

ZIMBABWE GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT INTO EDUCATION

1.0 Introduction

Zimbabwe has made great successes in its massive expansion of the education system since 1980 when it attained political independence. The Government declared education a basic human right and has since allocated the largest percent of its national budget yearly to finance education. Zimbabwe views education as an investment in human capital. School enrolments and number of schools have continued to increase. For example, there was an increase of 12.8% from 3 124 318 pupils in government and non-government schools in 2006 who attended 6 475 schools to 3 525 910 pupils in 2010 who attended 7 973 schools. My Ministry has made a deliberate policy to have ECD A (3-4 year olds) and B (4-5 year olds) established at all primary schools. The high demand for education necessitated the establishment of non-formal education to cater for the education needs of those adults who may want to continue their education or who may have been deprived a chance to education.

Government, through my Ministry, alone would not meet the demand for education; hence, we have involved the private developers/partners to complement government efforts in the provision of education in the country.

My Ministry, through its 2011 – 2015 Strategic Plan, strives to restore the professional status of teachers, revitalizing learning quality and relevance of its integrated curriculum, restore and improve conditions of learning,

strengthen quality assurance and staff development, reinvigorating school and system governance management and financing, focus resources on all disadvantaged children and revitalize Sport, Arts and Culture.

Despite the economic challenges we have experienced in the last decade or so, I am pleased to share with you that our education system is on a recovery path. This has been made possible because of various interventions by our government, as well as the involvement of stakeholders and cooperating partners.

2.0 Status of Government Investment into Education

2.1 Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM)

The government has always been sensitive to the plight of the disadvantaged groups in society. During the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) era the Government put in place the Social Dimensions Fund (a social safety net) to cushion primary and secondary school children from disadvantaged families against the negative effects of the programme by paying for their school fees and levies to keep them in school. In 2001, the Government took a conscious decision to refine it into a more inclusive fund known as the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM). The new fund added the dimension of paying for examination fees for secondary school students. Grade 7 pupils (primary) do not pay examination fees to write their exams. However, the increase in the number of people living below the poverty datum line has tended to put a strain on the fund. Measures have been put in place to ensure that deserving indigent children are assisted by engaging the School Selection Committees that are community based.

2.2 Education Transition Fund (ETF)

My Ministry took the initiative to provide resources in schools especially text books and stationery starting with Primary schools. This initiative was in two phases. The first phase has seen every Primary school child getting text books in the four core subjects, namely, Shona/Ndebele, English, Mathematics and Environmental Science and basic stationery. The second phase will see every Secondary school child receiving text books for the six core subjects namely English, Shona/Ndebele, Mathematics, Science, History and Geography and stationery. This was made possible through engagement of key stakeholders like UNICEF, E.U and many others.

2.3 Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP)

My government has put in place a Public Sector Investment programme that ensures that children learn in conducive environment. Government, through this programme, provides funds for the construction of Government schools. Non-Government schools benefit from the Building Grant in AID in their construction efforts. This year one million US dollars (US\$1 million) has been put aside for this purpose.

2.4 Schools Rehabilitation Programme

My Government has embarked on rehabilitation of run down schools after the Economic melt down that saw our nation experiencing serious economic challenges which affected the maintenance of our schools. This year alone, the Government has set aside three million US dollars (US\$3 million) for the refurbishment of targeted schools. We are also getting assistance from cooperating partners.

2.5 Per Capita and Tuition grants

In Zimbabwe, all schools receive per capita and tuition grants according to their enrolments so that every child is supported by Government to access quality education. Schools in low density suburbs receive 25% while those in the high density suburbs receive 30% and the rural schools receive 45% of the vote. This is also in fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goal number two which aims to provide adequate services to children so that they have access to Primary education by 2015.

2.6 Child Friendly Schools (CFS)

My Ministry has embarked on the concept of the Child Friendly Schools model which aims to create a congenial, conducive and friendly learning environment in order to improve the quality of education. The model embraces a multi approach to the delivery of quality education which emanated from the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Children, which came into force on 2 September 1990, to which Zimbabwe is a signatory. It is a pathway to foster the progressive realization of children's rights to a quality education. According to UNICEF's Child Friendly School Manual "Fulfilling the education related MDG's", this requires not just getting all children into school, but making sure that all schools work in the best interest of the children entrusted to them. This entails providing safe and protective schools adequately staffed with trained teachers, equipped with adequate resources and graced with appropriate conditions for learning so that children enrolled in primary school are likely to continue, complete the full cycle and advance to

secondary school. My country has allowed the private sector to assist in the provision of education. We have a number of Trustee schools that are owned by the Private sector who augment Government efforts in the provision of quality education in Zimbabwe.

Education Management Information System (EMIS)

This is a system used for data identification, collection, processing, generation, dissemination and evaluation in order to strengthen the capacity of my Ministry to manage, plan and control the flow of information within the Ministry. It provides mechanisms to meet the increasing demand for information and the baseline data to generate performance indicators in the attainment of educational objectives and policies in setting targets for the education sector. We have embarked on this programme seriously in order to meet International standards by 2015.

2.7 Computerization Programme (ICT)

My government has embarked on the computerization programme to ensure that all our children are computer literate by 2015. Several schools have received computers from His Excellence the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe who has strongly challenged School Development Committees (SDCs/SDAs) to procure computers for their schools. The Ministry of Information and Technology is partnering with my Ministry in the provision of computers to all Provinces and Districts. The goal is to ultimately provide e-learning and e-governance. So far 20 schools have been identified and the programme will soon be launched.

2.8 Technical/Vocational Programmes in Schools

My Ministry has incorporated skills development into its curriculum in order to produce products that are required by the economy.

Through the policy circular P77 of 2006, the Ministry adopted for implementation in the secondary schools, a two-pathway education structure in line with the recommendations of the 1999 Presidential Commission of Enquiry into Education and Training. This entails the general/academic education pathway and the skills pathway, that is, business/commercial/technology/ technical- vocational education pathway. This is meant to cater for the learners' varying aptitudes, interests and abilities.

2.9 Supervision, Monitoring and Evaluation

My government has embarked on the provision of transport for the supervision of schools in the country to ensure that quality education is achieved. So far 59 vehicles have been purchased for our Districts in the ten Provinces. This is after realizing that mobility is crucial in supervision.

2.11 HIV and AIDS, Health and Life Skills Education

HIV and AIDS is a cross cutting issue. Zimbabwe established a National AIDS Council in 2001 and developed an AIDS policy to combat the scourge. The National Aids Council is a unique innovation where every employee whether they are in the Private Sector or Government Service contributes 3% of their basic monthly salary as AIDS levy. The Council is managed by a Board whose structures cascade down to provinces, districts, ward and village levels in order to service the needs of the vulnerable groups and pays schools fees for children whose parents have died of AIDS. The Council also plays a coordinating role in the implementation of AIDS

programmes in partnership with NGOs and other stakeholders. The Ministry has put in place a policy to have HIV and AIDS taught in schools from Grade 4 to Form 6 and is in the process of finalizing its HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan.

3.0 Challenges

- Providing adequate school and ICT infrastructure, qualified staff and teaching and learning materials especially for ECD and new settlements;
- Enhancing access to quality education by all;
- Labour migration and
- HIV and AIDS scourge and its impact on teachers, pupils and communities

4.0 Solutions

- More structured engagement of communities (SDCs) and development partners from the corporate world, UN agencies etc in general education programmes to complement government efforts;
- Increase involvement of stakeholder participation including Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) in the provision of teaching and learning materials and other services;
- Continuous review of the teachers' remunerations including allowances and conditions of service in line with the 1966 ILO recommendations on the status of teachers and

6.0 Conclusion

In spite of the challenges faced, the Government of Zimbabwe has demonstrated its commitment to promoting and facilitating the provision of high quality and relevant education for all, through increased access, retention and improved achievement in Early Childhood Development (ECD), Primary and Secondary Education, Life Long and Continuing Education and involvement of cooperating partners.