to hire two specialised program officers responsible for the educational and psychosocial support aspects of ECD respectively.

Membership fees of RTGS\$50¹ per year per member augment funding, being used for supporting programs of building capacities of the members and coordination program activities. Interviews with ZINECDA staff revealed that membership fees could only support limited activities even when employing such cost—effective measures as holding training programs at the premises of members to avoid rentals for conference facilities. ZINECDA members reported that they highly benefited from the new skills that they gained during trainings and exchange learning that ZINECDA facilitated using these fees, but all of them felt that “*we need more such trainings*” (ZINECDA member, Domboshava) and that “*the trainings we are attending are too wide apart to sustain the momentum that we want*” (ZINECDA member, Westgate, Harare).

3.1.3. ZINECDA Membership

Members of ZINECDA are its channel through which to apply the desired standards of child development and protection through ECD programs. Their experiences are the sources of evidence for advocacy. ECD practitioners including ECD Center owners and managers, leaders of NGOs that support ECD—related programs, faith—based organizations (FBO), individual philanthropists and interest groups formed the core members of ZINECDA. The diversity of ZINECDA members varied widely across provinces, demonstrating that ZINECDA is gaining increasing visibility through its provincial activities and online engagement. Growth and diversity of membership additionally reflects differences in the amounts of efforts that provincial chapters invest in marketing the organization’s services and recruiting new members. As evidence of the differences

¹ RTGS\$ was the Zimbabwean currency at the time of gathering data for the evaluation, and the interbank exchange rate to the US Dollar as at 4th July 2019 was 1:7.7, which makes RTGS50 just USD6.50.

in the vibrancy of provincial chapters, the evaluation found that district chapters had been successfully created in three provinces, Matabeleland North, Manicaland and Midlands.

In general, nonetheless, ZINECDA membership has progressively expanded from 2012 to date as shown in the chart below.

FIGURE 2: ZINECDA MEMBERSHIP GROWTH RATE (2012—2018)

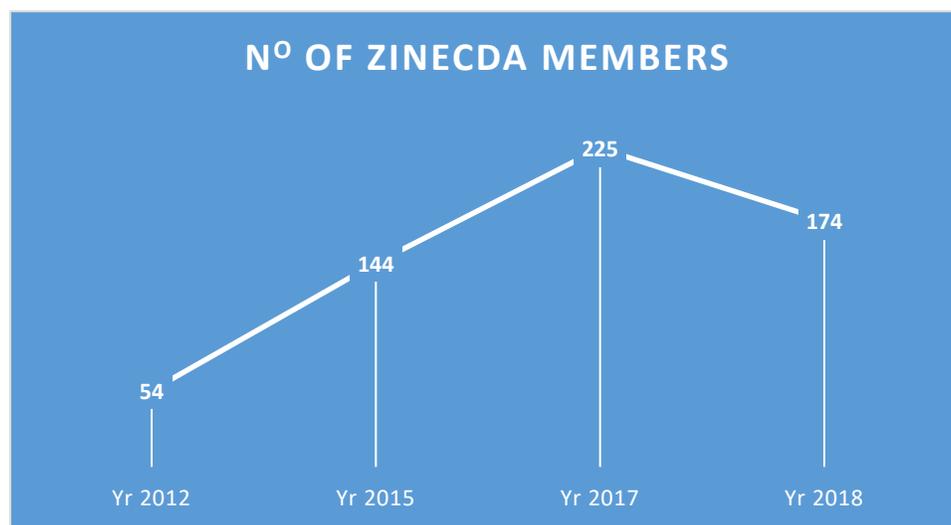


Figure 2 shows that ZINECDA membership grew 63% from 54 members (2012) to 144 by 2015 and a further 36% from that figure to 225 (2017), before declining 23% to 174 by the time of carrying out this evaluation. Overall, membership has grown 69% over the years. A scan of the members' database showed that membership diversity to be one of ZINECDA's chief strengths. Key patterns of member diversity that were observed in the database include:

- › **Geographical diversity:** the organization has attracted rural and urban (high and low density) members, enabling these to share their varied experiences. *“My ECD center is in a rural area, Domboshava, but I have established modern toilets that are found in urban areas because I learned the importance of this to children’s hygiene from my colleagues based in Harare”*, an rural ECD Center Manager reported.
- › **Maturity status diversity:** the ECD centers that have ZINECDA membership were found to include newly established and seasoned ones with decades of experience.
- › **Functional diversity:** among ZINECDA members were found Disability People’s Organizations (DPO), churches and faith—based organizations, philanthropic individuals, community—based organisation (CBO) and NGOs with an interest in ECD matters. Their diverse background avails a wealth of experiences that ZINECDA can tap into in supporting ECD programs.

The role of members was to deliver ECD services to children and to engage parents either to enlighten them about the importance of ECD to their children or to plan how to improve the quality of services at ECD centers

where their children enrol. Provincial chapters would periodically organize sessions for ECD practitioners to meet and share ideas of enhancing the quality of their services to children, receive training on new ECD policies, child protection strategies and related topics. The evaluation team attended and observed one such training workshop in Harare where ECD practitioners learned about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and how it applied to children in ECD. They discussed, for example, how child participation in the making of decisions that affect them could be made real for children in ECD whose levels of understanding concepts was deemed low. They further learned new games that can be used to enhance children's motor, social, physical, emotional and intellectual development.

3.1.4. ZINECDA programs and activities

ZINECDA's programs unite all its structures discussed above – the National (coordinating) Secretariat, AGM, BOT, National Steering Committee, ZINECDA members. ZINECDA's programs have been happening at provincial, national and regional levels through the efforts of its provincial chapters and networks to which the organization is affiliated, especially the Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI) and Africa Early Childhood Network (AfCEN). Experiences of ZINECDA's Provincial Chapters are used as evidence to inform national advocacy messages while national experiences inform regional advocacy.

The evaluation identified the core challenges that ZINECDA's national programs responded to as follows:

- a) Coordination, clarity and cohesion in the development and promotion of ECD policy in Zimbabwe has been poor (ZINECDA Annual Report, 2018), involving a discord between ECD Policy and the National Constitution (Minutes of Masvingo Chapter Engagement meetings). This has mostly been a result and reflection of the absence of evidence in the government's planning for ECD policy, especially considering that mandatory ECD service delivery is new to Zimbabwe and therefore evolving. ZINECDA's role has been to furnish the government with emerging evidence based on practice in the field. For example, MoPSE initially did not officially recognize private ECD centers until ZINECDA showed the ministry evidence suggesting that formal schools did not have the capacity to absorb all ECD learners and that private ECD centers played too important a role to ignore.
- b) Policy on ECD entry regulations is unclear, resulting some children entering ECD A and/or ECD B late (ZINECDA Annual Report, 2018). Low appreciation of the importance of ECD among parents makes this worse.
- c) Understanding of what ECD entails is limited, underlined by a belief that it is entirely about children's education, forgetting other important child well-being aspects such as health, nutrition, social and emotional wellness. ECD actors interviewed in this evaluation all reported that MoPSE monopolizes the custodianship of ECD. This leaves other social ministries such as Health and Child Care (MoHCC), Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MoPSLSW), and Women Affairs, Gender, Community and Small-to-Medium Enterprise Development (MoWAGCSED) concentrating on other priorities than supporting ECD. Further, the absence of inter-ministerial platforms for tackling ECD matters means that MoPSE has no mechanism by which to oversee or influence other ministries on ECD matters.
- d) Low national budget allocation for child education and hence limited government funding for ECD has seen government ECD policies remaining on paper without serious implementation. For example, policy insists on a teacher-to-learner ratio of 1:20, yet the government has failed to support the construction of any additional classrooms for ECD classes or to expand the staff establishment for ECD teaching

posts. Private ECD centers have continued to complement government schools’ classrooms and teachers, yet for a considerable time MoPSE did not officially recognise them.

- e) Subject—orientation of the ECD curriculum at the expense of a focus on stages of a child’s development and play (ZINECDA Annual Report, 2018) reflects the lack of evidence in the development of ECD curriculum.
- f) ECD infrastructure was incompatible and learning environments unfriendly, excluding children with disabilities (ZINECDA Annual Report, 2018). The evaluation’s in—depth interviews of owners of ECD centers revealed that ECD teachers lack skills of communicating with children with disabilities such as hearing and visual impairment, or teaching them.
- g) Expensive and cumbersome ECD Centre registration process in Zimbabwe (Masvingo Engagement meeting minutes) alienated private ECD centers, which ceased to make any further efforts to register before ZINECDA’s interventions.

In response to the above challenges, ZINECDA’s programs have revolved around the following activities:

- a) **Research:** two studies have been completed during the evaluated period. The first one was a resource mapping study, which enabled ECD actors to know the existing financial, technical, material, human and other resources that were available to the ECD sector and how these could be complemented. This would enable ZINECDA and partners to implement interventions that would augment and not duplicate or replace ongoing ones. The second study assessed the status of ECD in Zimbabwe to identify gaps in service quality and determine strategies of improving ECD service delivery. The two researches became the evidence base on which ZINECDA launched its program planning and advocacy.
- b) **Provincial meetings, exchange learning and capacity—building workshops:** ZINECDA’s National Secretariat strongly encouraged Provincial Chapters to be innovative in designing and implementing programs that responded to local problems and aligned with its national strategy. The WhatsApp extracts below exemplify this:

“Last week on Friday (21 May 2019) we attended the Midlands Chapter Quarterly meeting. The session was indeed amazing, thanks to Mr. Machowa and team. We encourage you all to set up dates for meetings and capacity building workshops in line with the ZINECDA strategy. Also send through your budgets and we will make sure you are well supported and a representative from the secretariat will come to your meeting”

2017 annual report records some meetings and trainings that were facilitated for ZINECDA members in the provinces. These trainings sought to equip ECD practitioners and caregivers with skills to support infants and younger children as well as to train stakeholders in skills of mainstreaming psychosocial support into ECD. The table below is an extract from that report.

TABLE 8: ZINECDA CAPACITY—BUILDING WORKSHOPS IN 2017

Workshop type	Participants’ category	No of participants per district						Total	No of workshops
		Gweru		Murewa		National			
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Training workshops	Teachers	8	104	4	87	0	0	203	7
	Caregivers	5	23	6	23	0	0	57	2

Workshop type	Participants' category	No of participants per district						Total	Nº of workshops
		Gweru		Murewa		National			
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female		
	School Heads	8	20	40	16	0	0	84	3
Totals		21	147	50	126	0	0	344	12

The above table shows a snippet of capacity—building activities in Midlands and Mashonaland East, which relevant provincial chapters organized. Twelve such workshops were held, attracting 344 participants including ECD teachers, caregivers and school heads.

The evaluation team's physical follow up to verify contents of ZINECDA's reports through attending one of the workshops in Harare (May 2019) and interviewing ECD practitioners confirmed the findings highlighted in the table above, revealing that a range of new ideas or skills have been shared and gained through provincial workshops and trainings. These ideas and skills are listed below:

- › **Strategies of maximising parental participation in ECD service delivery**, including through consistently and fully paying their school fees even within harsh economic climates that have characterised Zimbabwe during the current decade. *“I used to struggle to keep my ECD center viable because very few parents paid their fees, and if I threatened to exclude their children from school the parents would not be moved because they did not value ECD”*, a Domboshava—based ECD center manager said. *“But through workshops like this I learned that all I needed was to engage parents and discuss together the way forward”*. This ECD manager reported that through that strategy she discovered the reasons why parents did not pay their fees and was able to get their maximum cooperation. *“From my meeting with parents I discovered that they were reluctant to pay fees for their children because they did not even appreciate or value ECD”*, she said. *“Parents now sacrifice for their children's education and some volunteer their services of cleaning and running important errands for the school if they cannot afford the fees”*. Another ECD center manager who said, *“I almost closed the ECD to try a different business”* credited the revival of operations at her school to the exchanges of ideas facilitated through provincial chapters.
- › **Awareness of the importance of registering ECD centers with MoPSE**, procedures to follow in doing so and contact persons to contact in order to receive the best assistance in that endeavour. All ECD practitioners interviewed in this evaluation conceded that they had not registered their centers and did intend to do so until they became ZINECDA members. *“I found a new friend through these workshops, who owns a preschool center, and after one workshop I privately visited her to see how she did things”*, and Waterfalls—based ECD center manager reported. *“I admired what I saw at her preschool and replicated it at mine, and one important things that she made me know is that she had registered her ECD center with the ministry”*. Others reported that as much as they had learned about the importance of registering their ECD centers, they did not know the procedures, but at the ZINECDA—facilitated workshops they were advised of names of key officials to contact in order to accelerate the process.
- › **Ideas of improving ECD infrastructure** to accommodate children of such young ages and maximize opportunities of play—based learning. ZINECDA—facilitated exchange learning sessions had seen, for example, a rural ECD center introducing toilets with flush systems and small

squat holes that suit ECD children. One ECD manager reported that she learned to engage parents in creating toys and playground equipment from locally available resources. *“I learned through ZINECDA how to create a good learning environment for children, and now we are building a classroom block”*, an ECD manager from Domboshava reported. *“Previously we just used our own houses as classrooms, and children were overcrowded there because space is limited... I also erected a fence around our ECD center after learning about child safeguarding through workshops that ZINECDA organizes for us.”*

- › **Knowledge of children’s rights** along with the **motivation to uphold child safeguarding standards** and professionalism among ECD teachers. *“Sometimes during our workshops”*, a (Harare’s) Westgate—based ECD manager reported: *“We discuss case studies of ECD centers that have done well or badly in order to take home lessons of how to do the best with our centers”*. One of such case studies that ECD managers discussed involved an ECD teacher whose video became viral on social media platforms for excessively applied corporal punishment to physically and verbally abuse ECD children. *“Now we appreciate the importance of child safeguarding to the profitability of ECD business”*, a Waterfalls—based (Harare) ECD manager reported. *“Obviously all parents withdrew their children from that South African ECD center because of the abuses of the teacher in that video.”* Indeed the evaluation noted that ECD managers attending the workshop that the evaluation team observed said they vetted all their new teachers and insist that they go through a police clearance process before they assumed duties. *“At my school every new staff member, whether a teacher or a groundsman, has to read, understand and sign our child protection policy, committing never to abuse children”*, another ECD manager said.
- › **Overseas representation of ECD actors**, whereby ZINECDA has marketed Zimbabwe’s ECD, receiving ECD teaching and learning materials on behalf local ECD actors and distributing these to ECD centers. *“We received toys and templates from ZINECDA, which will last for the next four years”* (ECD center manager, Westgate, Harare).
- › **Access to opportunities within the Africa region and beyond**: One staff of a ZINECDA member institution based in Harare reported that her membership of ZINECDA qualified her to attend global advocacy forums, representing Zimbabwe. Through that experience, she reported, *“I am now an accredited global leader on ECD matters”* (NGO official, ZINECDA member, Harare). In concurrence with this statement another Harare ECD center manager said: *“ZINECDA strategically exposes us... some of us have gone to China from where they returned with brilliant ideas of how we could make the best use of small spaces.”*
- › **Access to guidance and technical support from ZINECDA representatives** who visit ECD centers for inspections. ECD center managers at the meetings convened by ZINECDA—Harare reported that they welcomed periodic supervisory visits of ZINECDA’s delegates, who leave them advice on how to improve their facilities and services.
- › **Diagnosis of challenges and strategies of overcoming them**: Exchange learning sessions helped ECD center owners and managers to diagnose, for example, that orphaned children, especially those living with female grandparents, and children of divorced parents, did not have birth certificates. Prior to becoming members of ZINECDA these ECD center managers thought this was a localised problem that affected children enrolled at their schools only until exchange learning within the context of ZINECDA showed them that this was a national crisis. Efforts to support children to secure birth certificates for children are underway in partnership with the

Registrar General's Office, especially in Matabeleland South. The next table profiles more challenges that were diagnosed through provincial exchanges, along with resolutions that were determined in response.

TABLE 9: CHALLENGES DIAGNOSED THROUGH PROVINCIAL MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS

Challenge or gap diagnosed	Responses implemented
ECD children not having birth certificates, especially orphans, children with divorced parents and/or children living with grandparents (ZINECDA Annual report 2018)	Engagement of parents and caregivers to sensitize them on the importance of birth certificates to children's futures
	Engagement of the Registrar General's Office to push for decentralized birth registration with relaxed conditions for children whose parents are divorced or late.
Outbreak of water borne diseases (ZINECDA Annual Report 2018)	Promotion of hygiene in ECD centers and sensitization of parents and caregivers about the importance and methods of maintaining hygiene.
SDC members' mismanagement of funds indicative of limited school management skills (Bulawayo, Matabeleland South and North Regional engagement workshop Report)	Targeting of SDC members in ZINECDA's trainings organized by Provincial Chapters. In these trainings SDC members learned about their responsibilities, accountability mechanisms and improved school management skills.
	ECD owners and managers agreed to more closely involve parents and SDC members in planning the development of ECD centers.
Too much red tape on ECD Centres registration (Matabeleland Report)	MoPSE has been engaged continually to seek and agree on ways of making ECD center registration more efficient
	Capacity—building workshops of ZINECDA members are used for exchange learning, where ECD center managers and owner share contact details of strategic MoPSE officials in the registration chain and ideas of how to overcome specific challenges related to red tape.
Poor ECD infrastructure (Masvingo Engagement meeting 2018)	Capacity—building workshops that Provincial Chapters organize emphasize on making learning environments safe for children and inclusive of children with disabilities. Some ECD center managers and owners reported that they had renovated their infrastructure accordingly.
	One of ZINECDA's leading advocacy messages during policy dialogues has been for the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to increase national budget allocations to education with ECD in mind.
Poor standards of ECD in Zimbabwe (Masvingo Engagement meeting 2018)	ZINECDA successfully campaigned for national ECD standards to be harmonized and documented in a manual to be shared with a schools. A draft had been produced by the time of this evaluation.
	Debate on whether to harmonise continuous assessment criteria for ECD or to eliminate the idea of assessing ECD learners altogether has dominated policy dialogue with MoPSE throughout the evaluated period. The latter is the preferred option.
Continuous assessment is problematic and class—based	
Lack of community Play Centres	ECD center managers and owners engage parents and caregivers, promoting improvised community—based play centers.

The above table shows that ZINECDA's provincial engagements critically assessed situations and diagnosed challenges at multiple levels including household, community, ECD center (service delivery), and government (policy—making) levels. At the government or policy—making level, ZINECDA focused beyond MoPSE to

include other ministries such as Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (advocacy for increased national budget allocation to education), Ministry of Home Affairs (need for decentralized birth registration with flexible conditions) and Ministry of Health and Child Care (need to respond to outbreaks of water—borne infections).

- c) **Advocacy engagements with government:** ZINECDA has been holding national and provincial dialogues with policy makers, especially from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education at which pertinent ECD concerns have been raised on the basis of evidence from the practice of its members. The table below is an extract from the 2018 annual report, showing the number of ZINECDA’s policy engagements and identity’s of the participants.

TABLE 10: ZINECDA POLICY ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS IN 2017

Workshop type	Participants’ category	No of participants			Nº of workshops
		Male	Female	Total	
Policy Engagements	Parliamentarians	10	14	24	2
	Media	8	4	12	2
Totals		18	18	36	4

The above table reflects four national engagements of parliamentarians and media practitioners that ZINECDA held on ECD policy—related matters in 2017. The targeting of the media was a strategy based on an understanding of the role of the media in influencing public opinion. With increased awareness of ECD policy and standards as well as new developments in ECD programming, ZINECDA hoped for increased and more accurate reporting of relevant matters through the media. The key agenda for policy engagements with parliamentarians was to share evidence from ECD service delivery and programming practice to demonstrate the benefits of supporting ECD meaningfully and inform policy decisions. The following extract from the WhatsApp group of Provincial Chapter chairpersons reflects ZINECDA’s alertness to policy developments in the ECD sector and readiness to sustain advocacy momentum:

Box 2: WHATSAPP COMMUNICATIONS FOR POLICY ADVOCACY PLANNING

“The Parliamentary portfolio committee on Primary and Secondary education will be holding public hearing on the Education Amendment Bill for Harare on Thursday the 9th of May 2019 at Parliament Building from 0800hrs. Please spread the news and let our membership attend in their numbers. Don’t forget to bring identification particulars.”

“Hello everyone, there is the programme for the child justice bill consultation being held in Bulawayo on the 13th and 14th. For those in Matabeleland this is a great opportunity for policy advocacy”

“In Hwange consultations are on Saturday 15 June from 10 am-13:00hrs”

“Great please share with your Chapter members in Matabeleland North platform”

“Let’s have some contributions to this child justice bill, what do you want to be presented. If all sites can repeat the same thing on how children rights could be dealt with in the context of,, “children in conflict with the law” that could be great. Let’s us throw in ideas”

“Hello everyone today we had a fruitful meeting with Matabeleland South Chapter in Bulawayo. Thank you @ 0712 686 536 for organising this wonderful engagement. Looking forward to Mat North meeting on Thursday. Other Chapters please inbox your program dates as discussed”.

“What a privilege and honour to host such a great meeting which was graced by Madam Mercy today, indeed ZINECDA is a great family.”

- a) **ECD Teacher training:** ZINECDA used field experience to justify its campaign for government to accelerated efforts to train, create posts and budget for ECD teachers in its primary education staff establishment. Its baseline research findings and feedback from provincial chapters consistently revealed that MoPSE’s insistence on making ECD mandatory and setting a teacher—learner ratio of 1:20 was sensible and yet not matched by the number of qualified ECD teachers. Therefore, in addition to lobbying for increased intakes of trainee ECD teachers in teacher—training colleges, ZINECDA initiated its own trainings to build capacities of para—professional ECD teachers already in post as indicated in table 5 (page 19).
- b) **National budget increase for ECD:** ZINECDA has continued to advocate for increases in the national budget share for education with needs for ECD learners in view.
- c) **Standardisation of ECD curricular and assessment tools:** as discussed elsewhere in this chapter, ZINECDA has kept alive debate in policy—making circles on the need to standardise ECD curricular, learner assessment tools and ECD standards. A draft of the ECD standards, which was developed within the collaboration of MoPSE, ZINECDA and other stakeholders, was under discussion at the time of carrying out this evaluation.
- d) **Support towards inclusive ECD:** disability inclusion has been a dominant theme in ZINECDA’s policy dialogues with parliamentarians, and attached to it have been calls to adjust infrastructure to suit learners with disabilities, train ECD teachers in skills of delivering special education for children with various disabilities and availing ECD literature in formats that are compatible with learners with disabilities. The following trail of WhatsApp conversations among ZINECDA’s Provincial Chapter Chairpersons illustrates the organization’s strong emphasis on disability inclusion in ECD:

BOX 3: WHATSAPP CONVERSATIONS OF PROVINCIAL CHAIRPERSONS ON INCLUSIVE ECD

“There is need for ECD teachers to implement inclusive education to children with disabilities”, said Mrs Kandungure from Little Bambinos Pre–school in Midlands province. She said this at the Midlands Chapter quarterly meeting in Mkoba on Friday 17 May”.

“It was a review and planning meeting which also had a session on inclusive education and policy advocacy”

“During the meeting it emerged that Private ECD Centers in Midlands would like to enroll children with disabilities, some already have such children but what is lacking are resources, suitable materials and proper training to do that”

“This is a cause of concern since very centers in the country have facilities for proper inclusive education at ECD level”

“As such ZINECDA is embarking on a drive to find out which schools enroll children with different disabilities in all provinces in Zimbabwe”

“So if your school or organisation or you know any school that offers inclusive ECD education, please comment below with the name/send a message”

“We need that information to inform us in our advocacy work because at ZINECDA we believe in evidence based policy advocacy”

“Please share this in your Provincial network”

- e) **Recognition of non—governmental or private ECD Centres:** with the MoPSE insisting on registering ECD centres located at public schools, ZINECDA used its members’ experiences to prove that private ECD centers absorbed sufficiently huge numbers of ECD learners to deserve recognition. This saw MoPSE revising its position to start registering private ECD centers as satellite sites linked to public schools.

Overall, ZINECDA’s work sought to inspire action at all levels from the very households where ECD learners received day—to—day care, through the ECD centers where services were delivered, to the parliamentarians where ECD policies were discussed. The evaluation showed that ZINECDA coordinated and implemented its work mostly through provincial chapters and the vibrancy of its programs seemingly varied across different provinces subject to the personal drives of provincial chairpersons. The organization additionally worked in partnership with, or through, other like—minded stakeholders and networks (e.g., networks of persons with disabilities that promote inclusive ECD) on relevant policy advocacy activities. The discussion of the organization’s progress, performance and significance takes note of this overarching analysis of ZINECDA’s work.

3.2. PROJECT PROGRESS ASSESSMENT

The evaluation showed that ZINECDA received activity—based grants, which served different functions of laying a foundation for the organization’s operations, notably a baseline researches, strategic plan development and establishment of a National Secretariat. ZINECDA made sound progress in laying foundations for its operations as follows:

- a) Two researches were carried out as planned, one of them to map resources in the ECD sector, and the other to assess the status of ECD service provision and gaps in service quality. These researches became the evidence on the basis of which ZINECDA created synergies and developed its advocacy messages.
- b) A national strategy was developed to become the basis on which all program activities at provincial and national scales are structured. In one of the WhatsApp conversations that the Evaluation Team Leader

extracted, the Communications Officer was reminding members to “*please organize provincial advocacy activities as per our national strategy and please let us know what you will be doing*”.

- c) The National Secretariat was successfully set up and has been consistently functional, with the evaluation showing that it has successfully maintained a lean staff compliment of competent, versatile and committed experts who have been able to divide attention between multiple tasks across professional disciplines and to switch to volunteerism in cases of limited or no funding for operations. However, the evaluation showed that the National Secretariat has been challenged logistically because of its lack of official vehicles, which compromised the robustness of its M&E. Technical limitations of available staff amid pressure from competing multiple tasks have compromised the organization’s progress in resource mobilization, as efforts have concentrated on coordinating provincial structures and implementing programs. Encouragingly, nonetheless, the endurance and determination of the National Secretariat team is unquestionable and a firm foundation to build upon.
- d) Provincial Chapters were successfully set up and were all vibrantly pursuing various advocacy agendas and responding to emergencies with potential to harm children (e.g., the Manicaland Provincial Chapter is on record seeking the support of other child safeguarding partners to respond to the devastating effects of Cyclone Idai, which hit that province the hardest in March and April 2019). However, district chapters have not been set up in all provinces except Manicaland, Matabeleland North and Midlands Provinces, where there are three such chapters in each. The evaluation established that the success of setting up these district chapters was more a function of the commitment of relevant Provincial Chapter Chairpersons than resources available to the organization since no ZINECDA received no funding specifically for setting up district chapters.

Because of the progress reported above, ZINECDA has managed to accomplish the following overarching results over the evaluated period.

- › **Visibility:** MoPSE and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education now recognizes ZINECDA and participates in the activities that it initiates.
- › **Membership growth:** the organization’s membership grew 69% from 54 members in 2012 to 174 by 2018. These members are actively involved in provincial knowledge exchanges and capacity—building processes that have tellingly improved ECD service delivery quality as will be discussed in a separate part of this section.
- › **Momentum:** ZINECDA has gained momentum as a movement, which is evident in its ever—growing numbers and high activity of provincial chapters in lobbying and advocacy, which continues to generate evidence that feeds into its national program.
- › **Foundation laid:** the availability of a national strategy gives direction and purpose to the network while the studies conducted so far provide evidence for effective programming.
- › **Standards raised:** ZINECDA members have appreciated the importance of registering their ECD Centers with the relevant ministry and have already registered or are pursuing registration. On the other hand parents and guardians have continued to receive new knowledge to enable them to meaningfully complement ECD services provided at the school.

There however remain challenges to the progress reported above, and addressing these should become ZINECDA's preoccupation after this evaluation. These challenges are listed below:

- › Excessive dependency on the current and pioneering Provincial Chapter Chairpersons sustains the threat of a collapse of provincial activities if these decide to relocate or resign (ZINECDA Strategy).
- › The organization regressed between 2017 and 2018, with membership falling in numbers from 225 to 174. Among these members, six were reported to be fully committed and remitting their annual subscriptions, which complicates the organization's financial position (2018 annual report).

3.3. PROJECT PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

The evaluation gave the organization a general positive performance rating as discussed below. Project performance as discussed elsewhere in the report will be gauged against its effectiveness, relevance, impact, efficiency and significance.

3.3.1. Organizational relevance

The evaluation deemed the organization as relevant because of the following:

- a) **It fills an institutional gap and pioneered a movement that was not there before:** ZINECDA was found to be the first and only national network that specifically endeavoured to unite national actors that champion the interests of ECD learners. ECOZI is the umbrella body of organizations dealing with primary and secondary education while ZINECDA is the ECOZI member that specially tackles ECD concerns.
- b) **It catalyses critical relationships, bridging otherwise permanent relational rifts between private ECD actors and government:** ZINECDA represented not only the interests of private ECD centers before MoPSE, but influenced these ECD centers to register and comply with standards set by MoPSE. It catalysed relationships between ECD actors and the Registrar General's Office for the important purpose of facilitating the accelerated birth registration for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).
- c) **It stands as a hub of information on ECD:** the researches that ZINECDA has completed and the rolling experiences of its members, which are shared as they come, makes the organization highly informed on ECD matters and an authoritative source of information on the subject. Already, evidence from its research and operations has been the primary basis of its advocacy agendas.
- d) **Its focus on ECD policy advocacy matches national policy thrusts,** considering that the introduction of ECD as a mandatory phase of primary education is a new development in Zimbabwe. ZINECDA membership generates the evidence that inform the development of this sector. Evidently, ZINECDA has been in the lead in influencing ECD policy throughout the evaluated period.

- e) **It responded to needs at multiple societal levels**, including the household level through parental sensitizations, ECD service providers (capacity—building), national policy makers (advocacy actions) and regional ECD actors (through its membership to AfCEN).
- f) **ZINECDA’s programs partially fulfilled the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s)**

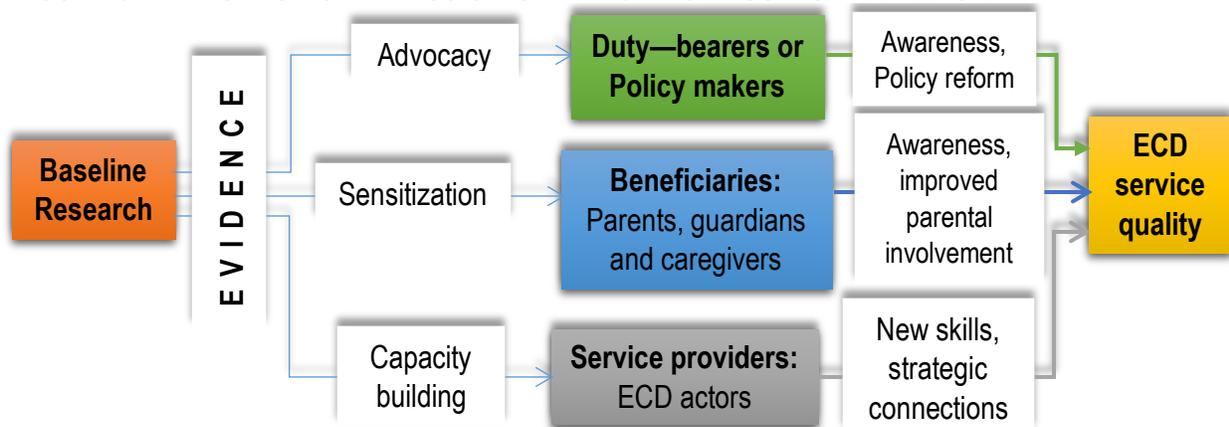
Below is a table illustrating how the organization fulfilled some of the SDGs

SDG	What was done by ZINECDA
SDG 3—Good health and Well—being	Findings of this evaluation show evidence that ZINECDA has been insisting on making government—supported school—based feeding of ECD learners an absolute standard. One of ZINECDA’s leading advocacy message is that ECD is not a reserve of MoPSE and it has invested energies into sensitizing parliamentarians accordingly and engaging MoHCC in policy dialogues.
SDG4—Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all	One of the extracts of WhatsApp messages shared between provincial chairpersons had a long trail of discussions about making ECD center environments accommodative of children with disabilities and teaching methods as disability—compatible as possible.
SDG 6—Clean water and sanitation	ZINECDA’s Manicaland Provincial Chapter swiftly responded to the disastrous effects Cyclone Idai and one of the deliberations of provincial chairpersons on their WhatsApp platform centered on reversing the outbreak of water—borne infections at some ECD centers.

3.3.2. Effectiveness

Overall, the evaluation’s independent impression of ZINECDA’s effectiveness in achieving its intended outcomes as per set objectives can be illustrated in the results framework below.

FIGURE 3: EVALUATOR’S IMPRESSION OF ZINECDA’S RESULTS FRAMEWORK



ZINECDA's key outcomes are:

- ✓ 69% Growth in membership from 54 in 2012 to 174 currently
- ✓ Improved ECD service quality due to knowledge gain and attitude change among ECD owners and managers resulting in major improvements in ECD service delivery standards as follows:
 - ✓ *Members are either registered with MoPSE or pursuing registration*
 - ✓ *Members are recruiting qualified teachers and facilitating the training of para—professional staff*
 - ✓ *ECD centers have upgraded their facilities through renovating ablution facilities to match little children or accommodate children with disabilities, diversifying equipment in outdoor play areas*
 - ✓ *Engagements with parents are done more frequently than before joining ZINECDA*
 - ✓ *Range of simulations used in teaching has diversified because of exchanges with other ECDs*
 - ✓ *Use of cheap locally available resources reported*

ZINECDA's key outcomes are:

- ✓ Positive policy influence, e.g., ECD guidelines and standards now converted into a booklet by MoPSE
- ✓ Provincial Chapters able to respond to local challenges, including emergencies, e.g., Cyclone Idai (WhatsApp posts)
- ✓ Unity of purpose among ECD actors that are members of ZINECDA

Efficiency

The evaluation found that as much as efficiency is one area where ZINECDA was most challenged because of resource limitations, the organization was highly adaptive through applying a range of coping strategies that enabled it to make substantial progress under very challenging circumstances. The evaluation showed that the organization established itself effectively at three levels of operation, namely the Secretariat level (programs and membership coordination), ECD center level at the grassroots (programs implementation) and provincial and national level (advocacy). :

- ✓ Financial and administrative systems are oiled
- ✓ Lack of vehicles limits logistical fluidity and coordination. However, creative utilization of social media modestly fills this gap
- ✓ Funding gaps limited the range of programs implemented
- ✓ Devolution enables the organization to achieve more with less
- ✓ Activity—focused funding accelerated important foundational developments such as the setting up of provincial structures, development of national five—year strategy

However, in spite of the above positive performances, the need for intensified resource mobilization to enhance the efficiency of ZINECDA's operations remains. With a widened resource base, a number of shortcomings in the organization's efficiency can be addressed. For example, national steering committee meetings were found to be held mostly through the social media and online platforms

Coordination and networking

ZINECDA's performance in coordination and partnership is generally on track, though needing strengthening:

- ✓ A culture of partnership has been inculcated from the grassroots to the national level (members to AGM)
- ✓ National Secretariat with departments that mirror the key functions of the organization facilitates effective coordination (information sharing, events management, progress and outcome reporting, capacity building, resource mobilization, national advocacy)
- ✓ Inter—province coordination has room for improvement and needs support through exchange visits
- ✓ Need for Provincial Coordinator, M&E Officer, Project Officers for coordination to improve
- ✓ Need for increased funding for national programs

3.4. ORGANIZATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

3.4.1. Impact assessment

The evaluation's data reflect impact at two levels, the primary and the secondary impact. ZINECDA's primary impact has been its very existence and operation. Its successful establishment is the major and primary impact because with it comes many developments that would otherwise not have happened in its absence. It represents the only new representative body that addresses ECD interests in the country – the only rallying place for organizations promoting ECD. The evaluation observed that most ZINECDA members were private ECD centers that are not based at formal primary schools because these could not enjoy any protection nor could their interests be represented in the making of ECD policies. With the organization's insistence that all ECD centers needed to register with MoPSE, those that heeded the call reported as follows:

- > *“ZINECDA encourages us to register with the ministry (i.e., MoPSE) and I am in the process of doing so. The advantage of registering with the ministry is that we can access loans to further develop the school and our graduates qualify to start their Grade 1 at government schools. Also, we become satellite centers for nearby government schools and heads of these schools regularly visit us for inspections and give us relevant advice. That keeps always developing”* (ECD manager, Domboshava).
- >

The secondary impacts of ZINECDA were found to be at two levels, namely the policy level and ECD service delivery level.

a) **Policy—level impacts**

ZINECDA generally transformed ECD policy in several important dimensions that allowed strategic benefits to accrue for ECD learners and actors. Specifically, ZINECDA's advocacy caused the following policy shifts:

- › MoPSE was successfully influenced to open room for the registration and official recognition of private ECD centers, which gave them access to period inspections that would sustain their continuing improvements. The result: good quality ECD services for children.
- › ECD standards of service delivery were harmonized through the influence and technical input of ZINECDA, resulting in the production of a booklet on ECD standards, which was in draft form at the time of this evaluation. These standards, once disseminated widely, will influence the quality of ECD services across Zimbabwe and level the playing field for all ECD learners, enabling all to start Grade 1 in primary school on a stable intellectual footing.
- › Campaigns for accelerated birth registrations yielded positive results in all provinces, especially Matabeleland North, allowing all benefiting and otherwise vulnerable children to access the progressive future associated with possessing birth certificates (e.g., qualifying for all major national schools examinations that facilitate transitions from lower to higher educational levels). Birth certificates are prerequisites for one to acquire national identity cards and passports, which are required on the labor market.
- › ZINECDA's evidence—based influence flavors deliberations and current outcomes of ongoing parliamentary portfolio committee debates on the Education Amendment and Child Justice Bills. Understandably, it is difficult to objectively measure the policy—level impact of an institution's contributions to prior policy debates, but the active participation of ZINECDA in policy review processes cannot be missing from narrative of the final shape of these policies.
- › Related to the above point, ZINECDA counts among the leading education sector actors that are driving the movement for inclusive education, especially the call for disability inclusiveness. ZINECDA is special in this regard for its part in emphasizing on inclusive ECD services. It has also emphatically registered its voice and gained visibility through advocating accelerated government—supported ECD teacher training, mandatory (government—supported) school—based child feeding and ECD curriculum revision to eliminate subject—focused syllabi in favor of development stage and play—based learning models.

b) *Impact at the level of ECD service delivery*

ZINECDA members interviewed by this evaluation demonstrated that the policy—level impacts above and the design of the organization's structures caused some trickle—down effects that impacted on the quality of ECD services in the following ways:

- › Standards of ECD centers that joined ZINECDA rose phenomenally because its insistence on seeking MoPSE official registration brought numerous demands (e.g., need for qualified ECD teachers, a teacher—learner ratio of 1:20, need for routine MoPSE inspections, good health and hygiene standards, etc.). All ECD owners and managers reported that failure to adhere to MoPSE standards attracted stiff disciplinary action, including forcible closure of guilty ECD centers. Exchange learning and capacity—building workshops that characterize provincial chapter activities further contributed to and smoothed ECD centers' upgrading of their standards. This translated into improved well—being of ECD learners, who now access food, safe playing equipment, non—abusive minders and teachers, sanitary living environments and competent teachers.

- › Some ECD centers are either building staff capacity to include ECD learners with disabilities and making infrastructural adjustments accordingly, which will revolutionize ECD service delivery in Zimbabwe.
- › Community—school relations improved through ZINECDA’s influence, with the evaluation receiving reports that ECD center owners and managers took to engaging parents and caregivers in planning for school development, including resolving conflict related to tuition fees payment. The organization’s efforts towards parents’ and caregiver capacity—building reportedly increased parents’ appreciation of the value of ECD, resulting in improved school—community relations. Through regular interfaces between ECD center officials and parental figures as well as joint planning sessions involving these, ECD learners now can access support for their intellectual, social, psychomotor and physical development bot at home and at school.

3.4.2. Sustainability assessment

The evaluation found reasonable grounds to conclude that the work of ZINECDA is sustainable and has notable mechanisms within its operations to guarantee its continuance with minimal or no external support. The first of these grounds is that **ZINECDA was created and has grown as a movement**, which is characterised by the following attributes:

- › A few actors initiate and share a vision for a specific public good with a team of stakeholders until they buy the idea and own it.
- › The initial stakeholders join the founding party to share the vision with a wider audience and take the lead in gathering masses in support of the vision.
- › Movements grow more through the efforts of newly joining masses than through efforts of founding actors.
- › Leaderships are renewed as the vision is passed on from one generation of actors to another.
- › Passion for the cause (public good), more than money or resources, drives the movement forward.

The evaluation found ZINECDA to have all attributes in the above checklist. For instance, it is a membership—based organization, which started with one organization before they increased to three in Harare, then 54 nationwide (2012), then 144 (2015) and now it has 174 members in all 10 provinces in Zimbabwe. These members are organized into provincial chapters that respond to local needs with the guidance of a national strategic framework, which the National Secretariat coordinates. These mechanisms makes the organization self—regulating and self—driving – an attribute that is readily noticeable in ZINECDA’s sustained survival across difficult macroeconomic experiences without funding for provincial operations.

Secondly, **ZINECDA invested into strategic relationships**, especially with MoPSE. Key informants who informed this evaluation through in—depth interviews all reported that ZINECDA succeeded in forging and sustaining cordial relationships with MoPSE, albeit adding that the same needs to be done with other government ministries concerned with children’s well—being, notably Ministries of Health and Child Care (MoHCC), Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MoPSLSW) and Women Affairs, Gender, Community

and Small Enterprise Development (MoWAGCSED). These ministries are expected to buy into the movement of supporting ECD once they appreciate that ECD is not exclusively about child education – a misconception that policy advocacy efforts at the time of gathering evaluation data were seeking to undo.

- ✓ Community—driven
- ✓ Bottom—heavy structure
- ✓ Locally available resources, committed resource persons in critical positions
- ✓ National Secretariat
- ✓ Focus on policies

Threats include

- ✓ Staff turnover risk if funding position does not change

3.5. OVERALL ASSESSMENT

3.5.1. Value for money

The evaluation identified several grounds to suggest that ZINECDA brought value for money and should not only continue, but scale up with increased financial support. The following are the evaluation's grounds for ZINECDA's high value for money rating:

- a) ***The organization achieved much with little.*** Its implementation has been characterised by reliance on a small National Secretariat the staff of which handle multiple tasks each. ZINECDA staff reported that they sometimes rendered their services voluntarily during phases where no funding was available. This especially applies to the National Coordinator. Interns have been recruited to broaden the skills base within that office, but obviously at a much cheaper cost than if fulltime salaried employees were to be hired. For these interns, the building of their capacity during their tenures in the organization is on its own added value in human resources development terms. Supporting the thin National Secretariat in the organization's bottom—heavy structure are 10 Provincial Chapters that are connected to 174 members who run ECD centers around Zimbabwe. At the grassroots, members reported that networking events that ZINECDA has facilitated for them enabled them to adopt cost—effective measures to boost the quality and hence value of their ECD services. The organization's promotion of locally available resources and strategic engagement of parents to support ECD stands out among ZINECDA's contributions.
- b) Investing in ECD is worthwhile because it constitutes holistic human development. Children receive a firm foundation that sustains their intellectual, social, physical and spiritual growth throughout life
- c) The evaluation shows that all levels of the organization's operations values it and perceive its benefits

- d) The organization plays a complementary and not competing function (it works with private ECD centers to complement other players supporting in—school ECD facilities, and it bridges these ECD centers with MoPSE)

3.5.2. Gaps needing attention beyond this evaluation

ZINECDA still has to respond to the following gaps:

- ✓ Perception that ECD is entirely about child education – ZINECDA will need to continue promoting a multi—stakeholder response and engage more social ministries of government than just MoPSE.
- ✓ Still many ECD actors that have not yet joined ZINECDA, which invites measures to intensify ZINECDA’s national visibility, especially at district level. Further, several ZINECDA members are not yet registered with MoPSE, which authenticates their existence and business while enabling them to access quality—enhancing support services that such registration attracts.
- ✓ Little is happening in the area of inclusive ECD, especially because of limited expertise of mainstreaming disability. ZINECDA was found to be promoting inclusive ECD already, and partnership with disability inclusion experts will be useful in strengthening this drive.
- ✓ ECD curriculum standardisation is yet to be achieved.

4

Evaluation Conclusions and Recommendations

The strengths and weaknesses of ZINECDA identified through this evaluation are the basis of recommendations in this chapter. Specifically, the evaluation showed that ZINECDA is indisputably a very necessary establishment that fills the gap in Zimbabwe's primary and secondary education sector. Whereas, for instance, ECOZI is preoccupied with advocacy for the general improvement of child education standards across the board, ZINECDA offers the specialized expertise of ECD service delivery. From its inception to date ZINECDA has swiftly established itself nationally and provincially, with district structures slowly building up on the foundation of the nine established so far, and a vibrant National Secretariat glues everything together. With a five-year national strategy and research evidence to inform programming, ZINECDA is set to achieve more in advocacy for improved ECD standards if it overcomes the existing gap in funding. Recommendations in this chapter are inspired accordingly.

4.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations in this chapter stem from a general strategic direction that ZINECDA should take from the post—evaluation period onwards. This strategic direction identifies the priorities for the organization's evolution at the different levels of its operation, which this evaluation defined as corporate governance setup, National Secretariat, membership and programming.

4.1.1. General strategic direction

In view of the evaluation's findings, resource mobilization is ZINECDA's leading priority. The evaluation showed that the network is very clear about what it needs to achieve and about the challenges that need to be addressed because of the baseline researches that it carried out and the strategic plan that guides it. It has capacity to professionally manage grants, as evidenced by its positive audit reports. The evaluation showed that limited funding deprived the organization of specialised positions within the National Secretariat to push such important agendas as M&E, proposal development and provincial coordination. Volunteerism during the founding phases of the organization, multi—tasking, multiple use of private spaces among Provincial Chairpersons and the effective use of social media and the internet are coping mechanisms that have enabled the organization to ride past its resource limitations. It is expected that increased funding will result in the following:

- › Stronger National Secretariat oversight through increased consistency in the holding of scheduled National Steering Committee meetings and AGMs.
- › More frequent field visits for program coordination, due diligence, M&E, program support and exchange—learning missions, which all facilitate feedback—sharing for the continuing strengthening of program strategies.

- › Expanded and coordinated district chapters, leading to increased visibility and growth in membership.
- › Increased balance between desk work (documentation) and fieldwork (program implementation) due to improved capacity to recruit and remunerate additional specialized staff.
- › More frequent and structured member capacity building and exchange—learning activities, which are the key pathway towards improved child development outcomes.

4.1.2. Recommendations for strengthening corporate governance

The evaluation recommends that ZINECDA will need to:

- i. Move towards increasing the professionalization of Provincial Chapters by supporting their ZINECDA—specific administrative budgets for office rentals, furniture, stationery, communications costs (internet, telephone, etc.) and travel logistics. As much as it is appreciated that the chairpersonship of provincial chapters is in the hands of participating organizations whose financial, human and material resources can anchor ZINECDA’s business, any viability challenges of these organizations can adversely affect ZINECDA’s. In addition, total reliance on member organization’s resources for provincial activities of ZINECDA will deprive ZINECDA of an identity, because its image and standards of operating will vary from one provincial chapter to another subject to the resource base of each chairing organization.
- ii. Establish consistency in the holding of the scheduled two National Steering Committee meetings per year to maximize the benefits of interpersonal engagements accruing to the organization. While the use of social media for sharing information and updates is duly appreciated as a stop—gap and cost—effective measure in the absence of the required funding, face—to—face meetings will be key in facilitating swifter decision making.
- iii. Consider, through Provincial Chapters, setting up Provincial or Regional Steering Committees. Regional Steering Committees can be fashioned out of a cluster of provinces that are close to each other (e.g., Bulawayo, Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South; Harare, Mashonaland East, West and Central, etc.). The specific model of doing this requires a deeper separate discussion, which will demand a strategic planning process and budget.
- iv. Through strengthened provincial structures, and assuming additional funding is secured, consider developing provincial action plans for the creation and establishment of district chapters across all ten provinces. Attached to this plan must then be a plan for expanding the ZINECDA membership beyond the current 174.

4.1.3. Recommendations for strengthening the National Secretariat

- i. Assuming that additional funding is secured, consider supporting (a) M&E capacity building, (b) making the post of Communications Officer substantive and the incumbent salaried, (c) modest administrative support for Project Officers (interns) working from Provincial Chapter Offices for M&E data gathering and (d) staff capacity building in the areas of program proposal writing and resource mobilization. These changes are expected to add value to the National Secretariat, yet without compromising its leanness, which this evaluation found to be cost—effective and a best practice.

- ii. Develop a robust M&E Framework as part of the M&E capacity building of staff to guide relevant staff in tracking and documenting the progress and results of the organization's work.
- iii. Procure at least two off—road vehicles for field trips to provinces and one small car for local office errands for the National Secretariat. Improved mobility is expected to smoothen coordination and communication efficiency, allowing for increased face—to—face interactions in planning.

4.1.4. Recommendations for membership support

- i. Continue to support needs—based capacity building and exchange learning workshops for members but at increased regularity, which however is subject to funding.
- ii. Document the best practices and success stories of ZINECDA members for wider sharing through the M&E Office recommended above. Admittedly, as the evaluation showed, there remains limited field—based information on ECD, and ZINECDA is strategically positioned to serve as an information hub in that respect.
- iii. Augment the exchange learning workshops that are currently taking place by paying rotational visits to ECD centers of members for inspections to track how they are faring in raising their ECD service delivery standards as per ZINECDA's guidance. This can be an additional responsibility of Provincial Chapter Offices, preferably done by the Project Officers and occasionally by the National M&E Officer. What these missions observe at the ECD centers can inform the best practice models and success stories that ZINECDA can share widely and use for its continuing advocacy.
- iv. Consider supporting field days involving the exchange of visits between ECD center owners or managers to observe innovations for replicating. Some ECD center leaders have privately organized such exchange visits and reported positive results consequently, so it is something worth scaling up with the support of an enlarged Program budget.

4.1.5. Recommendations for improving programming

- i. ZINECDA has set itself up as a hub of knowledge and information on ECD. It should reinforce this status through investing heavily into operations research and documentation of its success stories, key lessons and best practice models.
- ii. Sensitization at all levels of society from the family through schools, wards, districts and provincial levels should continue (ZINECDA Annual Report), especially for purposes of reinforcing new ideals in ECD programming. One example of these ideals is relates to ECD being a lot deeper than just child education – an aspect that will motivate other social ministries apart from MoPSE to take their places in supporting ECD. As part of this drive, ECD practitioners need to make it a standard to build capacities of School Development Committee (SDC) members in ECD values before these assume duty (Matabeleland Report). One of the cross—cutting lesson that ZINECDA's operations have generated is that ECD is a multi—sector endeavour that all stakeholders, from community to government level, must actively support.
- iii. The subject—oriented curriculum for ECD A and B should be done away with (Masvingo Engagement Meeting) and replaced with one that aligns with children's stages of growth, promotes play and is development—oriented (ZINECDA Annual Report). This requires a joint curriculum—drafting process involving consultations between government ministries and ECD practitioners. While the former can enrich the process with policy—related input and checklist of approved

- standards, the latter brings practical experience of interfacing with ECD learners. Their parents and community—based stakeholders, which adds up to evidence—based planning.
- iv. Research (data collection and documentation) should happen on a rolling basis as ZINECDA implements its programs so that ZINECDA's policy advocacy may remain evidence for credibility (ZINECDA Annual Report). Recommendations of strengthening the National Secretariat through financing substantive posts and administratively supporting Province—based Project Officers (Interns) should be taken seriously and implemented with this recommendation in mind.
 - v. ZINECDA should continue to push the following advocacy agendas with increased intensity:
 - a) The need for the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development to increase the national budget share of Education with ECD development plans in mind (Matabeleland engagement meeting Report).
 - b) The need to decentralise the system of registering ECD centers with MoPSE to open room for more ZINECDA members to be registered (Masvingo Engagement Meeting).
 - c) The need for government support for inclusive education delivery at ECD levels (Masvingo Engagement Meeting).
 - d) The need for government to full assume responsibility for the school—based feeding program and to support it, allowing the initiatives of NGOs and private ECD players to be complementary rather than core efforts (Masvingo Engagement meeting).
 - e) The need for Beam to be extended to private ECD Centres, based on the reality that shows these private players to be enrolling a significant proportion of ECD learners, including those from poor households because of the low absorption capacity of formal school (Masvingo Engagement Meeting).
 - vi. ECD practitioners need to make it a standard to build capacities of School Development Committee (SDC) members and newly recruited teachers in ECD values, child rights, child protection, child health and nutrition before these assume duty (Matabeleland Report). Parents need continued sensitization on the importance of ECD and its holistic nature in order to smoothen their transition from a state of not valuing ECD at all to an informed level where they fully supporting it. One of the cross—cutting lesson that ZINECDA's operations have generated is that ECD is a multi—sector endeavour that all stakeholders, from community to government level, must actively support (Masvingo Engagement Meeting).
 - vii. ZINECDA will need to extend its call for partnership to faith—based organisations, given that some of them own and run primary schools (Mashonaland Report 2018).

At this point, I, the Evaluator confirm that the contents of this report fully reflect my honest assessment of ZINECDA's operations and impacts thereof. I congratulate the organization for its hard work and results documented in this report and support its search for supportive partners on the basis of this evidence.

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