

BUDGET EXPENDITURE ANALYSIS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION

(Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia,
Zimbabwe)



https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Southern-African-Development-Community-member-states_fig1_290427801

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1.0 Introduction

It is known globally that more than 200 million children under the age of five years in the developing world are at risk of not reaching their full human potential because they suffer from the negative consequences of poverty, nutritional deficiencies and inadequate learning opportunities (Engle, et al, 2007). Shonkoff, et al (2012) further notes that the possible risks indicated above also call for a strong case for early childhood development interventions in nutrition, health, education and social protection, which can produce long lasting benefits throughout the life cycle. A child's early years present a unique window of opportunity to address inequality, break the cycle of poverty and improve a wide range of outcomes later in life. facilitate school readiness, better socialization, cognitive, socio-emotional, physical development, better health, safety, and caregivers have time for work.

The rapid impetus for early childhood development education in Africa can be traced from the ratification and adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC); the World education Conference on Education for all (UNESCO, 2004;2006); the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the current Sustainable Development Goals adopted in 2015. Apart from signing, ratifying and adopting international and regional instruments and development agenda's, SADC countries have over the past decade prioritised early childhood development education in their national policies and programmes. Early childhood development education has thus been incorporated in broad National development plans and in Education sector policies and has also been prioritised through the development of specific policies on early childhood development. In the SADC region policies have also drawn from the SADC Minimum package of services framework which was adopted in 2015. The Jomtien (1990) and the Dakar declarations have also informed national efforts towards ECDE as countries strive to achieve the benchmarks set out in these declarations. In addition, the Moscow Framework for Action and Cooperation of 2010, reaffirmed the commitment to ECCE as expressed in Jomtien (1990) and Dakar (2000) declarations. The Moscow Framework was a call for action focused on: mobilising stronger commitments to ECCE; reinforcing effective ECCE programme delivery;

harnessing resources for ECCE; cooperation; as well as targeted calls for action to donors and UNESCO¹.

SADC countries are also signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2030 and Africa's agenda 2063. Currently the ECDE agenda is being driven within efforts to achieve the targets set out in SDG 4 (target 4.2) which calls on governments to ensure that by 2030, all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education. Agenda 2030 appeals for increased access to quality, inclusive and equitable early childhood education and increased investment in this subsector.

Agenda 2030 emphasises the need for countries to ensure an enabling environment by establishing legal and policy frameworks that promote accountability, transparency and participatory governance and coordinated partnerships. In addition Agenda 2030 is also clear on the need for countries to provide at least one year of free and compulsory quality pre-primary education and ensuring that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited motivated and supported. The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) under Agenda 2063 also launched the Early Childhood Education and Development Cluster in September 2018 and identified Early Childhood Education Development as the pillar for future learning that is critical for Africa to realise sustained quality education and training.

The policies and programmes that have been designed in SADC countries demonstrate the fact that governments are intent to ensure that children can access early childhood education. Progressively the commitments stated in the national policies are becoming more visible in national budgets. Allocations towards pre-school programmes, which are incorporated within primary education programmes in most countries and under community and gender development (such as in Malawi), show varying trends in different countries, largely affected by fiscal considerations, macroeconomic environment and policy priorities.

This report explores the trends in resourcing early childhood development education in six SADC countries namely Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. While the age group considered for ECED differs in these countries, this report defines the age group for ECDE as 0-8 years. The report explores the extent to which governments in the

¹ https://www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/UNESCO_WCECCE_Moscow_framework_2010_EN%20.pdf

six countries are prioritising early childhood education through allocations in their national budgets from 2016 to 2021. It analyses the size and composition of budget allocations and offers insight into the trends that have emerged over the period covered in this report. The report outlines the progress made, opportunities, challenges and recommendations for ECDE in the six countries.

This study is premised on the understanding that beyond the ratifications of international and regional child rights instruments, as well as promulgation of impeccable laws, realisation of children's rights to access quality ECDE will not be actualized until adequate resources are availed. The study also appreciates that it is the incumbency of the child rights sector to lobby governments for increased fiscal space so that adequate resources are accorded to children. It is this study's persuasion that the prerogative to increase fiscal space for children has never been greater. Poor and vulnerable children and their families have been hard hit by the unabated market failures leading to food, fuel and employment shocks. Having exhausted available coping mechanisms, poor and vulnerable children are also likely to be disproportionately affected by reduced public support as well as the different austerity measures that governments in the region are undertaking.²

In an endeavor to address the foregoing, the report covers a contextual analysis of the state of funding for ECDE in the six countries considered in this report. In order to unpack the state of funding for ECDE the report analyses the trends in budget allocations to the education sector, allocations towards ECDE as a proportion of the total education budget, sources of funding towards ECDE, recurrent and capital expenditures, budget credibility and execution as well as the impact of Covid-19 on the ECDE sector. The last section of the report is prognostic in that it seeks to provide practical recommendations that can be used to promote increased investment in early childhood development education.

² UNICEF (2011), *Identifying Fiscal Space: Options for Social and Economic Development for Children and Poor Households* in 182, Countries, New York

2.0 Background

The SADC region has a young population with 76% of its population below the age of 35 years.³ Children below the age of 18 years comprise nearly half of the region's population. Understanding the demography of SADC is a key factor to the attaining of its long-term goals. A study commissioned by the World Bank in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Eswatini and South Africa confirms that Southern Africa is at a different demographic moment than the rest of sub-Saharan Africa⁴. The World Bank Report suggests that in 2050, Southern Africa will have a working-age population that is larger than its number of young dependents.⁵ That demographic window of opportunity will reach its peak around 2050, when a full 68 percent of the five countries' people will be of working age. This opportunity can be a double-edged sword. If the Member States do not deliberately invest in human capital which is a conduit for transforming the demographic bulge into a dividend, then the productive potential will be lost. This will have serious socio-economic, political and security repercussions on the region as a whole.

The disproportionate population of children whose basic rights and developmental needs are not met, limits the translation of the demographic bulge into a dividend. Despite overwhelming ratification of child rights instruments in SADC, as well as the development of national policies towards ECDE there is general under investment towards the implementation of these policies.

In most countries, where resources have been allocated towards ECDE they are inadequate and are often distributed inequitable leading to poor outcomes in early childhood development education. In most SADC countries, investment in children has been compromised by ballooning government and growing budget deficits in the face of multiple competing priorities. On average, low-income countries spend 30-40% of their annual

³ Corcoran, T. (2017). Are the kids alright? Relating to representations of youth. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 22(2), 151-164.

⁴ Bruni, L. M., Rigolini, J., & Troiano, S. (2016). *Forever Young? Social Policies for a Changing Population in Southern Africa*. World Bank.

⁵ Ibid.

revenue to debt servicing.⁶ Borrowing is one way of financing public investments in children. It is thus not necessarily a bad thing to do. However, if not done prudently, it can result in an unsustainable debt burden that negatively affects children. Sub-Saharan Africa for example spends approximately \$13.5 billion every year on debt repayments.⁷ The lost opportunities to investing in early childhood education presented by the debt burden as well as mismanagement of resources continue to limit the potential human development gains that would be achieved through adequate provision of ECDE.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The research adopted the Build to Last Framework (UNICEF) and the UNCRC Principles of public budgeting for children's rights to design questions and collect data on the analysis of budgets for ECDE support in six countries.

Build to last Framework for ECDE Support

According to UNICEF, as governments and their partners seek to scale up quality pre-primary education, it is critical for these efforts to be guided by a strong, comprehensive and systemic vision. A strong pre-primary system places children's learning and development outcomes at the core of its work. These desirable outcomes include, but are not limited to, children's physical well-being, social and emotional competence, and cognitive and communication abilities, as well as their overall curiosity and motivation to learn, often referred to as school readiness skills. The acquisition of these critical skills depends, to a large extent, on availability and equitable access to pre-primary services and equally on the quality of these services.

The structure of the Build to last framework is based on the holistic requirements for an effective ECE system, It is composed of a set of guiding principles, five core functions of the subsector, the enabling environment and a systems-strengthening approach across all levels of government.

⁶ UNICEF (2011), *Identifying Fiscal Space: Options for Social and Economic Development for Children and Poor Households* in 182, Countries, New York

⁷ Ibid

Enabling environment -- An effective and equitable pre-primary subsector requires a strong and supportive environment. Within the enabling environment, four catalysts are vital for advancing the subsector's development: ministerial leadership, policies and legislation, financing and public demand.

Core functions of the pre-primary subsector -- An effective subsector develops and nurtures five core functions: (1) planning and budgeting, (2) curriculum development and implementation, (3) workforce development, (4) family and community engagement and (5) quality assurance. The work to strengthen each core function will advance development of the subsector as a whole.

Subsector levels -- Though discussions of systems-building often concentrate on the national level, a strong pre-primary subsector is only as strong as its district- or local-level implementation. This framework considers the dynamic relationship between different levels of government as they influence each other. It is important to consider, for example, not only how policies at the national or subnational level affect what happens at the local level, but the reverse as well.

Principles -- When a country is building or strengthening its preprimary education subsector, applying a set of guiding principles will increase the likelihood that this work will endure over time, despite shifting conditions or crises. The framework recommends five overarching principles: Equity, Efficiency responsiveness, Coordination, Flexibility

Source: Build to last – A framework in support of universal, quality pre-primary education (UNICEF, 2020)

UN CRC Principles of public budgeting for children's rights

The UN CRC General Comment No.19 identifies effectiveness, efficiency, equity, transparency and sustainability, as key principles that should underlie national budgets that seek to respond to the needs of children. The assignment will take these principles into account in the analysis of national budgets from a ECDE perspective. Below is a brief outline of each of the principles:

Effectiveness --States parties should constantly assess how budgets affect different groups of children and ensure that their budget decisions lead to the best possible outcomes for the largest number of children, paying special attention to children in vulnerable situations.

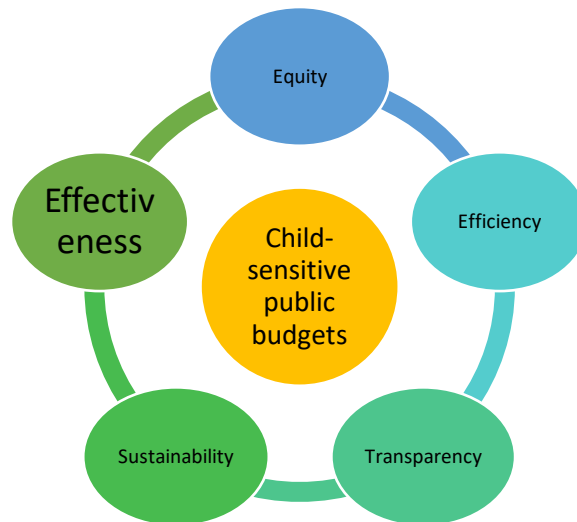
Efficiency -- Public resources dedicated to child-related policies and programmes should be managed in such a way as to ensure value for money and bearing in mind the obligation to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights. Approved expenditures should be executed in line with the enacted budget.

Equity -- States parties shall not discriminate against any child or category of children through resource mobilization or the allocation or execution of public funds.

Transparency -- States parties should develop and maintain public financial management systems and practices that are open to scrutiny, and information on public resources should be freely available in a timely manner.

Sustainability -- The best interests of current and future generations of children should be given serious consideration in all budget decisions.

Figure 1 – UNCRC Principles on Public Budgets



2.2 Methodology

Data collection methods

The consultants used a combination of primary and secondary research techniques; desk review and interviews respectively. This included content reviews, internet research, document analysis, and key informant interviews using a semi structured questionnaire. Content review included reviewing policy and legislative documents; previous studies done at national, regional and international levels; evaluation reports; strategies and plans; reports of technical and policy meetings, among others.

The literature reviewed also included analyses of national budget documents such as budget speeches and the books of appropriations in order to extract relevant budget information for at least three budget periods. The study made use of a set of guiding questions to extract relevant data that is useful in undertaking an analysis of commitments and trends to allocations and spending in the health, education, social services sectors.

Data analysis

The matrix method involves the use of matrix as a kind of a conceptual framework in table or grid format; matrices contain information about and explain aspects of research, and allow the researcher to get a quick overview of data related to a certain point. In this very sense they serve a similar purpose to that of tables employed in quantitative research. Matrices contain verbal information, quotes, summarised text, and extracts from notes, memos, and standardised responses and, in general, data integrated around a point or research theme that makes sense. The matrices were structured to reflect and provide answers according to the SADC OVCY Framework.⁸ The matrices were used together as a set to enable reaching conclusions about non-obvious relationships on investment in children in the region. The matrix was also used to appreciate the following:

1. Gauging government shifts in priority over time, measuring growth in children related programmes over time (2015 - 2017);
2. Measuring the relationship between government spending over time and the actual service delivery provision through the use of econometric soft wares;
3. Determining actual expenditure as a proportion of budget;
4. Analysing government revenue.

Analysis

The analysis of the budget data and policies will be undertaken through the use of various methods and tools.

The analysis areas include;

- Availability of policies and legislation that support the needs of children and programmes for ECDE
- Programmes being implemented to reflect government's priorities in improving the realization of the need for ECDE
- Policy and legislation shifts to improve the policy environment on ECDE at national level

⁸ The OVCY Minimum Package of Services puts the Strategic Framework and Programme of Action for Orphans, Vulnerable Children and Youth into action. The Package specifies the essential needs for children in six key areas: education, healthcare, nutrition, youth safety, psychosocial wellbeing, and social protection.

- The level of resource commitments allocated to ministries and programmes which relate to ECDE
- Analysis of equity in resource allocation and spending
- Analysis of government revenue
- Financial Budgeting
- Performance/results based budgeting and monitoring
- Sustainability of resource spending for ECDE

Some of the methods of analysis and tools to be used in the analysis include;

- Use of score cards to gauge each country' status regarding government' policy and legislation priority or commitment (gauging of government's level of commitment in terms of putting in place policies, legislation and budget frameworks that support ECDE)
- Gauging government shifts in priority over time, measuring growth in ECDE related programmes over time (2016 - 2021),
- Measuring real growth in spending accounted for inflation (constructing a deflator) over time – trend analysis
- A comparison of budgeted amounts to costs or provision
- Measuring the relationship between government spending over time and the actual service delivery
- Gauging actual expenditure as a proportion of budget
- Analysing government revenue

2.3 Limitations of the study

The study's primary method of data collection is content review. The principle limitation of the study therefore relates to greater reliance on desk review though complemented by responses by key informants to a questionnaire that sought to get more insight into ECDE financing in the six countries. There was limited availability of data on national budgets actual expenditures online. It took a lot of effort and tapping into the researchers' social capital to get some of the data used in this report. However, the information derived through the

research was adequate to inform its anticipated use for policy advocacy on investment in early childhood development education.

3.0 Analysis of Trends in ECDE Financing in the SADC Region

3.1 ECDE Policy Overview in the SADC Region

The commitment to promote children's rights in the SADC region is expressed through the efforts that have been made by countries in developing various national policies that speak to different aspects of child development and rights. Although SADC countries are at varying levels in child policy development there is evidence of efforts to develop policy that incorporates the minimum package of services for children that has been agreed at regional level. The SADC Minimum Package of Services (2011) identifies the basic and complementing needs and services for children in the following areas: Education and vocational skills; Healthcare and sanitation; Food security and nutrition; Child and youth protection and safety; Psycho-social well-being; and Social protection.

In the interest of promoting better prioritisation of budget allocations to the education sector the continent has agreed on specific benchmarks for allocations to the education sector. The Education for All-A Framework for Action in Sub-Saharan Africa (1999) which was reinforced by the Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting our Collective Commitments in 2000 calls for increasing budgetary allocation to education by ensuring that at least 7 % of GDP is allocated to education within five years and 9 % within ten years (UNESCO 2000). In addition, the 2011 Jomtien Statement recognises that states should spend at least 6% of their GDP and /or at least 20% of their national budgets on education in order to achieve quality education for all.

The six SADC countries considered in this report are at varying levels in terms of allocations to the education sector. Levels of budget allocations and actual expenditures to education in general and ECDE in particular, remain inadequate in most countries, a signal that the

progressive ECDE focused policies have not yet been fully translated into significant budgetary allocations. The varying socio-economic and political contexts in the SADC countries also plays a role in the manner in which resources are prioritised in national budgets. Public finance management systems in these countries are also at varying levels of development. While some countries are advanced in adopting a programme-based budgeting format, others are still largely using an output-based approach. Programme based budgets have been accepted globally as progressive as they focus more on outcomes. This outcome approach is useful as it allows governments to trace the child focused outcomes based on the resources that have been allocated and spent.

The table below shows the policies that have been adopted by the six countries under review as well as the Ministries responsible for implementing ECDE programmes. Included in the table is also the budgeting approach that has been adopted by the country. The national policies adopted by the countries below include specific blueprints that have an ECDE focus such as the Early Childhood Care, Development Policies and Strategic Plans in Eswatini and Malawi. Where specific ECDE policies have not been developed, Early Childhood development has been incorporated as a specific component within the education policy.

Table 1: Policy Overview in six SADC countries

Country	Ministry Responsible for EDCD	National Policies on ECD	Budgeting Approach
Eswatini	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ministry of Education and Training - Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ECDE Prototype System -investment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Education and Training Sector Policy- 2018 - Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Policy -Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) - Swaziland Early Learning and Development Standards (SELDS) - Multi-Sectoral ECDE Framework 2018-2022 - Quality Standards for Pre-Primary Education 	-Performance Based Budgeting

Lesotho	- Ministry of Education and Training	- Education Sector Plan (2016-2026)	-Project Based Budgeting
Malawi	- Ministry of Education - Ministry of Gender, Community, Development and Social Welfare	- National ECD Policy (2017-2022) - National Integrated ECD Strategic Plan (2018-2023): implemented through two programmes; I. Integrated ECD Programme II. Investing in Early Years Project	-Programme Based Budgeting
Mozambique	-The Ministry of Education and Human Development	-Mozambique is still without a National Policy on ECD education but it is guided by: -National Education System Law18/ 2018 -National Action Plan for Children II (2013-2019) Projects: I. Pilot II. Accelerated School Readiness (ASR) program III. Gaza ECD project	-Project Based Budgeting
Zambia	-Ministry of Education	-Universal Free Primary Education Policy of 2002 -The Education and Skills Sector Plan (ESSP) -Education Act of 2011 -Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) -Vision 2030: It also articulates education sector targets	Output Based Budgeting
Zimbabwe	-Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education	-The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2016-2020 -Education Amendment Act 2020 -National Development Strategy 1	-Project Based Budgeting

The shift to Programme Based Budgeting or performance-based approach by most countries in the region has assisted governments to reflect policy priorities in vote allocations in the national budget.

Eswatini, for example, has adopted a performance-based budgeting approach, which is an international standard that directly links budget spending to results. Eswatini has built capacity of parliament to oversee and influence the budget process in order to enable MPs to track the budget easily and monitor if it fulfils the targets and objectives set in the Budget legislation.⁹ Lesotho, Malawi and Mozambique have also adopted the programme based budgeting. Malawi began implementing programme based budgeting, in 2018, as a means of building stronger linkages between sector and national policies and the budget.¹⁰ On the other hand, Zambia adopted the output based budgeting approach because of its advantage as a tool to assess results.¹¹ Zimbabwe shifted to a program-based budgeting (PBB) approach in 2014 as a means of strengthening transparency in public finance management.¹²

3.2 Sources of Funding for ECDE

A review of the funding sources for ECDE in southern Africa reveals that resources mainly come from governments, through the national budget, development partners/donor support and to a minimal extent the private sector.

Figure 2: Sources of Funding for ECDE in SADC Countries

⁹ See <http://www.fsvc.org/fsvc-monthly-update-performance-based-budgeting-in-eswatini-combating-terrorism-financing-in-somali-and-more/>

¹⁰ See <https://www.cabri-sbo.org/en/media/building-a-case-for-change-programme-based-budgeting-reform-in-malawi>

¹¹ See <https://www.lusakatimes.com/2018/11/05/ministry-of-finance-to-embark-on-countrywide-sensitization-of-output-based-budgeting>

¹² See <https://blogs.worldbank.org/African/program-based-budgeting-powering-zimbabwe-journey-improved-transparency-and>

Fiscus	Private Funding	Donor Funding
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • budgetline allocations • subsidies • parental leave policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • workplace based care • payments to providers • donations in cash or kind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funds from development partners such as UNICEF, World Vision, World Bank

The bulk of education funding for the six countries under review comes from national budget allocations. An average of 90% of recurrent expenditures, are funded through the national budget while the remaining resources are from donor support. Donor funds are mainly targeted at capital or developmental expenditures and provide about half or more of the total capital funds on average. However, capital expenditures in the education sector only represent an average of 5% or less of the total education budgets for the countries under review. Financing of basic education, by development partners, through national budget support provides governments with greater fiscal space to enable increased allocation of resources to social sectors such as education particularly given the high proportion of recurrent costs in overall spending.

In Eswatini for example, the education sector is mainly financed through domestic resources availed through the government. An analysis of recurrent and capital expenditure shows that donors prefer to fund the capital budget. In the 2018/2019 fiscal year for example, donors contributed almost half of the capital budget, which was on average 5% of total spending towards education, while 100% of recurrent expenditure was funded by government. Between 2015 and 2019 Eswatini has received an approximated donor financing amounting to US\$2.1 million. A similar trend can be found in Lesotho where the 2020/21 fiscal year shows that 95% of the spending towards education was drawn from the national budget, an increase from 93.8% recorded in 2019/20. As in Eswatini, donor support in Lesotho is mainly directed towards developmental purposes with 100% of the development budget being

financed through donor support, in the 2020/21 fiscal year. This was an increase from 89.5% donor support to development programmes in the 2019/20 fiscal year (UNICEF, 2020). This shows an increasing trend of donor support to the capital budget in Eswatini, from 67.4% recorded in 2015/16 to 100% recorded in FY 2020/21.

In Mozambique government resources constitute the majority of resources towards education and this has increased over the years from 70% recorded in FY2008 to 90% contribution in 2019(UNICEF, 2019). Mozambique has got a unique funding model for ECDE programs which is incorporated into the Ministry of Education in the national primary education directorate through the Education Sector Support Fund (FASE). FASE is a Trust Fund to support the comprehensive development of the country's education sector, and is funded by the Mozambican government and international donors. FASE implements the ten-year strategy (2020-2029) for the education sector with the budget for the ten-year strategy for 2020-2029 is on average \$1 billion annually. FASE is co-funded by 11 donors: Finland, Canada, Italy, Ireland, Portugal, France and Germany, the EU, the World Bank, UNICEF and the Global Partnership for Education¹³.

Construction of ECDE Centres in Mozambique

The Mozambican government has adopted the project based budgeting approach and has applied it to the education sector. One of the projects that the government committed to, is the large scale pilot of a community-based ECE program, *Desenvolvimento Integral da Criança em Idade Pré-Escolar (DICIPE)*, which was financed through a US\$40 million loan. The loan was meant for construction projects. An amount of 350 community based pre-schools were constructed and operationalised in five provinces according to a UNICEF Report (2021).¹⁴ Third Party Providers (TPPs) were contracted by the Ministry of Education and Human Development which supervised and managed the former. The TPPs implemented and provided ECE services in five provinces for the duration spanning from 2015-2019 with responsibilities including provision of all services at community level, mobilising communities, building pre-school facilities and training teachers among other

¹³ https://um.fi/special-target-groups/-/asset_publisher/hVUm8qOoXH3u/ahaKytInterventionType/id/24320251

¹⁴ See also See <https://www.ecdmeasure.org/2020/12/02/ece-data-mozambique/>

activities. During the penultimate year of the pilot, the Education Ministry took full responsibility for all 350 preschools.

As is the case in the other countries considered in this study, on average 90% of education budget in Malawi was financed by the government between FY2017/18 and 2020/21 (UNICEF, 2021), with the entire recurrent budget financed from domestic resources. Donor funds represent less than 5% as an average of the total education budget although it is the main source of finance for developmental expenditure. On average, 70% of the developmental budget funds came from donors between FY2017/18 and 2019/20.

In Zambia, education budget is largely financed from domestic resources and one such vehicle to facilitate funding is the Skills Development Fund (SDF). The SDF is funded through ring-fenced Skills Development Levy collected from formal employees' monthly payroll at a rate of 0.5% since FY2017 (UNICEF, 2021). Cooperating partners complement through direct budget support as well as project financing.

Funding under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe is from the government at an average of 94% over the period 2017-2021 while the remaining 6% came from external sources (UNICEF, 2021). In FY2021, Development Partner Support stood at US\$29.1 million rising from US\$20.4 that was recorded in 2020 representing a 43% rise. Most of the Development Partner Support was channeled to non-wage spending. Some of the funds from donors were not channeled direct to programs and hence were not recorded in the country Public Financial Management System (PFMS) necessitating the need to channel resources through the Education Development Fund and the Global Partnership for Education.

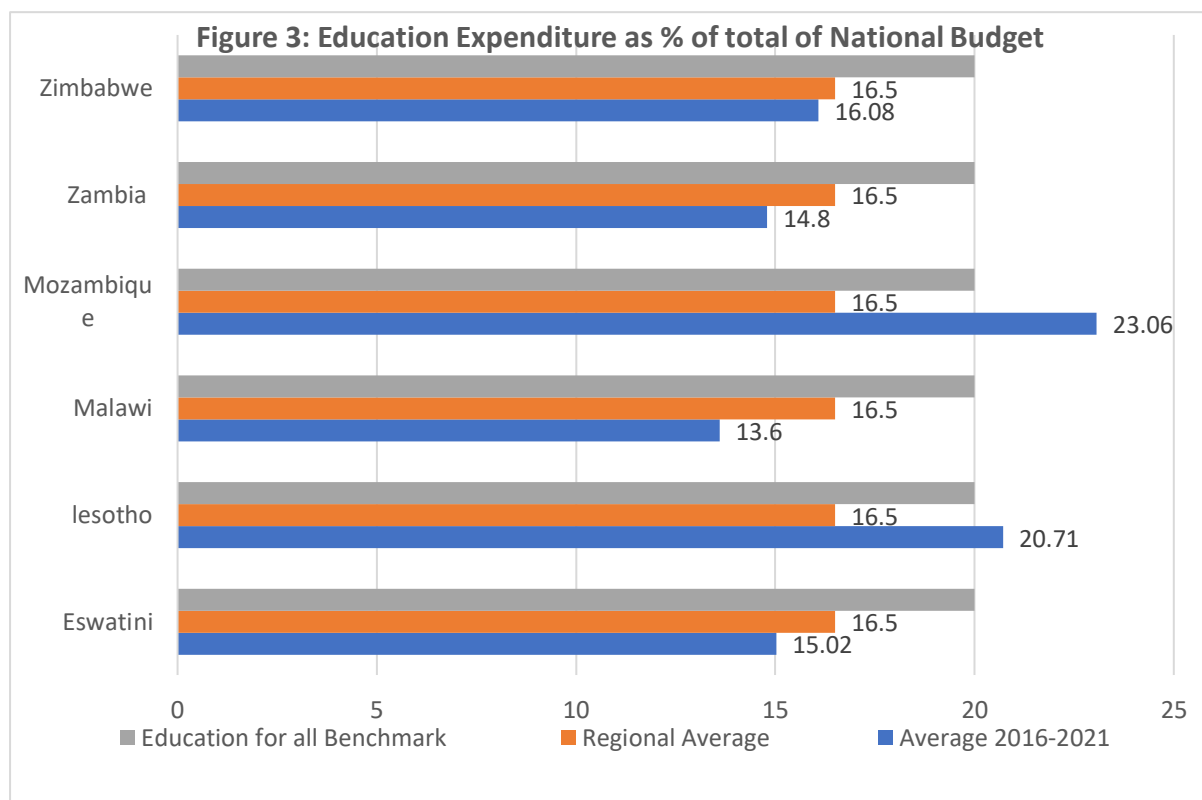
The SADC region through its regional integration efforts recognizes Private Sector as critical in promoting the region's development agenda including in social sectors such as Education¹⁵. The region is however yet to really tap into the potential of private sector support to the

¹⁵ https://media.africaportal.org/documents/the_role_of_the_private_sector_in_the_development_agenda.pdf

provision of education and more specifically ECDE. What currently persists in most SADC countries is private Early Childhood Centres that are out of reach for the majority of children due to affordability.

3.3 Education Expenditure as a Percentage of the National Budget in SADC Countries

Budgeting trends under the education sector are useful in assessing allocations for ECDE focused programmes. The graph below shows the average budget allocations to education as a percentage of the total national budget over the period 2016 to 2021 as well as the regional average. These average allocations as a percentage of the total national budget are also compared to the regional benchmark of 20% of the total budget according to the Jomtien statement which SADC countries committed to, together with the rest of the continent.



The graph shows that average education expenditure as a percentage of the total national budget in Mozambique and Lesotho has been quite progressive, reaching the 20% benchmark in the case of Lesotho and surpassing the benchmark in the case of Mozambique. These two

countries have also surpassed the regional average with 23.06% and 20.71% averages for Mozambique and Lesotho respectively.

In the case of Lesotho, the trends in allocations towards the education sector have been increasing over the years. Between 2016 and 2021 the allocations have increased from a low of M0.28 billion in 2016 to M3.74 billion in 2020/21. The increases in expenditure over the years can be attributed to the evolving policy landscape in the education sector mainly characterised by the adoption of the Education Sector Plan (2016-2026) and an effort by the government to implement these policies through allocating resources. Expenditure trends in the education sector indicate that education remains a major priority compared to other sectors in Lesotho evidenced by the fact that it has received the largest share of the national budget allocations in the 2017/18, and 2020/21 fiscal years. For instance in 2020/21, allocations to the sector amounted to M3.74 billion which represents 16.2% of the National budget although the figure has fallen to M2.62 billion in 2021/22. The Covid-19 pandemic also informed the higher allocations to education in the 2020/21 financial year. In the 2020/21 budget allocations to education showed a nominal increase of about 15.5% from the previous year. Whilst these nominal increases are positive it is worth noting that in real terms the increase is approximately 9.8%. This means that inflation will erode the purchasing power of the M3.74 million allocated for the 2020/21 education budget by about 22 per cent¹⁶.

The rest of the SADC countries considered in this study have been experiencing fluctuations in their allocations. This can be attributed to reductions in revenue due to changing macroeconomic circumstances. With Eswatini for example, the free primary education policy led to an increase in allocations to the education sector to 18.2% in the 2015/16 fiscal year. Reductions in allocations in the following years can be attributed to the effect of the decrease in the nation's revenue which was also affected by a general decrease in SACU revenue.

In Zimbabwe total education spending by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) expressed as a proportion of the GDP has been fairly constant for five years running from 2016 to 2020 ranging between 4% and 6%. When expressed as a proportion of total

¹⁶ UNICEF 2020/21 brief, Lesotho

government budget and total vote appropriations, however, total allocation to MoPSE has been decreasing for the same period. Thus, total MoPSE’s allocation as a proportion of total government expenditure decreased from an average of 18% between 2016 and 2019 to 12% in 2020.

In Zambia, budget allocation to education takes the third largest share on average after General Public Services and Economic Affairs. From 2017 the allocation to education, as a percentage of total government allocations, has been decreasing from 16.5% to 11.5% in 2021.

3.4 Access to Early Childhood Education in SADC Countries

Access to early childhood development services in the region remains a challenge with more than 50% of children aged between 3-5 years still unable to access these services. The table below shows the levels of access to early childhood development in different SADC countries. Access is represented as the percentage of children aged between 3-5 years who attend ECE in each country.

Table 2: Access to early childhood education in SADC Countries	
Country	% access as share of children ages 3-5 years who attend ECE
Eswatini	19 (2014) 28 (2018) 30 (2020)
Lesotho	35.2 (2020)
Malawi	32 (2018) 39 (2019) 45 (2020)
South Africa	59 (2018)

While Early childhood development has been embraced in policy blue prints, implementation of these policies is yet to match the needs of children as many children in the region are denied early childhood education and development due to cost and access. These policies are therefore yet to be matched by allocations in the national budget that promote increased

access (both in terms of quantity and quality) to ECDE. Table 2 above shows that apart from South Africa less than 40% of children aged between 3-5 years have access to ECDE. In a number of countries, the governments have developed policy and legislation around ECD yet it remains largely provided by the private sector, churches, and other institutions, at a cost which is prohibitive to the majority of children. A few countries have begun to finance provision of ECD for ages 4 and upward including Eswatini, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe, through developing curriculum, training of personnel and infrastructure. While realisation of the rights of children to early childhood development services is only expected to be progressively achieved over time, the current levels of access to ECDE remain a cause for concern in terms of how national budget allocations can better meet the needs of children in these countries. The low levels of access also reflect that SADC counties will need to invest more in terms of capital expenditures in order to develop the ECDE sector through infrastructure development and teacher training for example. In most countries, a huge focus therefore will remain on the quantitative access, in order to increase the numbers of children who access ECDE in both rural and urban areas.

Poor access to ECDE has affected school readiness among a huge population of children entering primary school education. In Eswatini for instance, although the level of access to pre-primary education has steadily increased over the years, most children in Eswatini enter primary school lacking essential school readiness in literacy and numeracy due to limited provision of ECDE services. According to data from 2014, only 19% of children aged 36-59 months were developmentally on track for literacy and numeracy, and there were disparities already at this level signalling that education disadvantages start at a very young age. Beyond 2014 Eswatini has increased allocation of resources to early childhood education and the percentage of children accessing pre-school increased to 28% in 2018 and above 30% in 2020. Apart from general challenges in access to pre-primary education, disparities also exist for children in urban areas and those in rural areas. According to the 2018 percentage of children accessing pre-school, Eswatini is behind other countries in the region with only 28% of children aged 3-5 years attending ECDE services compared to 59% of children in the same age group in South Africa¹⁷.

¹⁷ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/35787/Eswatini-Education-Sector-Analysis.pdf?sequence=5>

Children in Lesotho also face a myriad of challenges in accessing their education rights. Gross enrolment rates in pre-primary school are 35.2 per cent, which means that education deprivation affects 64.8 per cent of preschool-aged children in the country. The Kingdom has made strides in putting in place policies that promote ECDE, inspired by a national vision to have a literate and productive society with well-grounded moral and ethical values. The Ministry of Education and Training implements this vision through the Education Sector Plan (2016-2026) whose key areas that include: improved education access; and better education quality and equity. Formal primary education in Lesotho is delivered through 2,204 pre-primary schools: and 1,478 primary schools.

Equitable access to ECDE in Lesotho has been affected by unclear policies guiding teachers' deployment. According to Lesotho's Education Sector Plan for 2016-2026, the deployment of teachers across schools is not guided by clear policies. This lack of guideline clarity explains the current imbalance between the supply and demand of teachers in schools. The extent to which teachers are deployed to schools based on enrolment is 60 per cent in urban Early Childhood Care and Development and only 20 per cent in rural primary schools. Therefore, strengthening the law and regulatory framework, as well as enforcement of these in the education sector, would support the Ministry of Education and Training's efforts to allocate and distribute available resources more efficiently.

Malawi is currently implementing the National ECD Policy (2017 – 2022) and the national Integrated ECD Strategic Plan (2018 – 2023). According to the 2018 Annual workplan and report on Integrated Early Childhood Development, the transition from home to ECD centers and from ECD centers to lower primary schools has many challenges for children, caregivers, parents and teachers. Only about 32% (2018) of children in Malawi start primary school after attending an ECD service. This means that the majority of children in Malawi (68%) enter primary school without having accessed any formal pre-school education. Although access has increased to 39% in 2020, the government efforts towards ECDE will need to be reflected through increased and equitable resourcing towards promoting access to ECDE.

Beyond quantitative access to ECDE, as reflected by nominal increases of children attending early childhood development centres, it is also important to view access in terms of quality of services being provided for the young learners. Access to Early Stimulation and Learning Opportunities in Malawi remains a challenge despite having more ECD centres in rural areas, the majority of children in the rural areas do not have access to these facilities. As a result, very few children below the age of 5 have the opportunity to attend formal ECD services before joining the formal primary education. Malawi experiences high caregiver turnover among the trained caregivers. There are more untrained caregivers working in ECD centres with no salary/honoraria awarded to them. The lack of adequate infrastructure for infant classes cannot be over emphasised as well as the inadequacy of trained caregivers (at about 50 percent of available numbers) and inadequate teaching and play materials across the ECD centres.

In Zambia, access to ECE has only increased marginally over the years. From a policy perspective early childhood education was integrated into the Education Ministry's structure in 2011, and a Directorate of Early Childhood Education (DoECE) was created in 2012. In 2014 the country witnessed the first intake of children enrolled in public early childhood education centres. The proportion of Grade 1 entrants with ECE exposure grew from 16 percent in 2004 to 29.4 percent in 2018 and further to 32% in 2020. As a result, Zambia still falls behind some of its peers in the Southern Africa region in terms of access to ECE, such as Zimbabwe (32 percent), Malawi (45 percent), and South Africa (above 50 percent), and is below the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 53 percent¹⁸. While there is gender parity in terms of ECE access in Zambia, the proportion of children with disabilities accessing ECE is low and remains undocumented.

Quality access to ECDE also remains a challenge in Zambia. According to the Zambia SDG Indicator baseline report the percentage of teachers in pre-primary education who received at least the minimum qualification of training for the pre-primary level was 4.4 percent in 2017 from 4.6 percent in 2016. This is compared to the percentage of teachers in primary education who received at least the minimum qualification of training for the primary level

¹⁸ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/document/file/2022-01-program-document-espig-zambia.pdf>

was 79.4 percent in 2017 from 79.2 percent in 2016. The low numbers of qualified teachers for ECDE compromises the delivery of quality learning to children.

In addition, the 2019 allocation to Early Childhood Education in Zambia has declined by 88 per cent because of no allocation for ECE infrastructure due to austerity measures. Without an increased allocation for ECE infrastructure a considerable number of children will continue to lack access to services and hence be ill-prepared for grade one as currently only 32 per cent of grade one entrants have ECE experience¹⁹.

The decline in the share of education expenditure has resulted in deviations from international commitments. The Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action, a global plan agreed by countries in 2015 for the implementation of SDG 4, urges governments to allocate at least 15-20 percent of their total public expenditure on all levels of education, while the second, which is more widely accepted, sets spending of 4-6 percent of GDP on education. The declining share of education in Zambia has important implications on attaining SDG 4, 7NDP aspirations and the Vision 2030.

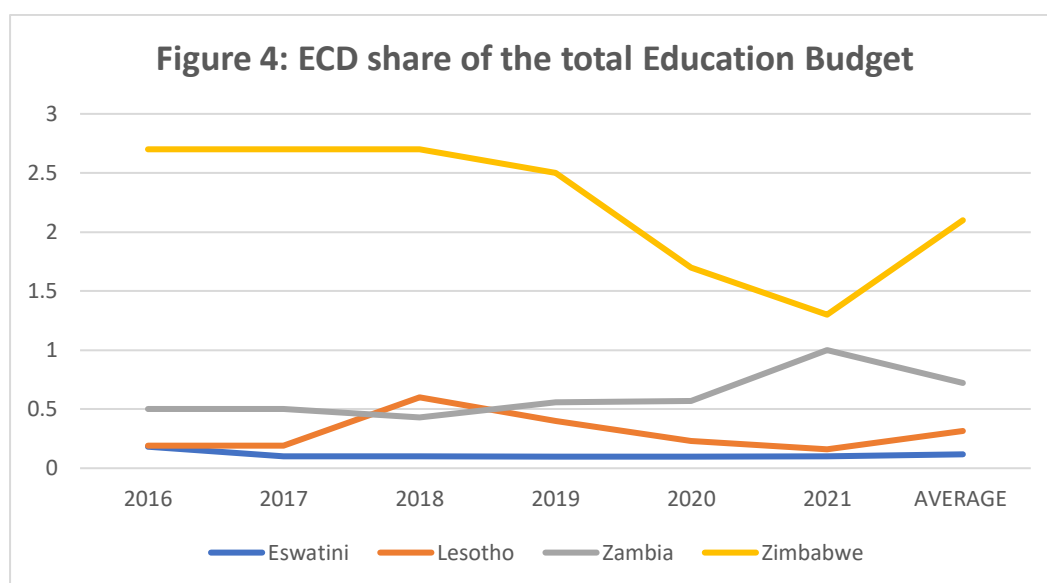
3.5 ECDE Share of the total Education Budget in SADC Countries

A description of the share of education expenditure as a percentage of the total national budget (as discussed in 3.3) shows that some countries (Mozambique and Lesotho) have achieved the regional benchmark of 20 percent allocation to education. These achievements are however not reflected in allocations to the ECDE subsector which continues to be underfunded in most countries.

¹⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/5001/file/UNICEF-Zambia-2019-Education-Budget-Brief.pdf>

For instance, in 2019 only around two percent of education budgets in East and Southern Africa were focused on early childhood education, which falls far below the international benchmark for governments to allocate at least 10 percent of their education budgets to early childhood education²⁰.

The graph below shows that in most countries only 1%, or less, of the total education budget, is allocated towards ECDE expenditures.



In Zimbabwe the share of total education budget allocated to ECDE or infant education has been dropping for the period under consideration (year 2016 to 2022). On average 2.7% of the total education budget was allocated to infant education between 2016 and 2018. Allocations have declined to 2.5% in 2019; 2.0% in 2020; 1.5% in 2021 and 1.45% in 2022.

The share of ECD programmes from the total education budget remains low in countries such as Eswatini where, in 2018, only 0.1% of the education sector budget was allocated to ECD programmes. The inadequacy of these resources to meet the early childhood development needs in the country is compounded by the fact that the bulk of the funds are channelled towards recurrent expenditure leaving very little for development of the sector.

Table 3: ECDE share of the total Education Budget

²⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/8156/file/UNICEF-ESARO-Quantifying-Heckman-Paper-2021-revised.pdf>

Country	Eswatini	Lesotho	Zambia	Zimbabwe
2016	0.18	0.19	0.5	2.7
2017	0.1	0.19	0.5	2.7
2018	0.1	0.6	0.43	2.7
2019	0.1	0.4	0.56	2.5
2020	0.1	0.23	0.57	1.7
2021	0.1	0.16	1	1.3
AVERAGE	0.12	0.32	0.72	2.1

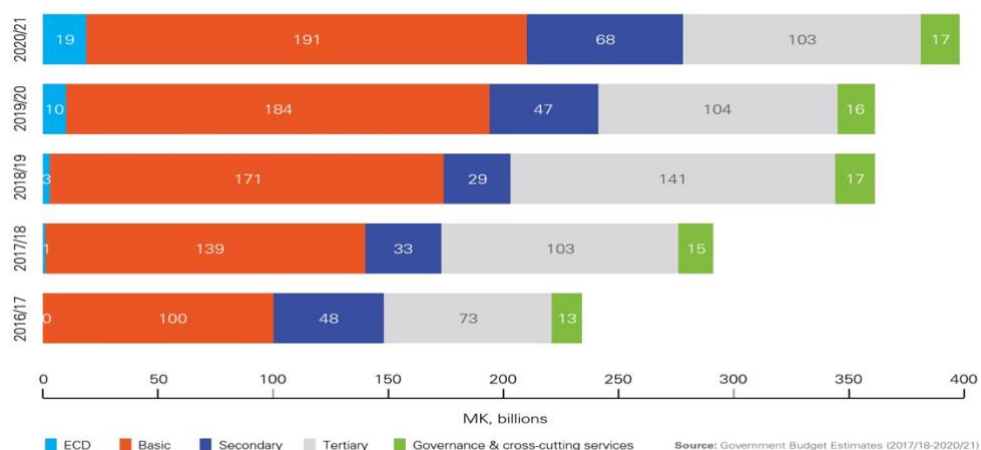
As shown in the table above, Lesotho has experienced a decline in allocations to ECDE as a percentage of the total education budget. In 2020/21, 0.23% (M0.007 billion) was allocated to ECDE while in 2021/22 the percentage declined to 0.16% (M0.006 billion) of total education spending. The decline in allocations to ECDE between 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years, is however consistent with the overall decline in the total allocation to the education sector budget as follows: in 2020/21, allocations to the sector amounted to M3.74 billion which represents 16.2% of the national budget and this fell to M2.62 billion in 2021/22.

In Mozambique public spending towards early childhood education has been increasing over time in nominal terms. As a share of the total education budget allocations towards early childhood education averaged around 0.23% between 2009 until 2013 and increased steadily to 2.36% by 2017²¹.

In Malawi, the ECD budget (in nominal terms) almost doubled in 2020/21 from MK10 billion allocated in 2019/20 to MK19.2 billion. In 2020/21 FY, 95% of the ECD budget coordinated by the MoGCDSW in Malawi was financed by the World Bank as part of the “Investing in Early Years (IEY)” project, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Gender. The ECD budget’s share expressed as a percent of the total education budget has been increasing from zero recorded in 2016/17 and 2017/18 to around 5% in 2020/21 budget.

²¹ https://www.unicef.org/mozambique/media/2751/file/Budget_Brief_2019_-_Education.pdf

Figure 5: Trends in the Allocation to Different Education Levels (Malawi)



Source: UNICEF, 2021

From the figure above, the share of the ECD budget as a percent of the total national budget and GDP has been increasing since 2015/16 from below 0.01% in 2015/16 to around 0.048% in 2018/19 (UNICEF, 2019). The ECD budget as a share of the total budget has risen further from 0.55% in 2019/20 to 0.88% in 2020/21 (UNICEF, 2021).

3.6 Per-capita spending on ECDE in SADC Countries

Per capita spending on early childhood development education refers to the expenditure on pre-school care and education per child which is calculated by dividing public spending on educational institutions by the number of children enrolled in those programmes²². The table below shows the average per capita spending for countries in the SADC region.

The table shows that most countries are below the regional average of USD138 per capita spending for ECDE. COVID-19 has since magnified ECD funding shortfalls. Preliminary estimates suggest that government spending on health and education for children between 0-6 years will fall from US\$138 per person in 2019, on average, to US\$122 in 2020 before a modest uptick to US\$126 in 2021²³.

²² <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/44975840.pdf>

²³ <https://www.unicef.org/esa/media/8156/file/UNICEF-ESARO-Quantifying-Heckman-Paper-2021-revised.pdf>

The low per capita spending has the impact of compromising the quality of ECDE services available to children in these countries and hence their readiness for the first level of primary school. Most countries tend to spend more on primary school children as opposed to pre-primary school learners as in the case of Zambia.

Table 6: Average Per Capita Spending on ECDE (0-6 years), 2016 – 2020

Country	Average per capita spending USD	Average for six countries USD	Average for Southern Africa USD
Eswatini	217	80	138
Lesotho	109		
Malawi	23		
Mozambique	15		
Zambia	49		
Zimbabwe	70		

In Zambia per capita spending is however relatively lower for primary education and is further reduced for pre-primary education. Zambia allocates about 55 percent of its Education budget on primary education, which is the largest expenditure programme. Education spending per child shows that Government spent about US\$171 per primary learner and US\$205 per secondary learner in 2018 and the lowest per capita expenditure is for pre-school learners at an average of USD49 as shown in the table above. Therefore, public expenditure per secondary pupil was 1.2 times more than that spent on a child in primary school during 2015-2018.

Inequalities in terms of expenditure per child in urban and rural areas also emerges as in the case of Mozambique. One of the main challenges affecting access to ECDE in Mozambique is inequitable distribution of resources particularly across provinces. Per capita funding for education is high in major cities such as Maputo but very low in northern provinces such as

Zambezia, Nampula and Tete. For example in 2018 resource allocation per child for primary school was MT 171 in Zambezia, while in Maputo the allocation was MT 4,821 per child. These disparities are however not unique to 2018 allocations but have persisted in other years. These inequality gaps will need to be addressed if the country is to make progress in improving access to primary education and pre-primary education in particular.

3.6 Recurrent Expenditure vs Capital Expenditure on ECDE in SADC Countries

Recurrent expenditure constitutes the costs of goods and services that need to be recurrently available in order to sustain the production of education services. These include salaries, teaching and learning materials as well as utilities (such as electricity and water). Capital expenditure on the other hand refers to expenditure on assets that can last beyond the financial year in which they are acquired. These include construction of buildings and purchase of equipment²⁴.

The average recurrent expenditure is above 85% for countries in the SADC region, with some countries reaching and exceeding 90%. Recurrent expenditure in Lesotho for the 2020/2021 financial year was 95%. Over a five year period (2017-2021) the average recurrent expenditure is 94%. Malawi's recurrent expenditure in the 2020/2021 financial year was 90%. Mozambique also shows a recurrent expenditure that averaged 90% in 2019. These high recurrent expenditures mean that Capital Expenditure for the majority of countries falls below 10%.

The larger amount of Eswatini's education spending is allocated to a growing recurrent budget. Between the 2014/15 fiscal year and the 2021 fiscal year, the recurrent budget has increased its share from just under 93% of the total approved budget to over 95%. At the same time, the capital budget has shrunk significantly from more than 7% of the total budget to less than 5%. This compromises expenditure targeted at developing the sector and further constrains the much needed developments in the early childhood education subsector.

²⁴ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/3859598/5890273/KS-BF-05-002-EN.PDF.pdf/540801b8-b438-4388-9532-4bab0ed7ba2a?t=1414781172000>

A micro analysis of ECD budget allocations in Malawi reveals that resources allocated to fixed assets acquisition has declined, in nominal terms, from 54% to 21% (MK128 million) in 2017/18 before increasing marginally to 24% (MK160 million) in 2018/19 (UNICEF, 2019). A huge component of the ECD budget is also engulfed on travel expenses which constituted 42% in 2016/17; 31% in 2017/18 and 44% in 2018/19. Increasing access to ECDE is anchored on financing capital expenditure particularly towards the construction of infrastructure required for the provision of early childhood learning services to children.

In Lesotho The education sector budget is mostly spent on recurrent expenditure with over 60% going to compensation of teachers. Total recurrent expenditure has been above 93% of the total education budget for the past six years. Consequently, only less than 7% of the education budget was spent on capital expenditure or developmental purposes particularly for early childhood care. The recurrent expenditure budget continues to dominate the education budget, receiving 95.5 per cent of the sector's budget in 2020/21. This share was slightly smaller in 2019/20 at about 93.1 per cent of education sector's budget

Use of capital budget allocations has largely been targeted at expenditure towards construction of infrastructure and teacher training in most SADC countries.

Expenditure for ECDE in Zambia

In Zambia for example planned budget expenditure has largely been informed by policy implementation. Progress in ECE in Zambia has also been through the implementation of the 2017-2021 Education and Skills Sector Plan (ESSP) which was designed to re-establish education as the key catalyst for national development towards attainment of Zambia's long-term development vision. The success of the implementation of this ESSP can be assessed against the milestones that government had set. These milestones required additional resources in order to achieve:

- Increased pupil enrolments and transition rates: the Government targeted to increase enrolment from 12 percent in 2015 to 25 percent in 2022 to improve the number of Grade 1 entrants with ECE experience,

- Increased teacher recruitment: The Government intended to reduce the high Pupil-Teacher Ratios (PTR) by 2022 from 50 to 40 in ECE through employment of close to 674 additional teachers for ECE, and
- Enhanced infrastructure development: Government planned that between 2015 and 2022, it was going to build more classrooms: 3,000 at ECE level, 13,000 at primary school level and approximately 4,000 at secondary school level²⁵.

In Eswatini expenditure towards the free primary education programme has been complemented by other initiatives that have been implemented to ensure more children are brought to school to access basic education. Mobile schools for primary students and mobile teachers' houses were introduced in some areas to cater for children who were out of school due to shortages of public primary schools. The enrolment for primary school education has been increasing since 2015. The government has already resourced for the building of schools on the sites where mobile schools have been located. There has been increased financing for capital projects between 2015 and 2016. Construction of new schools is one of the projects that has been financed by both government and donors.

The Eswatini Ministry of Education and Training is in the process of bankrolling a fully-fledged pre-school programme in public schools. Expenditure on training of teachers has also constituted the spending for this subsector since 2015. ECD teachers have been receiving training at Ngkwane Teacher Training College. There are plans to adopt the early childhood programme in all public schools. The Eswatini government has also mobilised to train teachers on childcare and to pilot the child care centres in 80 public schools located in the rural areas. Training for caregivers and teachers is also being supported by the government. The government planned to avail ECD facilities to 5-year-olds as a pilot project, which will be scaled up to include 3-year-olds. However, very limited budget resources have been committed so far to develop the necessary infrastructure to implement the programme.

The existence of private pre-schools in Eswatini, which are currently providing early childhood education has seen government making efforts to regulate the operation of these centres. Government has however also mobilised resources to develop a curriculum for the

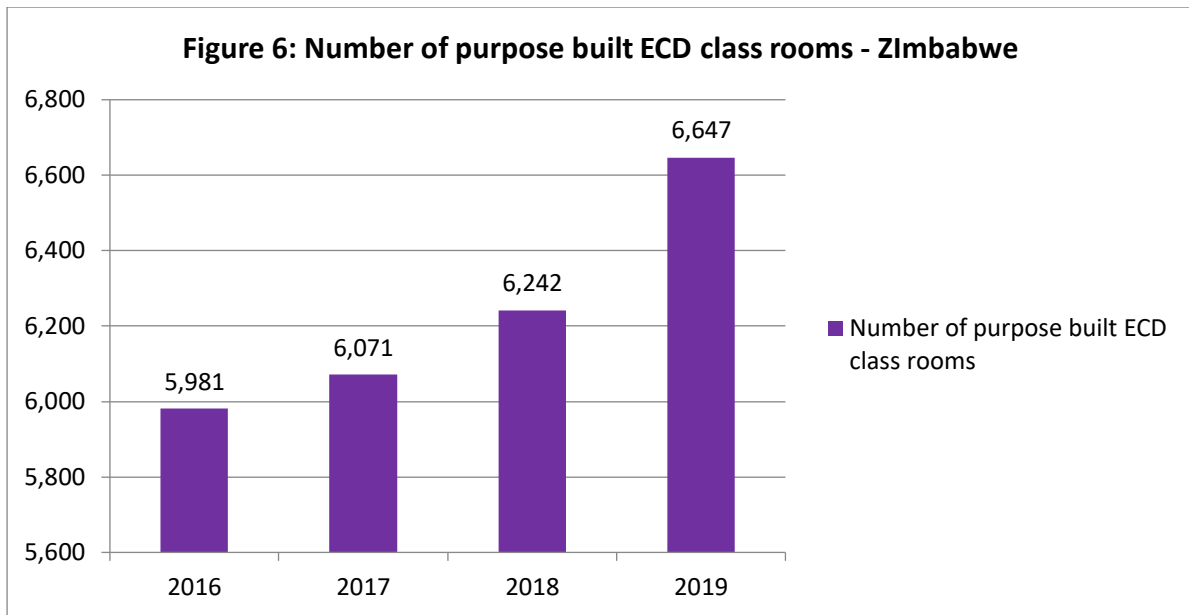
²⁵ <https://www.unicef.org/zambia/media/2476/file/Zambia-budget-brief-2020-2021-education.pdf>

neighbourhood childcare centres. The government has also invested resources in developing a mechanism to ensure children and parents participate in raising awareness on the education childcare centres. The ingadwas have been used as platforms to engage communities (including children) on the education childcare centres.

3.7 Budget Credibility and Execution in ECDE allocations

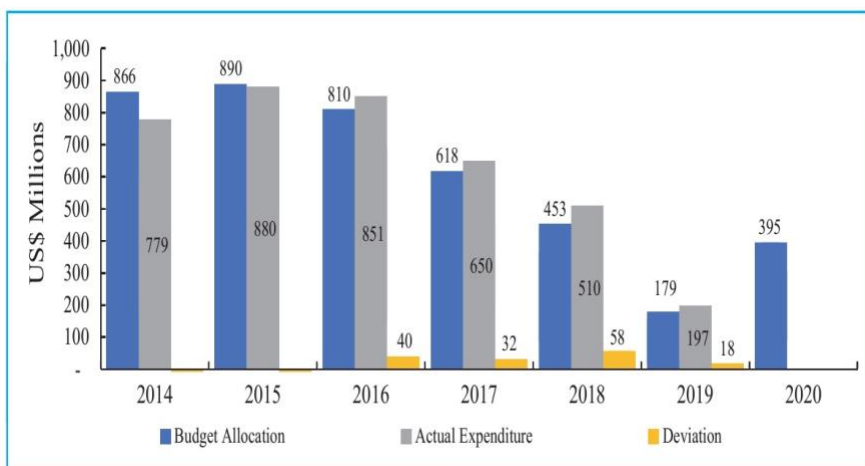
Budget credibility and execution describes any major variations between the overall approved budget and actual expenditure. Budget credibility and execution remain a challenge in most SADC countries with an impact of limiting development achieved through the allocations made in the national budget. Budget execution in most countries is driven by recurrent expenditure, capital budget expenditure however remains a challenge as in the case of Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe the government has prioritized expenditure towards construction of classrooms as depicted in figure 6 below. Much of the construction has been targeted at rural schools. The steady progress in increasing ECD classrooms is however affected by weak execution of the budget. Though gradually improving from 11% in 2017 to 56% in 2019, the utilisation rate of the capital budget remains a concern. Some of the challenges contributing to the weak capital budget execution include, limited capacity in project planning and prioritisation, and delays in release of funds by the Ministry of Finance. Delays in the procurement process have also been cited as one of the major challenges, emanating from the lack of appreciation of the new procurement legislation and guidelines.



In Zimbabwe to ascertain the credibility of the education budget it is important to analyse what has actually been spent against the approved vote allocations to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. As shown from figure 7, budget overruns that have been persistent from year 2016 to 2019 are an indication of weak budget planning and execution. From year 2016 through 2019 there has been budget overruns with figures of US\$40 million, US\$32 million, US\$58 million and US\$18 million respectively.

Figure 7: Budget Allocations and Actual Expenditure, 2014 – 19, Zimbabwe



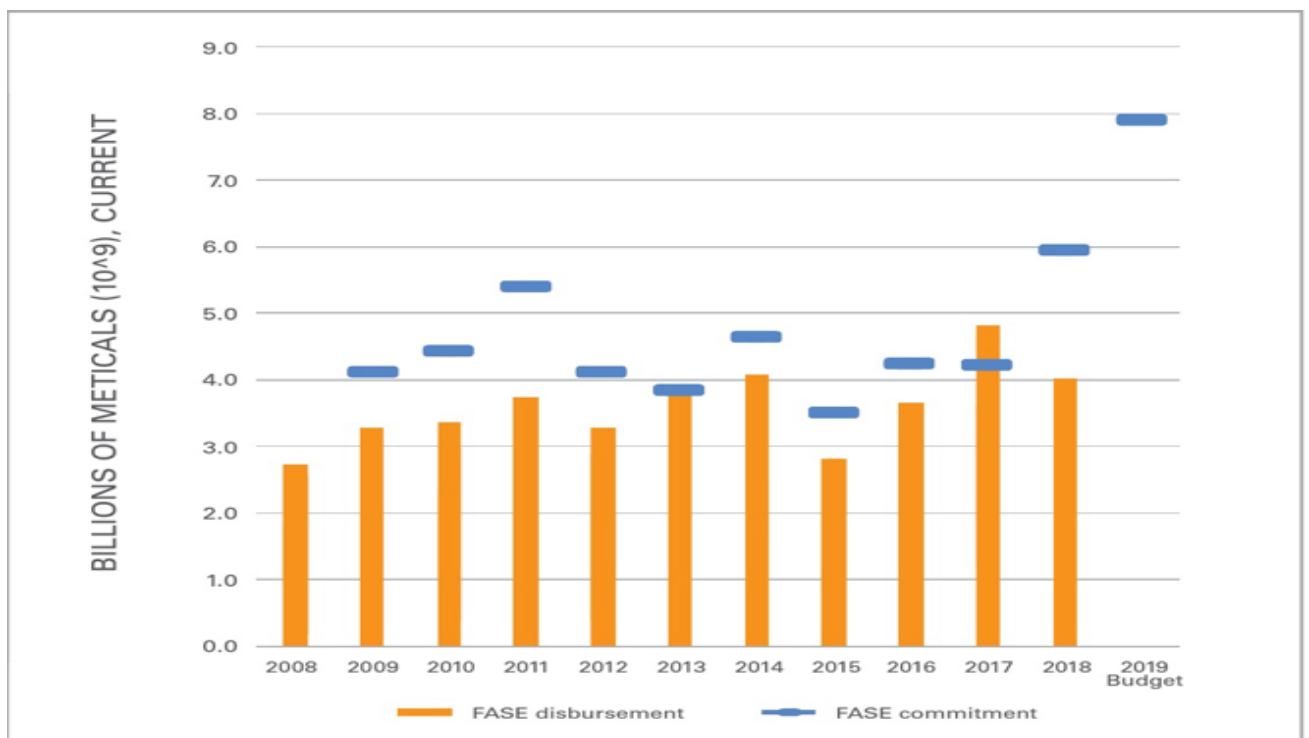
Source: UNICEF, 2020

Again in Zimbabwe Budget overruns measured in terms of deviation of total actual education spending from the budget have also been worsening from just 5% in 2016 to a high of 99% in 2020, a trend reflecting poor budget planning and execution.

In Mozambique during the period 2008 to 2018, the entire education sector (General Education and Higher Education) executed on average 92% of its budget.²⁶ This has been mostly driven by the dominant recurrent expenditures that are relatively easy to spend. Poor external funding execution with an average of 71% for the same period weighed down the overall aggregate budget execution rate.

Credibility of FASE funding in Mozambique can be assessed by comparing the resources that were pledged and what was actually disbursed. To do so a vivid picture has been captured in the figure 8 showing the gap between pledged and disbursed resources.

Figure 8: FASE Commitments and Disbursements (Mozambique)



Source: UNICEF, 2019

As shown above the larger the gap between committed resources and pledged resources, the smaller the credibility that can be placed on donor funding while the smaller the gap the

²⁶ See UNICEF Budget Brief 2019 for Mozambique

more credible is donor funding. Between 2008 to 2018, it is only in 2013 and 2017 when donor disbursement equalled or exceeded their commitments. Although commitments were on the rise for the period 2016 to 2019, what concerning is the mismatch between committed and received disbursements making it difficult to plan effectively in the education sector.

In Zambia Primary education takes up the largest share of the education budget. Over half of the education budget (51.3 percent) was allocated to primary education in 2021. However Early Childhood Education remains at the lower level in terms of allocated resources. In 2021 for example only 0.1% of the Education budget was allocated to ECE. Execution rates for ECE in Zambia are also very poor compared to those for primary education and other sub sectors. There are significant variations in the execution rates within recurrent expenditure by education programme. The average execution rates for primary education over the period 2015-2018 averaged about 96-97 percent. At the lower end of the execution rates ladder is Early Childhood Education whose execution rates declined significantly in 2017 and 2018 and averaged 45.5 percent during 2015-2018. This is shown in the table below:

Table 5: Budget Execution rates (%) 2015 to 2018, Zambia

Education programme	2015	2016	2017	2018	Average
Early Childhood education	85.8	71.6	8.1	16.5	45.5
Primary Education	94.8	99.3	97.4	96.1	96.9

Malawi has also experienced a number of issues around budget credibility²⁷ In the 2018/19 financial year, the allocation to ECD under the Ministry of Gender was reduced by 18%. This was also observed with allocations to basic education which were reduced by 14%. The cuts in expenditures mainly affected capital budgets, including infrastructure development. Apart from issues with budget credibility, Malawi also faces budget execution challenges which

²⁷ Budget credibility is measured by the variance between approved and revised budgets

arise from late disbursements of resources, including school improvement grants, protracted procurement and bureaucracy in the implementation of capital projects, especially construction.

3.8 Impact of Covid-19 on ECDE

According to the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)(2021) in its report on Financing Education in Africa during the Covid 19 pandemic, financing to education during the pandemic has worsened due to many pre-existing challenges within countries in Africa. According to the World Bank (2020), even before COVID-19, about 258 million primary and secondary school children were out of school, and more than half of all 10-year-old children in low- and middle-income countries were unable to read and understand a simple text. In sub-Saharan Africa, this “learning poverty” was close to 90% (World Bank, 2020).

Due to the pandemic many countries have adopted the emerging lessons from the use of distance learning in order to reach children during lockdowns that were imposed as a consequence of the pandemic. Resources to ensure children in both urban and rural areas access learning during the pandemic have not been adequate. Some of the challenges, identified by ADEA (2021), in financing education during the pandemic include:

- Inadequate resources to reach all children in need of infrastructure to support continued learning,
- Lack of resources to finance provision water and sanitation facilities as well as resources to expand learning spaces in schools
- Over-reliance, particularly by low income countries, on external funding for emergency responses,
- The negative effects of the pandemic on economic growth in the majority of countries has resulted in an increase in budget deficits.
- The pressure of competing national priorities including existing debt repayment, increased spending in the health sector, and recurrent expenditures, such as public sector salaries, have had a negative impact on financial responses in the education sector.

These challenges have seen poor response to ECDE needs in most countries in the SADC region. Prior to the pandemic, Lesotho for example already faced an immense need to develop pre-schools and improve access. The necessity of ECDE has also been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has forced 3–5-year-old learners out of formal education facilities since March 2020. The supply of preschool services needs to be improved in response to the pandemic in order to mitigate the worsening of inequalities among children in terms of access to ECDE

In addition Lesotho's Education spending is also not equitably distributed across levels of learning. Using the 2017/18 Continuous Multipurpose Household Survey and Household Budget Survey, the government has estimated that 49 per cent of public education expenditure is consumed by post-secondary students who represent 15 per cent of the learner population, with only 51 per cent of the expenditure benefiting 85 per cent of learners (primary and secondary). With the COVID-19 pandemic, inequalities in education will be exacerbated not only in Lesotho but in other SADC countries as well given the similarities in expenditure trends.

Despite a declining trend in allocations towards education in general and ECDE in particular The national budgets in SADC countries do not explicitly show a plan or provision for financing education in the event of the crisis or the worsening COVID-19 pandemic. For example the clear decline in funding towards education in Zimbabwe has not been met with financing interventions to mitigate the impact of the pandemic. In the Zimbabwe 2021 budget, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education was allocated ZWD55.221 billion, which represents about 13.09% of the national budget. This percentage allocation is 3 percentage points lower than the 16.5% average of countries in sub-Saharan Africa. This falls short of the recommended Education for All targets of 20% of national budget or 6% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The overall MOPSE budget is showing a declining trend over the years, both as a percentage of GDP as well as a total share of the national budget.

Through donor support some countries such as Malawi, have directed interventions to pre-primary children in both urban and rural areas.

Malawi's funding from GPE and UNICEF has been used to support distance learning solutions to reach learners from marginalized areas and vulnerable populations with limited access to the Internet or electricity. It offers distance learning solutions to pre-primary, primary and lower secondary school children through radio, television, and digital platforms (GPE, 2020g). UNICEF's

grant specifically supports 66,993 children with distance learning solutions targeting those from marginalized and vulnerable populations (UNICEF, 2020f)
Source: https://www.adeanet.org/sites/default/files/financing_education_kix_observatory.pdf

4.0 Conclusion ad Recommendations

For investment in children to be a reality, several challenges that SADC countries face have to be dealt with. Some of the issues that would need to be addressed include strengthening public policies, regulatory frameworks and finance at all levels, unlocking the transformative potential of people and the private sector, and incentivizing changes in financing as well as consumption and production patterns to support sustainable development.²⁸

Further to this, appropriate incentives, strengthening national policy environments and regulatory frameworks and their coherence, harnessing the potential of science, technology and innovation, closing technology gaps and scaling up capacity -building at all levels are essential for the shift towards sustainable investment in early childhood education.

There is need amongst SADC Member States for the realisation that in spite of the austerity measures in place, investing in children is critical to achieving inclusive, equitable and sustainable development for present and future generations.²⁹ In doing this, there is need to affirm the importance of promoting and protecting children's rights while ensuring that no child is left behind.

This study reinforces the need to have impeccable policies and robust mobilisation and effective use of domestic resources as these are the primary ways in which sustainable development can be achieved. While there is an appreciation that international assistance plays a key role in financing children's issues, it should, however, not be the backbone of development initiatives of Member States, instead, it should only supplement domestic

²⁸ African Union, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, (2016)

²⁹ Ibid.

efforts. Such a situation can be reached when revenue collection and administration systems are enhanced through modernized, progressive tax systems, improved tax policies and more efficient tax collection.

The use of information management systems should be strengthened and implemented at national and local government level in order to capture the unique early childhood education needs of children and in different geographical areas and in different circumstances a manner that will inform the design of appropriate responses and interventions. The identification of appropriate responses promotes efficiency in the use of resources, as resources will be targeted to providing specific services to children who lack them. The information will also promote equity in distribution of ECDE resources among rural and urban communities in order to address inequalities currently prevailing in most countries.

CSOs have a critical role to play in informing budget priorities for ECDE. CSOs that are working at the community level are exposed to the different situations of children on the ground. This information is critical in designing the most suitable responses for children in different circumstances while taking into account their geographical context. The impact of Cyclone Idai for example as well as the Covid-19 pandemic, on different geographical areas and on children in different circumstances needs to be taken into account in framing interventions and allocating resources that seek to ensure continued access to ECDE as well as improved access beyond the natural disaster.

In-service training for teachers needs to be prioritised in national budgets as this equips teachers to be able to provide ECDE in the learning environment. With free education being rolled out in some SADC countries, there is need to ensure that the human resources to roll out ECDE are available. There is need to develop M&E systems that track the implementation of ECDE programmes at local and national level with a view to informing budget priorities.

There is need for an improvement in the timely disbursement of resources to ECDE programmes. The study revealed that in some cases actual expenditures are limited due to poor disbursement by Treasury. This compromises the effective implementation of ECDE which is often subsumed in the primary education budget. Government should not focus on

nominal increases in allocations but rather seek to ensure that allocations also increase in real terms to ensure that the quantity and quality of ECDE services being provided does not diminish due to the impact of inflation.

4.1 Specific Recommendations

In view of the foregoing analyses, the report makes the following recommendations. The recommendations take a human rights approach that appreciates that the governments are the primary duty bearers for the realisation of children's rights. As such, most of the recommendations will be directed to them. The thrust of the recommendations is drawn from a set of principles that guide resourcing for children's rights as articulated in General Comment 19 of the UNCRC. The principles of efficiency, effectiveness, equity, transparency and sustainability.

Data collection: SADC member states should improve collection, disaggregation and dissemination of budget data through observance of the dictates of UNCRC General Comment No. 5 (2003) on General Measures of Implementation by collecting in real time and sharing budget allocation and utilization data amongst all relevant stakeholders encapsulating all areas of child protection, health and education.

Public spending in children: In the light of general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, the SADC governments are recommended to ensure that public spending on child focused sectors and programs such as ECDE are adequate, equitable, efficient and effective and is undertaken within transparent and inclusive public finance management processes. It is only through increased and improved quality of public spending that SADC member states can sustainably deliver essential services such for early childhood education to all children. The allocation of resources should take note of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals on substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms, take immediate measures to combat corruption and strengthen institutional capacities to effectively detect and investigate cases of corruption and prosecute the perpetrators, including by strengthening the public financial management system in order to avoid diverting resources from the implementation of the rights of the child.

Consistency with budget benchmarks: With most SADC countries being unable to meet the political commitments they made at regional level, for example the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All, there is need for countries to ensure efficient use of existing resources for the child focused sectors.

Exploration of Public Private Partnerships: SADC countries are vulnerable to shocks in the global economy and this tends to affect revenue that can be allocated in the national budget to child focused sectors such as ECDE, often resulting in huge budget deficits. For instance, Lesotho and Swaziland have been affected by the reductions in SACU revenue, As a consequence, budget allocations to social services have been affected resulting in a reduction in the delivery of services to children. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) should be explored as a strategy to finance child focused sectors in SADC countries. The implementation of the SADC Industrialisation Strategy by member states should be mindful of the potential of PPPs in developing sustainable resource options for the realisation of children's rights.

Domestic Resource Mobilisation: There is need for the governments to build sustainability for its programmes, especially the free primary education programmes that are being implemented in some SADC countries. Domestic resource mobilisation is critical as a sustainable way of ensuring sustainability in provision of resources for this sector. To promote domestic resource mobilisation member states will need to review their revenue collection mechanism as well adopt strategies that can enable revenue authorities to efficiently and effectively collect taxes from the huge informal sector in the region.

Administration costs over program implementation: Whilst prioritisation of health, education and social protection is evident through comprehensive policies in most SADC countries coupled by efforts to increase budget allocations, more needs to be done in terms of the balance between allocations to recurrent expenditure and programmes. A huge proportion of the resources allocated to early childhood development goes to wages and other administration costs, leaving very little for programme implementation. SADC countries need to rationalise expenditure to ensure that available resources are spent efficiently towards budget lines that lead to an improvement education outcomes. This requires adherence to

public resource management legislation and the avoidance of mismanagement of resources through corruption.

Civic engagement of citizenry in budgeting processes: The budget formulation stage is key in the determination of priorities and allocation in a national budget. The budget process can be strengthened by incorporating child sensitive budgeting and promoting their participation in the budget process. It is important to make sure that children are involved in the strategic planning and identification of needs stage of the budget process.

Strengthening Community Based Responses: Reduced allocations to child focused programmes (either due to dwindling donor funds or low revenues) will limit the services provided to children. Vulnerable families will be mostly affected due to poverty. Available resources should also be directed towards creating opportunities for community-based responses that promote income generation for vulnerable households, in order to give children in the region a better chance of enjoying basic rights and by doing so ease the burden of poverty.

Child Centric Budgeting: Where huge budget deficits occur in the different countries in the region, available resources in most cases are disbursed to finance recurrent expenditure as opposed to early childhood education and other child focused programmes. This means that provision of services to children is compromised as a result of the budget deficits. Governments should prioritise disbursements towards child focused programmes and adopt austerity measures for other expenditure related to administration such as vehicles, and travel.

Ensuring value for money: An efficient system of resource use which looks at the specific needs of specific children and by doing so inform the provision of the appropriate basket of goods, is necessary in SADC countries. This approach will free resources towards critical needs for children in different circumstances and by doing so promote equitable distribution of resources.

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