



# **Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Republic of Zimbabwe**

**A Submission by:**

**Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)**

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## **EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE**

### **Introduction**

1. The focus of this report is the provision of education in Zimbabwe, a land locked country of 390,580 square kilometres with a population of 12,236,805 in Southern Africa. The information provided in this report comes from persons living in Zimbabwe.
2. Zimbabwe has two ministries of education, the Ministry of Education, Sport, Art and Culture which is responsible for education of the young from Early Childhood to the age of 18 as well as adult and non formal education. The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education is responsible for post high school education. In 2011, the two education ministries received the largest allocation of total government budget.

### **Free and Compulsory Education**

3. According to the Zimbabwe Education Act<sup>1</sup> all children have the right of education. However, education is not free since pupils are required to pay tuition fees as well as development levies. While tuition fees in government schools have been generally very low, development levies at times have proved to be impediments to the provision of free education. The presence of children on the streets in urban areas is an indictment against any claim that education in Zimbabwe is compulsory and free. High costs of books and uniforms have led high drop outs in rural areas<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, Tendai Chikowore, the Zimbabwe Teachers' Association (ZIMTA) president pointed out in 2008 that Zimbabwe may not achieve one of the aims of the Dakar Declaration, to which Zimbabwe is signatory, that is, Education for All by 2015 (ZIMTA warns of collapse of education sector<sup>3</sup>,

### **Equality of access to primary school education**

4. On the attainment of independence in 1980, Zimbabwe pursued a policy of education for all. This practice progressed well until the introduction of the Economic Structural Adjustment in the 1990s. The effect was that while generally, school enrolment decreased for both boys and girls the decrease was more marked among girls at primary school level<sup>4</sup>. While every child in Zimbabwe is supposed to have the right to primary education some

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<sup>1</sup> Education Act 2004 [Chapter 25:04]

<sup>2</sup> Biti, T. (2010). The 2011 National Budget Statement

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thezimbabwetimes.com/?p=4979>.

<sup>4</sup> Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network, 2004, <http://www.kubatana.net/html/archive/gen/040329zwrncn.asp?sector=GEN>

school requirements render it unavailable to a number of children. As well, there is no legislation that compels parents or the state to ensure that children are sent to school.

5. Many schools have in place development levies that some parents cannot afford. In his 2011 Budget Statement, the Minister of finance indicated that there was a drop out rate of 8% in 2010 among children between 6 and 17 years. Given that there are high drop outs in rural areas, it cannot be said that all children have equal access to primary education.

### **Children with Disabilities**

6. According to the Education Act, there should be no discrimination in the provision of primary education in Zimbabwe. However, the Act fails to articulate the provision of education to persons with disability. The education of persons with disability has been left to be addressed by the Disability Act. At the same time Zimbabwe opted for inclusive education as a policy that would lead to the avoidance of discrimination in schools when it accepted the provisions of The Convention of the Rights of the Child, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action and the Dakar Framework for Action<sup>5</sup>. All children must be able to go to schools nearest them or schools of their choice without impediments being put in their way. However, the continued existence of specialised, that is, segregated schools for people with disability precludes inclusivity. At the same time very few teachers in ordinary schools have the necessary skills to be able to work with pupils with special educational needs.

### **Relevance of the curriculum**

7. The curriculum in Zimbabwe's primary and secondary schools lack relevancy to the development needs of the child, a fact recognized by the report of the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training. That is why there is always need for training the secondary school graduates as they finish school without any vocational skills that would enable them to survive in the world of work. Many school drop-outs and "O" level graduates remain unemployed because the education they received did not give them the skills to enable them to obtain work after school.

### **Girls access to school**

8. The Education Act provide for equal access to education in Zimbabwe. This is the case in theory. In reality, the story is different. In difficult times parents often choose to send boys to school at the expense of girl. The drop-out rate in both primary and secondary schools is higher among girl children than among boys. This has been observed by the United Nations

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<sup>5</sup> Hapanyengwi – Chemhuru, O. (2009) A Synoptic View of the History of Special Needs Education in Zimbabwe. Retrieved from, <http://www.thefreelibrary.co/oswell+hapanyengwi/Contributed-a260031>.

agents like UNICEF and UNESCO as well as some Non – governmental organisations like the Campaign for Female Education (CAMFED) that have moved in to enable girl children to go to school and stay there longer. In other words, while it appears that boys and girls have equal access to education, there are many inhibiting factors when it comes to access to education by girls. Aware of this situation, the Government of Zimbabwe in collaboration with interested organisation initiated the National Girls’ Education Strategic Plan in October, 2006. The plan, among other things, was intended to enable Zimbabwe to ensure that girls did not drop out of school and ensure that Zimbabwe achieves universal primary education.

### **Parents and the rights of children**

9. Many parents who live in rural areas lack knowledge of their rights and those of their children. A research carried out by Hapanyengwi<sup>6</sup> showed that even teachers were not aware of the rights of the child, nor were they aware of their rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). A concern raised in the research was the conviction among some teachers that children should not be taught about their rights as it was believed these would make the pupils insubordinate. While the government has made it a requirement among schools to teach human rights and even going to the extent of coming up with textbooks for the purpose, human rights education is not being taught as it should.

### **The Convention of the Rights of Children in schools**

10. The rights of the child as defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child are part of the Human Rights Education curriculum. At primary school level, human rights education has been infused into social studies. At secondary school level, human rights education has been infused into a number of subjects that include History, Geography, and Religious Studies. However, because of the lethargy among teachers in teaching Human Rights Education in general, the provisions of the CRC are not being taught in schools. In fact some teachers are not aware of the existence of copies of the CRC in their schools. The situation has been exacerbated by the unsettled political situation in the country where teachers are victimised for talking about human rights education.

### **The availability of secondary education**

11. According to government policy, secondary education should be easily available to pupils in Zimbabwe. However, some pupils in rural areas still have to travel long distances to schools and some pupils in urban areas fail to raise development levies charged by school

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<sup>6</sup> Hapanyengwi – Chemhuru, O. (2002, March). Secondary School Teacher Preparedness for the Introduction of Human Rights Education in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe. **The Bulletin of Teacher Education**, Vol. 11. Issue 1. Pp. 38 – 46.

development committees<sup>7</sup>. While the government has provided with social support programmes such as the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), this has not been able to cater for all disadvantaged pupils. This is because secondary education is not yet free in Zimbabwe.

### **Quality Teaching and Working Conditions for Teachers**

12. The economic difficulties in Zimbabwe have reversed some of the gains previously achieved in the provision of education. There has been an exodus of teachers from Zimbabwe to neighbouring countries in search of higher wages and better conditions of service<sup>8</sup>. The situation has not improved as the conditions of service and salaries still remain unattractive. The president of ZIMTA, Chikowore, in 2008 argued, “The socio-economic status of the teacher in Zimbabwe declined drastically over the years”. Thus, the schools are failing to attract experienced teachers. It is also noted that the Minister of Finance in his 2011 Budget statement indicated that in 2010 24% of the teachers in schools in Zimbabwe were unqualified.

13. There are approximately fourteen teachers colleges in Zimbabwe. However, due to the economic difficulties in the country only a few colleges are operating at their optimum capacities. Very few young people are opting to join the teaching profession as they find the conditions of service, including poor salaries, under which teachers work to be unattractive. There is need to improve the status of teachers by improving their salaries and conditions of service.

### **School infrastructure**

14. While it would appear that there are enough schools for all children who would seek an education, there is the phenomenon of double – sessions or *hot-sitting* that masks the need to construct more schools in Zimbabwe. Hot-sitting, as noted by the Minister of Finance compromises the quality of education in Zimbabwe. In fact there are newly resettled areas that require schools for the newly resettled families.

15. While most schools are well equipped, there are newly established schools that lack basic infrastructure. Such schools require assistance in the form of classroom space, books, desks and chairs, teachers’ houses as well as other teaching requirements. Such schools are found in remote parts of the country and in newly resettled areas, a product of the Fast Track Resettlement Programme. The Minister of Finance, Biti stated that 555 primary and 399 secondary schools had no desk in 2010. Furthermore, the text book to pupil ratio was 1:15.

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<sup>7</sup> Biti, 2010

<sup>8</sup> In the Telegraph of 18 November, 2007 Stephen Bevan reported a mass exodus of teachers from Zimbabwean schools and on 25 September, 2008 in the same newspaper, there were reports of schools turning away pupils because there were no teachers to teach them.

He also points out that at least 26% of primary classrooms needed repair. However, to alleviate textbook shortage, UNICEF in 2010 came up with a textbook distribution programme that seeks to ensure a textbook to pupil ratio of 1:1 at primary school<sup>9</sup> (Mutseyekwa, 2010). It is difficult to gauge the success of this programme since it has not yet been evaluated.

## **Recommendations**

16. We propose the following recommendations in order to improve the right to education for all children of school age in Zimbabwe:

- i. Ensure that primary education is free for all children and secondary school is available to all those who seek a secondary education.
- ii. To ensure that human rights education is carried out in all schools.
- iii. Improve the salaries of teachers and their working conditions.
- iv. Provide more primary and secondary schools to make education accessible for every child and to eliminate *hot-sitting*, i.e. double sessions of school in the one day to cater for the overload of children wanting to attend school.
- v. Ensure that education is inclusive and non-discriminatory.
- vi. Provide adequate resources that will promote quality education.
- vii. Ensure the curriculum in secondary schools reflect the needs of children, including vocational education.

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<sup>9</sup> Mutseyekwa, T. L. (2010, August). Education Transition Fund Sensitisation. Retrieved from, [http://www.unicef.org/Zimbabwe/media\\_6135.html](http://www.unicef.org/Zimbabwe/media_6135.html)