



EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND CRISES IN ZIMBABWE

Proposals on How to Foolproof the Public
Education Sector During Crises Periods

BY THE FEDERATION OF ZIMBABWE EDUCATORS' UNIONS (FOZEU)

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We thank the following Unions who came together to draft the education in emergencies and crises report.

1. Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe, ARTUZ
2. Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe, PTUZ
3. Professional Educators Union of Zimbabwe, PEUZ
4. Zimbabwe Democratic Teachers Union of Zimbabwe, ZDTU
5. Teachers Union of Zimbabwe, TUZ
6. Zimbabwe Rural Teachers Union, ZRTU

The other Unions have since left the FOZEU family but we appreciate their contributions towards this report.

We are heavily indebted to Maureen Sigauke who compiled this report with the assistance of Avoid Masiraha. The two managed to bring our ideas together and added more flesh from desktop research.

We hope the Zimbabwean government will adopt this report and sustain provision of education during seasons of crises and emergencies. We call on education stakeholders to join us to push for the adoption of this charter.

Obert Masaraure

FOZEU Interim Chairperson.

SECTION 1

1. Introduction

Zimbabwe is one of the Southern African countries that are prone to a variety of hazards, risks, crises and disasters of different categorizations and nature. The social, economic, environmental and political consequences of disasters are frequently complex. Disasters disrupt the vital social fabric of communities, economic activities, threaten livelihood and set back economic growth and development. As has been witnessed in the COVID19 pandemic, disasters and crises destroy and disrupt essential public services and infrastructure such health and education. It is therefore essential that disaster response activities should lay the foundations for the subsequent recovery of the affected population. Beyond responding to crisis events, it is equally important that communities and countries alike draw lessons from past disasters and be proactive on preparing for future crises and disasters based on an integrated multi-sectoral approach.

As has been the case world over, the COVID 19 pandemic - has ravished every facet of society in Zimbabwe in an unprecedented manner. Due to the mobility restrictions instituted in a bid to flatten the COVID Infection curve, the education sector has been hard hit with the closure of schools spanning close to a full school calendar year. The closures have forced government and other interested stakeholders to think alternative ways of upholding children's right to education which is universally applicable even during a crisis. Unfortunately, existent crevices within the education sector were exposed and left millions of children without accesses to their fundamental human right – Education. From an educators' viewpoint, alternatives for learning fostered have been impractical and unsafe in the least. As vaccination commenced signaling a positive stride towards managing the COVID pandemic, schools have resumed operations. As the Federation of Zimbabwe Educators Unions (FOZEU) representing eight teachers' unions, we believe that the time is ripe to have conversation on how to guard the education sector against the impact of future crises and disasters and ensure that teaching and learning continues during emergency situations. The need to protect, rebuild, and strengthen education systems as well as provide quality education to children everywhere should sit at the center of these discussions. Education should be explicitly listed as a priority in all revised Humanitarian Response Plans and response strategies.

As active and key proponents of Zimbabwe's education system, the teachers represented by a consortium of unions that make up FOZEU have drafted this paper to proffer aspirations and proposal for Education in Emergencies that can and should be considered by government and other stakeholders. This paper is based on the educator's expertise

and experience of the COVID pandemic and other past crises. This paper embodies FOZEU's belief in the fact that the pursuit of sustainable development should be founded on putting Education First at all times.

1.1. Defining Education, Disaster, Crises and Emergencies

Scholars of Disaster and Crisis Management often posit that there is a distinct difference between the terms disaster, crisis and emergency.

A disaster is a sudden, calamitous event that seriously disrupts the functioning of a community or society and causes human, material, and economic or environmental losses that exceed the community's or society's ability to cope using its own resources (International Federation of the Red Cross). The Civil Protection Unit in Zimbabwe adopted this definition in all its Disaster and Risk Management processes.

A crisis is a disruption that affects a life-sustaining system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense and its existential core.

Emergency is defined as a state in which normal procedures are suspended and extraordinary measures are taken to save lives, protect people and limit damage. Emergencies are usually unanticipated in terms of what exactly happens, when and where they take place. However, they can and should be planned for.

From the definitions stated above, it can be noted that the three terms have three similarities – unpredictability, devastating impacts on life sustaining systems and the urgent action required to reduce impact. For the purpose of this position paper, the terms will be used loosely and interchangeably with crisis used predominantly.

Emergency crises, in this position paper, refers to broad range of sudden circumstances and events that place children's access to education in jeopardy.

1.2. Typologies and Nature of Crises

The broad range of circumstances or events that threaten children's access to education fall under the following four categories: Health, Economic, Environmental and Political (HEEP)

- i. **Health** crises include epidemics and pandemics such as HIV/AIDs, Cholera and COVID19.
- ii. **Economic** – crises encompass severe upsets in any part of economic systems that alter social and life sustaining systems.
- iii. **Environmental** crises refer to natural disasters including hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts, and cyclones.
- iv. **Political** crises which include social unrest and violent conflict.

Crises or Disasters often manifest in 3 epochs – pre- crisis, in-crisis, and post-crisis. In each of these epochs, a continuum of crisis management mechanisms mainly encompasses recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction as illustrated in **Figure 1.1**.

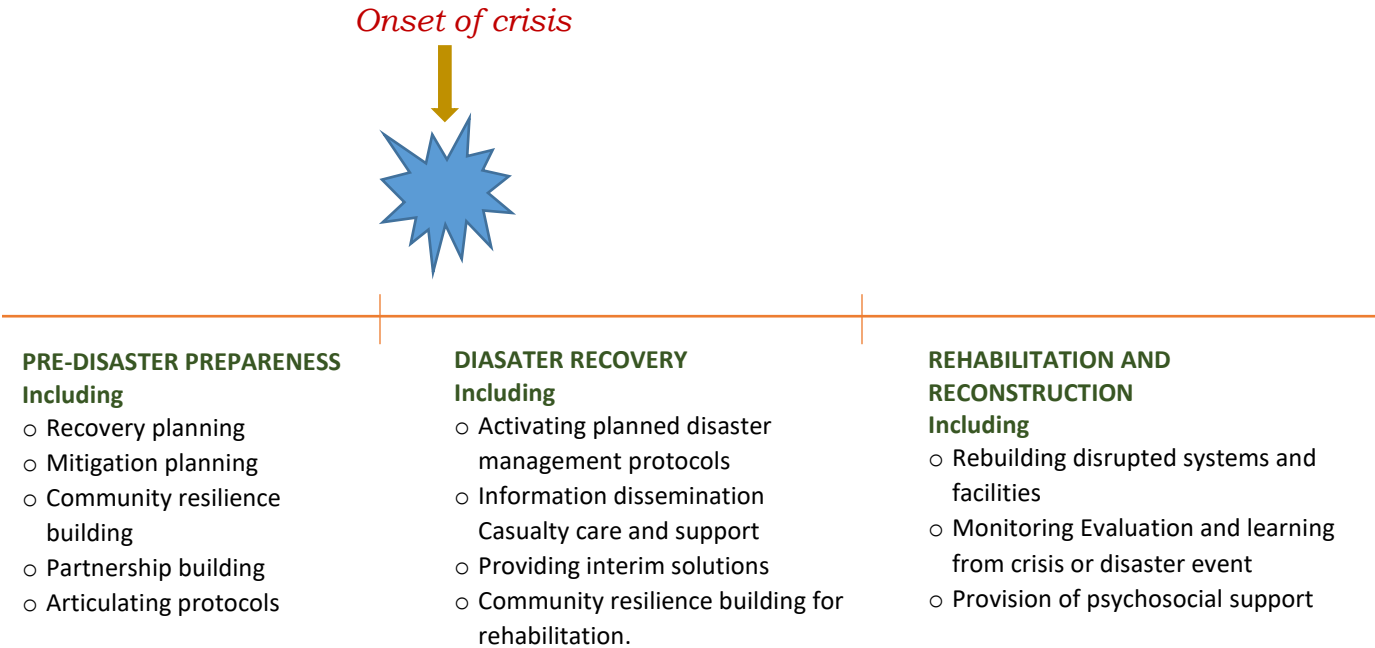
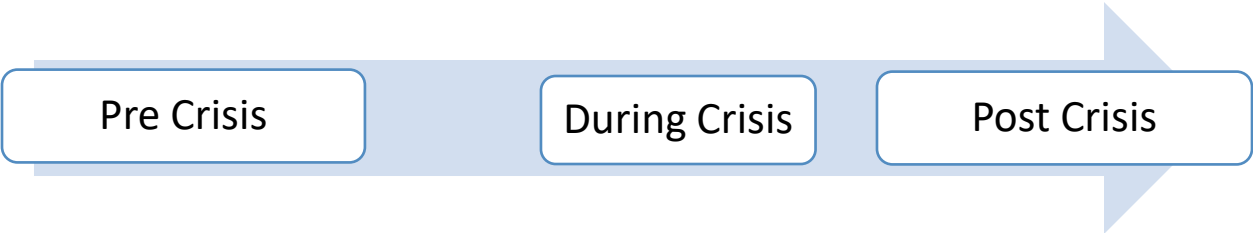


Figure 1.1: Epochs of Disaster Manifestation and Key Activities



1.3. Critical Stakeholders for Effective Public Education

Providing quality education to all is primarily the responsibility of national authorities, delegated to ministries of education and local education authorities. However, holistic learning includes many other stakeholders as outlined in **Figure 1.2**.

In the case of emergencies, crises and disasters, the involvement of other stakeholders is enhanced due to the need for localized recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction management mechanisms. In some emergencies or crisis, national authorities are often disabled from meeting their obligations. In such case, other stakeholders can play a critical role in ensuring that children's rights are upheld and applied even within crisis situations.

1.4. Impact of Crises on Education and Sustainable Development

Education and development are integrated themes for any nation's socio-economic, environmental, and political development. In the context of sustainable development, education is identified as both an enabler of development and a requisite indicator of sustainable development. Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for lifelong learning opportunities as espoused by SDG 4 enables upward socioeconomic mobility and is key to escaping poverty.

Emergencies, disasters, and crises, in all their forms, disrupt existing educational systems and impede children from accessing their right to education. Crises have a tendency of negating any progress realized in bridging the inequality gap between children of different genders from different social classes and geographical spaces thereby increasing vulnerabilities. In the case where the impact of the crisis leads to morbidity and major disruptions in life systems and livelihoods, extreme mental strain may be experienced by learners, educators and other stakeholders involved in education. From a cost viewpoint, crises exert pressure on national or local budgets and resources due to the fact that recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts come at a financial cost. Ultimately, crises regress sustainable development of communities and the nation as a whole. It is the acknowledgement of the short- and long-term effects and impacts of crisis that has necessitated the drafting of this paper.

SECTION 2

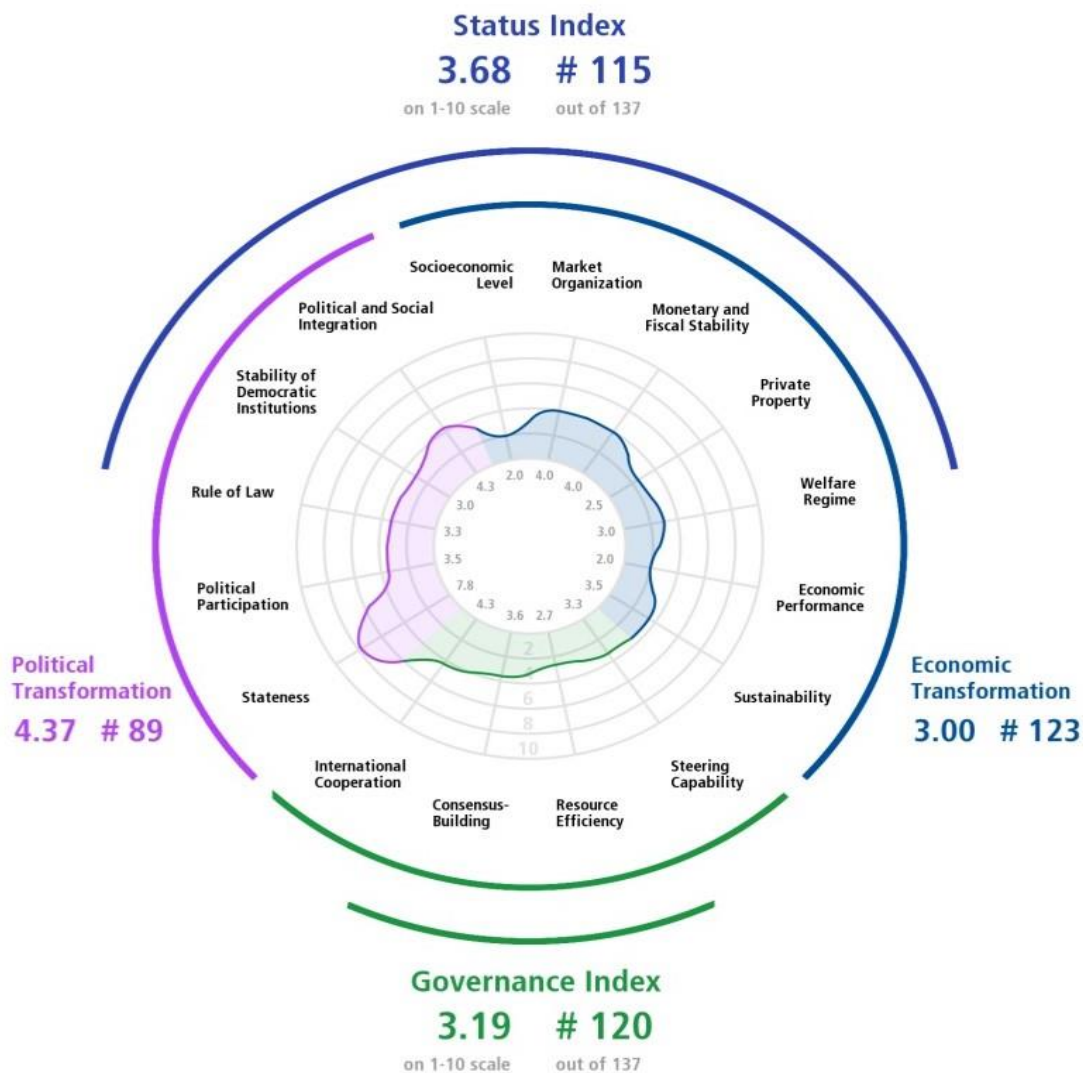
2.1 Zimbabwe's Political Economy

In 2020, the gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated to have contracted by 8% for a second year in a row as COVID-19 hampered economic recovery. The pandemic and its impacts disrupted livelihoods, especially in urban areas, and added 1.3 million to the extremely poor. Estimates suggest the number of extremely poor reached 7.9 million in 2020—almost 49% of the population. Surveys¹ indicate that nearly 500,000ⁱ households have at least one member who lost their job in 2020, causing many to fall into poverty and worsening the plight of the existing poor.

Wage earners in urban areas and the extreme poor were disproportionately affected by the pandemic, as their salaries were either cut or not received at all. Rural households rely less on wage employment and nonfarm (?) businesses therefore urban households suffered most economically. In both rural and urban areas. Households' loss of access to basic social services and deepening of negative coping strategies continues to undermine Zimbabwe's relatively high human capital and the pace and inclusivity of economic growth. Zimbabwe's economy is set to rebound by 2.9% in 2021. Expected bumper harvest and continuation of rule-based monetary policy are expected to stabilize food prices and improve food security. However, disruptions caused by the pandemic will continue to weigh on economic activity in Zimbabwe, limiting employment growth and improvements in living standards.

From a political viewpoint, Zimbabwe remains largely highly intolerant of basic rights, peaceful dissent, and free expression. In 2019 following the president's sudden announcement of a fuel price increase, security forces responded with lethal force, killing at least 17 people. In the months that followed, several civil society activists, political opposition leaders, and other critics of the government were arbitrarily arrested, abducted, beaten, or tortured. Nothing much has changed as Zimbabwe continued to be a polarized country where social dialogue is compromised and the respect of human rights such as freedom of expression are not respected.

Figure 2.1 summarizes Zimbabwe's political economy according to the Bertelsmann Transformation Index of 2020. The state of Zimbabwe's political economy has a direct bearing on the education sector and has affected efforts directed building a resilient education sector in the wake of crises.



2.2 Disaster Preparedness in Zimbabwe

Admittedly, human risk from all forms of hazards cannot be eliminated completely, but it can be reduced through systematic disaster risk reduction (DRR) approaches that can be scientifically applied for minimizing vulnerability and building resilience in nations through multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional measures. To mitigate and prepare for such hazards, the Government of Zimbabwe enacted the Civil Protection Act as disaster legislation and created several institutions such as the Department of Civil Protection which is charged with the coordination and management of disasters and hazards.

The Department of Civil Protection falls under the Ministry of Local Government, Public Works & National Housing. The Department of Civil Protection (DCP) administers the Civil Protection Act Chapter 10:06 of 1989. The key result area of the Department is Disaster Risk Management (DRM) which entails a spectrum of activities involving prevention, mitigation of disaster risks, preparedness planning, timely early warning, and response to rehabilitate affected elements. The mandate of DCP is overall coordination of Disaster Risk Management institutions drawn from the public and private sectors including development partners. An institutional arrangement at national, provincial, district and in a few areas at community level exists and is functional, albeit with capacity challenges (financial, human, material, and equipment).

BOX 1: Four Areas of work for the CPU

1. Preparedness Planning

- Develop preparedness plans to ensure optimal response.
- To design early warning mechanisms at all levels.
- To promote indigenous knowledge systems and documentation of same for posterity.
- To ensure communities are equipped with basic knowledge and skills to manage prevailing hazards.
- To develop preparedness plans at national, provincial, district, local authority, community, and strategic institutional levels.
- To conduct training exercises and lessons learnt reviews.

2. Capacity Building

- Ensure the attainment of optimal capacity for Disaster Risk Management.
- Develop and maintain a disaster risk management framework in line with international best practices.
- To strengthen coping capacities of the general public in relation to the country's risk profile
- To develop mechanisms to address the identified gaps.

3. Risk Reduction

Integration of disaster risk reduction into development for sustainability. To develop a national strategic disaster risk management framework and a mechanism for implementation of same

4. Transboundary Mitigation

- Mitigate against trans boundary disasters and plan for bilateral/multilateral interventions for major incidents.
- To identify and maintain an updated trans boundary risk profile.
- To conduct multilateral consultation on prevailing disaster risks.
- To develop requisite protocols and strengthen those that exist as and when necessary.

It can be concluded that Zimbabwe has a good policy framework on paper that provides guiding framework for disaster or crisis management. The strengths and limitations of this framework are as outlined in **Table 2.2**.

Strengths	Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Existence of the CPU and the CPU Act shows sensitivity and willingness to invest in DRM. ▪ Inclusion of different partners and stakeholders in the CPU brings diverse perspectives. ▪ Provisions for national, provincial and district CPU offices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ DRM is not supported by practices on the ground. ▪ In practice, DRM in Zimbabwe is more reactive than proactive. ▪ No specific sectoral integration of DRM systems into different sectors e.g., education ▪ Limited or inactive community participation in DRM ▪ Unavailability of dedicated and adequate resources to implement DRR programs. ▪ Centralization of power and resources ▪ Focuses more on natural hazards rather than vulnerability caused by economic and political factors

2.3 The State of Education in Zimbabwe and history of crises

Zimbabwe is not alien to crises and disasters - human and natural. **Table 2.1** gives a summary of natural disasters for the period 2015.

Table 2.1: Summary of Natural Disasters in Zimbabwe, 2015 - 2020

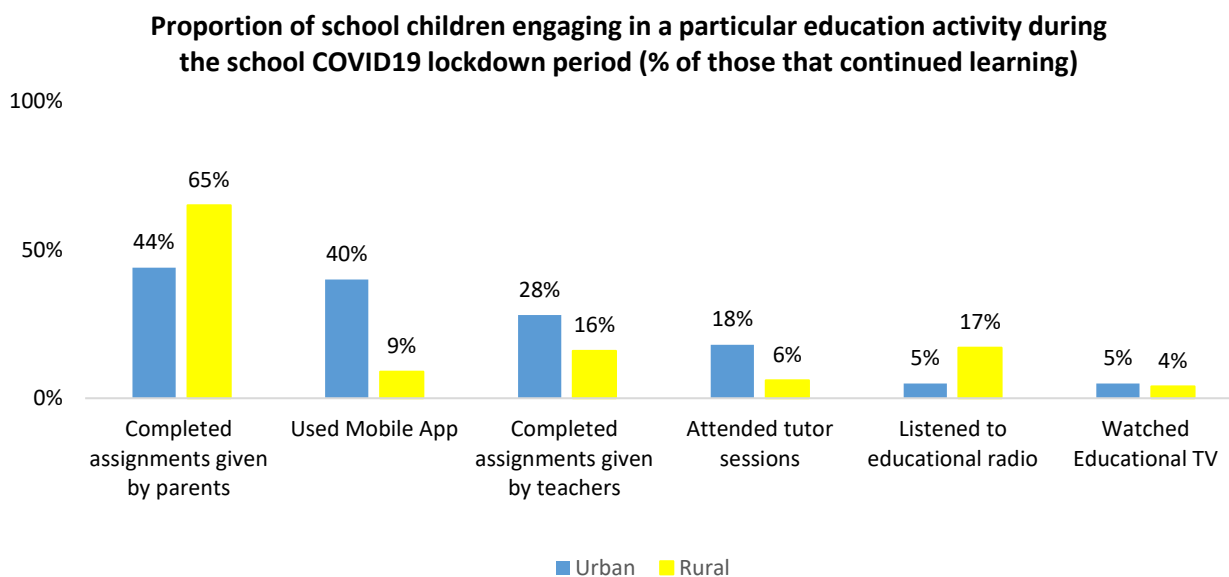
Disaster Type	Disaster subtype	Broad Categorization	Events Count	Year(s)
Epidemic	Bacterial disease (cholera)	Health crisis	1	September 2018 – March 2019
Storm	Convective storm, floods	Environmental Crisis	2	2015, 2016
Storm (Tropical Depression ex Dineo)	Tropical cyclone, slide	Environmental Crisis	1	February 2017
Epidemic	Viral disease (Typhoid)	Health crisis	1	2019
Flood	Flash flood	Environmental Crisis	1	
Storm (Cyclone Idai)	Extra tropical storm	Environmental Crisis	1	February – March 2019
Drought	Drought, Food shortage	Environmental Crisis	1	December 2019
Pandemic	Viral Disease COVID19	Health crisis	1	March 2020 to date

Source: Zimbabwe Education Sector Analysis (2020)

All listed crises including the economic crisis Zimbabwe of the past decade, have affected the education sector in different proportions. Cyclone Idai caused devastating infrastructural impact on schools and homes and left hundreds of children unable to access education. Zimbabwe has experienced periodic outbreaks of cholera and typhoid over the last decade which also affected the education sector and required a multi-sectoral approach to deal with, with the core of the problem being poor service delivery.

2.4 Remote Learning

When crisis or disasters strike, it is most often that physical in-class lessons and learning is disrupted. In the case of the Cyclone Idai, schools were destroyed forcing alternative thinking around educating children while efforts were directed towards rehabilitation and reconstruction. In the context of COVID19, schools across the country closed for close to a year in response to the growing number of COVID19 cases in the country. Resultantly, alternative and remote learning approaches had to be adopted to ensure that children continued learning. Some alternatives taken up in the case of the COVID19 pandemic as outlined in the Zimbabwe Education Cluster COVID Strategy (2020) include radio and TV programs, Digital and Online learning and the provision of supplementary learning materials. Access to remote learning amid school closures was limited in rural areas, especially for poor households. Less than 30% of school-going children in rural areas engaged in education and learning during pandemic-related school closures, compared with 70% for urban children². **Figure 2.3** illustrates how learners interfaced with the various alternatives during the global pandemic.



Source: [Monitoring COVID-19 Impact on Households in Zimbabwe, November 2020](#)

The COVID19 pandemic exposed a number of areas that needed attention to ensure maximized efficacy of remote learning initiatives. From **Figure 2.3**, the spatial inequality between rural and urban areas was evident in how different learners took up options available for alternative learning. Urban spaces are not homogeneous and exist in different social layers and classes. Learners' access to education is therefore layered along class lines. With prevalent urban poverty, some learners from vulnerable and poor

² Zimstat, Rapid PICES phone survey July 2020

families in the urban areas are and were unable to access continued and quality education over the duration of the COVID crisis. Access to remote learning, as viable alternative education platforms during emergencies, crisis, and disaster, faces the following challenges:

- i. Limited internet infrastructure and poor-quality internet coverage
- ii. Few available community radio stations for localized radio learning platforms
- iii. Lack of gadgets to support remote learning alternatives such as computers for e-learning, radios, and TV.
- iv. Spatial urban and rural inequalities over issues such as electricity supply, internet access etc.
- v. Lack of coordination and information over available options.
- vi. Limited teaching capacity and skills on the parent's part.
- vii. Lack of affordability of internet and therefore online learning.

From the COVID-19 experience and other natural hazards that had a direct and indirect bearing on physical in-class learning, there is need to foolproof the education sector and learners' right to education in any circumstance by ensuring that remote learning is feasible and practical.

2.5 Teacher Incapacitation

A consistent message from all teachers' unions in Zimbabwe in the 2020 has been that of incapacitation. The Unions declared incapacitation when the government reduced their salary from US\$520-US\$550 in October 2018 to less than US\$40 by September 2020. Even though the government has awarded civil servants salary increases in April 2021, the salaries allotted fall short of the poverty datum line. Consequently, teachers have not been operating at full capacity. Teachers' unions unanimously agree that only through meaningful engagement, improved salaries, eradication of discrimination among government workers, assurance of health and safety of teachers and pupils during the COVID-19 period, and harmonization of labour laws will teachers' return to full function in schools.

SECTION 3

This section outlines FOZEU aspirations that should ensure that education continues in the times of crises or disasters. Under each aspiration is a list of goals that

Aspiration #1: Enabling Environment for Education in Emergencies

Building on the deficiencies related to the policy environment, infrastructural gaps and Zimbabwe's political economy, FOZEU recommends that following actions among others:

- a. Realignment and reformation of public service labour laws and domestication of ILO conventions related to public service employees
- b. Government to religiously follow laws, and not cherry-pick what laws it wants to align and those it doesn't want to align with the constitution.

Aspiration #2: Inclusive Remote Learning Alternatives

Recognizing the glaring inequalities that exist within Zimbabwe that impede access to education and internet connectivity, FOZEU recommends that following actions among others:

- a. The development of a Remote Learning Guiding Framework.
- b. Popularizing remote learning alternatives available to the citizens of Zimbabwe.
- c. Expanding internet infrastructure for expanded coverage.
- d. Reducing cost of internet service for learning purposes.
- e. Expedite licensing for community radio stations.
- f. Resuscitating mobile libraries to provide learning resources to communities.
- g. Upgrading Educators' skills on ICT and remote learning.

Aspiration #3: Capacitated Educators for Education in Emergencies

Appreciating that the teacher is a critical stakeholder for sustainable education during and beyond crises, emergencies and disasters, FOZEU recommends that following actions among others:

- a. Sustainable remuneration of the teacher
- b. Enable teacher professional development.
- c. Review of the grading system and other related employment conditions
- d. Establishment of a Teacher Professional Council (TPC)
- e. Maintaining a realistic teacher-pupil ratio

Aspiration #4: Learner Support Systems for Continued Learning

Cognisant of the fact that during crises, teacher-student in-class interaction is disrupted making it necessary for other forms of support systems to be strengthened, FOZEU recommends that following actions among others:

- a. Parental Support

- Community Remote Learning Training
- Reduction in cost of internet data'
- Resuscitation of community and mobile libraries
-
- b. Civil Society Support
 - Supporting Community Based Organizations as implementing partners for the Education in Emergencies
 -
- c. Private Sector Support
- d. – Private companies to contribute to rolling out of cheaper ICT infrastructure to =r sponsorship of schools and communities to reduce the cost of data.

SECTION 4

The aspirations outlined in Section 3 need to be coordinated in a concerted and systematic manner that subscribes to the principles of Disaster Risk Management. This section explains two FOZEU proposals on how disaster risk management can be integrated into the education sector.

4.1. Proposal 1: Sector Specific Disaster or Crises Management Approach

While there is an appreciation of the CPU and the DRM mechanism in place at a national level, FOZEU strongly proposes that DRM be integrated into different sectors e.g. the education sector. Integration will entail that each sector can come up with contextualized and sector specific DRM mechanisms, structures and protocols. In the education sector contextualizing DRM responses will mean that looking at education in emergencies will be the central issue of discussion. The sector specific approach benefits the sector and the learners who are at its core in that crisis recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction will be faster resulting in lesser negative effects due to the localized responses.

4.2. Proposal 2: Education in Emergency Committees

Disaster management in the education sector faces challenges of coordination by both school authorities and the communities surrounding the school. The lack of coordination starts at the top and reverberates down to individual public schools creating challenges in building capacity for schools during emergencies. There are several stakeholders that come into play in building resilient education systems. These stakeholders need to be coordinated and their efforts combined to build a strong response and recovery to crises. There is therefore need for emergency committees to coordinate stakeholders towards support of the education sector during emergency periods. The committees will be localized and specific to a school with membership from the school, the community, the students, the school development committee, private sector, and the traditional and political leadership. Mindful of the existence of District Civil Protection Committees (DCPUs), these committees must exist to complement existing efforts but more importantly with a sole focus of strengthening capacity of public schools to respond and recover from the impacts of various emergencies.

The specific roles of these committees are outlined as follows:

- To mobilize resources and prudently disburse towards the needs of the school.
- To scope crises and raise alarm to ensure prevention and reduction of impact.
- To coordinate stakeholders towards funding and response strategies.
- To raise awareness and educate the learner, the teacher, and the community on education emergencies.

SECTION 5

For the aspirations and proposals outlined in Section 3 and 4 to transition to reality, the different stakeholders involved holistically in preserving and promoting the right to education need to play different, distinct and important roles.

5.1. Role of the State and Education Authorities

Education provision in all circumstances including during crisis remains the state's primary function. While the Zimbabwean government has made commendable efforts to respond to disasters in their broad sense through the creation of the Civil Protection Unit (CPU) based on the Civil Protection Act of 2001, there are however many gaps that still exist in the education sector's response to disasters. These gaps demands that the State acts to save education during emergencies such as floods, hunger, and the new emerging emergences as COVID19. FOZEU identifies the following to be chief of the role the Zimbabwean government can play in ensuring education in Emergencies.

The Zimbabwean government's role include:

- i. To exhibit political willingness toward disaster response and recovery in the education sector beyond policy rhetoric.
- ii. To depoliticize disaster response, recovery and management and facilitate for devolved multi-stakeholder engagement and participation during emergencies.
- iii. To integrate disaster management into different sectors and to functionalize disaster response and management structures at different levels
- iv. To create an enabling political and socioeconomic environment that supports effective disaster management in the education sector and respect the right to education and other fundamental human and labour rights.
- v. Improved networking at national and regional level.
- vi. The State through relevant line Ministries and government agencies, should work with communities and adopt the model of treating communities as the pillars of managing disasters.

This call is in line with the Dakar World Forum which identified humanitarian emergencies as major obstacles to education and the need for governments to show commitment in protection of the education system from such emergencies.

5.2. The Role of Educators and Teachers' Unions & Associations

As a Federation, FOZEU recognizes the pivotal role teachers, through their various unions and associations, can play in ensuring that learners across Zimbabwe continue accessing education during times of crises. Educators can play three main roles:

i. Advocacy

Unions have an advocacy role which traditionally has been a defining feature of teachers' unions. They raise issues concerning the welfare of teachers and the deficiencies in the education sector including the lack of infrastructure and the working conditions of

teachers. The role remains key and much more important during emergencies where capacity of teaching staff becomes important. They articulate the needs of the teachers who in the face of emergencies are ordinarily on the frontline to ensure that education exists.

ii. Advisory role

Teachers Unions also play a key role in advising government and influencing policy through their advocacy mechanisms. They are hands-on and privier to the gaps posed by emergencies hence they hold a concrete *locus standi* to advise government and to propose recommendations for better education during crisis periods.

iii. Expert Innovative Thinking

The Unions have an equally important role to discover new ways of teaching to adapt to emergencies and engage stakeholders in support of such initiatives. In Kosovo, the post conflict recovery teachers Unions play a key role in drafting creating strategies for post conflict education system. In the face of

5.3. The Role of Civil Society and Traditional Leadership

The civil society including churches can play a key role in education in emergencies both as an independent stakeholder and through cooperation with other stakeholders. At the Education Forum in Dakar, governments identified the civil society as a key partner in the designing and implementation of education policies that guarantee education for all. The operation of the civil society however is dependent on free environment which values multiple voices.

i. Education of the communities.

The civil society has a role to educate communities on impending disasters and to amplify voices of the voiceless. Zimbabwe has in the past year witnessed ravaging impacts of the COVID19 in the education sector. The response of the state to introduce remote learning as a coping strategy was constrained on many fronts. The greater population of students could not access remote learning due to challenges related to affordability of the internet, access to the internet and geographical location. Such context demands the civil society to raise awareness and provide alternative ways on how educations authorities can cope with emergencies.

ii. Advocacy and holding the government to account.

The major role of the civil society traditionally is to act as a watch-dog to the state, and to hold to account authorities in line with their responsibilities and in protection of the citizens. In emergencies the civil society has a role to oversee how the state and responsible authorities are operating and protect citizens. Emergencies come with

disbursements of funds for various education commitments, and it is the duty of the civil society to raise alarm on corrupt issues. The recent allegations of COVID19 funds by individuals at various levels, provides for the need by the civil society to ensure that funding for education in emergencies including allowances for teachers, funding for infrastructure at schools etc. is guarded against misuse and abuse.

5.4. The Role of Traditional and Community leadership

Part of the emergencies we have seen in the past is political violence mostly during elections periods. During such emergencies learning is disrupted and schools used as political bases. The violence disrupts learning process and directly affects teaching staff and learners at various levels. Traditional and community leaders become a key important stakeholder in ensuring that schools are safe spaces for the learners and the teaching staff. These leaders also play a key role in raising awareness and coordinating communities to support their schools and act to safeguard them against disruptive emergencies and building community resilience.

5.5. The Role of the Media

The media plays a key role in disaster management and more importantly in saving education during emergencies. It forges a linkage between authorities and the public and plays a key role in information dissemination. Notably the media is essential in raising awareness to the communities, the learners, and the teachers on the state of the disaster and coping mechanisms. The recent COVID19 crisis has seen gaps in information dissemination particularly in the remote places of the country. Students were instructed to stay at home while teachers were forced by circumstances to quickly adapt and adopt without much preparation for remote learning. In such circumstances the media in all its forms has a role to give information to the learners on the way forward and the prevalence rate in different places. It has a role to influence public action and government policy by providing evidence-based information.

5.6. Private Sector Involvement

The private sector has always been an important stakeholder in disaster management for its collaborative and supporting role. In the education sector the private sector has a role to collaborate with government in funding of various requirements during emergencies but also in the recovery period. The private sector across the globe collaborates with affected communities to provide financial support. In the face of COVID19 the private sector retains the role to support the establishment of proper infrastructure for remote learning, and COVID19 toolkits particularly in rural communities and low-income urban areas.

SECTION 6

6.1. Cross Cutting Issues

In advancing better education during emergencies, efforts are guided by cardinal pillars of human rights, gender equality, inclusion, and the need to preserve the environment. The thinking around improving education during crisis period does not exist in vacuum, it fits into the daily issues that affect both learners, the teaching staff and the broader enabling environment.

Gender Equality

During a crisis, male and female scholars are impacted disproportionately with the latter bearing the most brunt due to the remnants of patriarchy. Chances of the girl child falling prey to social ills such as sexual abuse, forced marriage and unwanted pregnancies during a crisis are very high. Post-crisis, the girl child is more likely to not return to school than the boy child. Noting these gender inequality backdrops in an era of inclusive and equitable sustainable development, FOZEU strongly proposes that all actions and interventions be principled on ensuring gender equality in relation to access to education and any other facets.

Respect for human rights

Fundamental human rights must be upheld and respected even during periods of crisis and disaster. Guided by the Constitution of Zimbabwe and various other international documents, FOZEU asserts that the respect of human rights as a key pillar in ensuring the growth of the education sector and strengthening it during emergencies. Respect of human rights goes beyond constitutional provisions to ensuring the practical respect of such rights as enshrined in the constitution. The right to association, decent wages, freedom of expression and movement are some of the basic rights that are commonly trembled upon and more so during emergencies. In managing crisis, all social groups must live free of political violence and intimidation. The respect of the rights of all citizens particularly those of learners and teachers remains a key ingredient to building a strong education sector that can resist various shocks.

Equity and Inclusion

A divide continues to exist between groups in the country in terms of their access, quality, and infrastructure endowment of education facilities. In many rural schools, infrastructure for learning purposes is poor and their access to learning materials incredibly low. School coverage is high in urban areas and lower in the rural areas where students still walk longer distances to get to schools. Rural and most schools in low-income urban areas still lack the appropriate infrastructure to cater for the disabled learners and teaching staff.

FOZEU is resolute in calling for commitment to the call for inclusion and equity among learners and to close spatial disparities and gaps by geographical location or social class.

Fiscal Integrity

Noting the history of public finance mismanagement during crises and disaster periods in Zimbabwe and across the globe, FOZEU is unwavering in calling for the integration of fiscal integrity in all processes involved in ensuring Education in Emergencies. Guided by the provisions of Chapter 17 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe on Public Finance Management, all resources mobilized and funds administered to support disaster recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction in all sectors should be handled with transparency. FOZEU lauds the adequacy of the Public Finance Management constitutional provisions and calls that these provisions be adhered to.

6.2. Guiding Principles

In the context of Education in Emergencies, FOZEU proposes a consolidation and contextualization of the CPU guiding principles to the education sector. The Federation therefore proposes that the following 5 principles to guide all interventions employed within the education sector in times of emergency, crises and disasters.

- i. Learner-centric approach** – at the center and core of all interventions should be the learner and the respect of the child’s right to education
- ii. Responsiveness** – all interventions and actions must be discharged in a coordinated, timely and organized manner at all levels.
- iii. Transparency & accountability** - ensuring that information that can be used to measure performance and to guard against any possible misuse of powers is available at all times. This helps in holding all stakeholders accountable for their actions.
- iv. Collaboration & Partnerships** – effectively fool proofing the education sector from adverse impacts of disasters and crisis is premised on multi-stakeholder collaboration and partnerships founded on candid social dialogue.
- v. Innovativeness** – emergency situations require new and creative ways of embracing new realities and other enablers such as technology, at all levels, to mitigate against the negative impacts of crises and disasters.

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