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Key figures

- **853,032** learners (ECD to Grade 7, ages 3 to 12) targeted under the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) through Education in Emergency support across 33 districts with severe needs.
- **3.5 Million** learners are currently affected under the COVID-19 pandemic. The cluster is targeting to reach these learners with various activities to address their needs.
- **105,252** people have benefitted from activities related to the **HRP** and **398,023** people have benefitted from **COVID-19 related activities** as of **August 2020**.
- Cluster Partners are appealing for **US \$41 Million** through the **Humanitarian Response Plan 2020** and **US \$10.26 Million** to meet the emergent needs outlined in the **COVID-19 Addendum**.
- **20** operational partners within the cluster have planned, ongoing or completed activities.

Humanitarian needs

- The education system in Zimbabwe was already stretched before the COVID-19 pandemic as a result of multiple crises, including the impact of Cyclone Idai, which struck Zimbabwe in March 2019, , the economic crisis coupled with hyperinflation and the ongoing drought. Before the onset of the COVID-19 epidemic, estimates by the Education Cluster were that at least 1.2 million out of more than 3.4 million (about 35 per cent) children of school going age (3 to 12 years), would need emergency and specialized education services in 2020. This includes more than **853,000** children in acute need, such as: children not enrolled in school; orphans and other vulnerable children (OCV), including children with disabilities and children living with HIV; and those in need of school feeding.
- The combined effect of the humanitarian crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic has far-reaching implications for the demand and supply of education services. While Zimbabwe closed schools on March 24, 2020 to contain the spread of COVID-19 and to protect school populations, school closures have disrupted the education of more than 4.6 million children, with adverse impacts on the protection and wellbeing of children as well as their readiness for school, attendance and participation in learning.
- The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) successfully conducted June national examinations for Forms 4 and Form 6 from June 30, 2020 to July 23. However, the planned reopening of schools, which was originally scheduled for 28 July 2020, was postponed indefinitely. In August 2020, Cabinet announced re-opening of schools for examination classes (Grade 7, Form 4 and Form 6) as follows: September 14, 2020 for those sitting for the Cambridge examinations and September 28, 2020 for classes scheduled to sit for local Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC) examinations. Local ZIMSEC examinations are expected to begin on December 1, 2020. While the MoPSE continues to consult widely on the reopening of schools, there has been no announcement for the rest of the non-examination classes.
- While schools are expected to reopen for examination classes, school children have missed a whole school term (about 92 days) of teaching and learning, with serious implications for their well-being and academic growth. The prolonged school closures are likely to have a major negative effect on children's learning, physical, social and mental health and well-being; threatening hard-won educational achievements for years to come. Prolonged school closures will also likely exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and inequalities among children, especially girls, children with disabilities, those in rural

areas, orphans and vulnerable children, as well as those from poor households and fragile families. School closures also have the potential to widen learning disparities and increase the risk of some learners permanently dropping out of school.

- While the MoPSE is prioritizing the health and well-being of learners, teachers, staff and school communities, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted both the health and economic systems. To add to these challenges, schools, which traditionally rely on user fees to fund their daily operations, will likely be resource constrained. Most parents will most likely be unable to pay school fees because most rural and urban households are experiencing economic hardships induced by COVID-19-induced economic shocks. Ensuring that all the pre-conditions for the safe re-opening of schools, including infection prevention and control measures, the provision of hygiene facilities and personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as adherence to physical spacing, and social distancing considerations in a context of increasing cases loads and a fragile economic context also represents significant risks. Without a well-resourced education and health systems, reopening schools remains a significant challenge. At the same time, protecting the right of every child to learn has never been more urgent.
- The cluster is targeting **3.5 million** learners at ECD to secondary school level through prioritization of activities.

Humanitarian response

- As of the end of **September 2020**, a total of **139,606** people have benefited from various activities implemented by the cluster partners as part of the **Humanitarian Response Plan 2020**.
- A total of **846,181** people have benefited from COVID-19 related activities linked to the overall Zimbabwe Education Sector Preparedness and Response Strategy and the Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19 addendum for the period of March to September 2020. In addition, various Education in Emergencies (EiE) partners are implementing the following activities across the country as part of efforts to respond to and combat the impact of the **COVID-19 pandemic**:
- **UNICEF** continues to provide technical and support to the MoPSE to develop and implement key response activities. In the area of **Alternative Learning**, UNICEF provided technical and financial support toward the development of radio lessons. To date, 646 radio lessons have been developed with 520 lessons broadcasted. In the area of **Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)**, UNICEF provided \$3,000 each to about 657 schools to support Water, Sanitation and Hygiene WASH rehabilitation activities in schools. UNICEF through the Zimbabwe Idai Recovery Project (ZIRP) aims to procure and distribute EIE supplies, teaching and learning materials to 133 affected schools (106 primary schools and 27 schools) in the 8 cyclone-affected districts. In the reporting period, UNICEF distributed 66 ECD kits, 71 School-in-a-box kits, 43 recreational kits and 29 tents to 24 schools in Bikita and Gutu district. The supplies will benefit 12,371 learners (6,242 males and 6,129 females).
- **Plan International Zimbabwe (PIZ)** reached out to 495 Adolescent girls through dissemination of COVID-19 bulk messages aimed at enhancing safety and protection of learners enrolled under “SAGE” NFE education programme being implemented across 11 districts. PIZ also continues to facilitate Risk Communication and PSAs on ZTV to bolster awareness of COVID-19 amongst learners. As part of Humanitarian Response Planning (HRP) 2020, six district-level Training of Trainers workshops were conducted to strengthen safeguarding among 294 Community Volunteers facilitating “SAGE” NFE programme in 6 districts namely: Bulilima, Imbizo, Khami, Mutare Rural, Mutasa and Reigate. In area of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, PIZ also completed drilling of 5 boreholes at 1 secondary and 4 primary schools affected by Cyclone Idai in Chipinge district. This initiative, which was aimed augmenting Government’s capacity to provide safe drinking water and complement re-opening of schools, will benefit 1,157 boys and 1,212 girls in those schools.
- **UNHCR** through its partner, Terre des Hommes-Italy, distributed 500 and 300 single student desks and chairs to the primary and secondary schools, respectively, in Tongogara Refugee Camp. The desks will promote social distancing as an infection control measure against COVID-19. World Vision, the WASH partner disinfected classrooms and public spaces at both the refugee primary and secondary schools prior to the re-opening of schools to further enhance infection control measures.

- **World Vision Zimbabwe** produced 11,000 washable cloth face masks through the Education Cannot Wait (ECW) grant. These masks have a key COVID message " Mask Up- COVID 19 is real" were distributed to vulnerable school children and School Health Coordinators.
- **Higherlife Foundation** continued with National Hand Washing and COVID-19 Education campaign. To date, HF has trained 213,057 people in Beitbridge, Mangwe, Chegutu, Harare and Bulawayo as part of the campaign. In addition, 126 Sanitation Ambassadors were to facilitate the COVID-19 Education campaign trained in the 5 districts.
- **Catholic Relief Services (CRS)** has reached 3,765 Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) virtually, with psychosocial support facilitated by CBT therapists. CRS has provided 2,698 adolescent girls and young women with mensural hygiene messages and provided 11,202 OVCs with textbooks in the 9 districts of Bulawayo, Matobo, Lupane, Insiza, Nkayi, Gweru, Harare, Guruve and Mazowe. In order to address the challenge of learners dropping out of school due to fees, CRS has also provided school fees support to 960 Grade 7 learners 1,623 learners in Form 4 and and 151 Form 6 leaners- all of who will be sitting for their national examinations; .
- **DanChurch Aid (DCA)** with funding from ECHO is supporting 3,000 primary school learners in Mabvuku and Tafara, Mzilikazi and Reigate and Harare South with school fees and stationery support for three terms. Each learner will receive USD10.00 per term for school fees and stationery. DCA is currently conducting verifications to avoid duplication of services with several other school fees payment programmes within the schools. DCA will be distributing PPEs to schools hosting the learners benefitting from the current support.
- **Mavambo Orphan Care** through USAID support implemented the Mavambo Children Vana (MCV) project in Harare and Goromonzi. For the reporting period, Mavambo paid school levies for 281(201 female and 80 male) OVCs through the project. Furthermore, the project supported the dissemination of key messages through SMS/text to 15,758 (11,519 female and 4239 male) OVCs. A total of 2,437(1,628 female and 809 male) OVCs were reached through distribution of learning materials for learning outside of school/at home.
- **The Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI)** monitored the preparedness of schools to reopen in Mashonaland West. There is shortage of PPE and running water however schools have improvised WASH facilities. On 29th of September ECOZI held its 3rd national coordination with the PPC on Education, ECOZI members and MOPSE and made recommendations for the #SAFELYBACKTOSCHOOL CAMPAIGN.
- **CARE International** through the IGATE project distributed study guides to support continuous learning. Specifically, CARE distributed 342 primary learning materials, 459 secondary learning materials and 241 Community Based Education learning materials in Chivi and Mberenga districts. CARE conducted the START4Girls project inception meetings attended by 40 participants from relevant government line ministries in Buhera and Mutare districts. The START4Girls is a new 4-year project funded by Global Affairs Canada to supporting education learning outcomes (attendance, retention, completion, transition and training) by adolescent girls and young women, including those with disabilities, within, across and beyond educational learning pathways in vulnerable communities of Zimbabwe.
- **Save the Children** conducted infrastructural assessment for a total of 100 school in Bikita, Zaka, Chipinge and Chimanimani districts whereby scheme of works were completed, and the procurement process has commenced. A gender assessment exercise is currently been undertaken in Bikita, Zaka, Chipinge, Chimanimani and Mutare. The organization has also completed registrations and preparations to receive non-food items for the 139 schools in 6 districts this will reach 54 000 children.
- **Terre des Hommes Italia in Zimbabwe (TDH)** with funding from UNHCR and ECHO is supporting alternative learning for Grade 7s and Form 4s. TDH managed to reach 69 (35M; 34F) form 4 learners and 243 (118M; 125F) grade 7 learners with home study packs in Tongogara Refugee Camp in Chipinge. TDH procured 3,740 masks for vulnerable children, 165 handwashing facilities, 740 face shields for teachers. The organization is currently in the process of constructing and rehabilitating infrastructure (including 30 latrines) in 40 schools that were affected by Cyclone Idai in Chipinge and Chimanimani

Gaps and constraints

- Inadequate Funding to address the educational and protection needs induced by COVID-19:** Despite numerous efforts, funding remains a challenge in the fight against COVID-19. To date, the cluster has only received 15% of its funding requests to address to prioritized critical needs, including the provision of adequate water, soap and thermometers to enhance IPC measures in schools, teaching and learning materials to ensure the continuous learning and prepare for the reopening of schools.
- Teacher Mass Action:** Since the announcement of the reopening of schools, teachers' unions have called for mass strikes citing incapacitation- lack of money for bus fares, food and other basic needs-to return to work. This mass action has the overall impact of affecting the response to COVID-19 when children return to school.
- Unmet Needs for marginalized learners:** While the Cluster has made significant progress in promoting continuous access to education, through the provision of materials and the development of radio lessons, the cluster has not been able to meet the learning needs of all children, especially children with disabilities, those living in the most remote areas without access to radio signals and children from poor households. These children continue to have unmet learning needs in part because of shortages of teaching and learning materials at home. To add to the challenge, the worsening food insecurity in most poor households represents a significant challenge, which has the potential to contribute to dropping out school.
- Reduced mobility and access to technology for remote working:** The Government, through the Public Service Commission (PSC) directed that only 15 percent must be at their workstations in Ministries. This directive, together with the lockdown regulations, have reduced the availability of staff from both partners and Government, with adverse implications for the implementation of response activities. To add to the challenge, staff are facing resource and technical constraints such as lack of computers and poor connection to mobile networks to enable them to work remotely and respond to the needs of learners.
- Macro-economic constraints:** Zimbabwe's fragile economy represents the greatest challenge in the fight against COVID-19. Economic decline has exacerbated the delivery of critical services such as health and the provision of water, which are critical ensuring the prevention of COVID-19. The rapidly depreciating local currency is forcing service providers to increase their prices, with negative implications for preparedness efforts as goods and services are rising each week. Poor public service delivery, and especially the shortage of medical personnel, continues to undermine the confidence of parents in efforts to reopen schools. While most parents are unable to buy learning materials to support learners at home or pay fees to support preparations for the reopening schools, schools face an increased financial burden to implement all the recommended measures to mitigate against the spread of the disease. Similarly, partners also face financial resource constraints to respond to the urgent and emergent
- The relegation of education to a secondary national COVID-19 priority:** Zimbabwe has prioritized critical needs such as health, water and sanitation, above all other considerations. The beliefs that education is not lifesaving, that schools are for academics, which can be postponed, has left many children vulnerable, unprotected and exposed to risks like family violence and exploitation. To add to the challenge, fiscal constraints and resource challenges mean that the education of children at home, is not receiving adequate national resources. This represents a great constraint in response efforts, to detriment of the educational needs of children.

Coordination

- The cluster conducts weekly coordination meetings **every Tuesday** from **1430Hrs to 1530Hrs**. The Cluster has also established WhatsApp groups to ensure regular communication and collaboration around response plans.
- Partners have continued to convene virtual meetings every week, to discuss and address issues related to the proposed response. The cluster established Technical Working Groups continues efforts to operationalize the COVID-19 Strategy. These TWGs meet regularly to discuss technical issues and provide updates to the larger weekly cluster meetings on WhatsApp.

- Partners encouraged to visit the cluster webpage on Humanitarian Response to access latest products and resources shared in relation to HRP and COVID-19 Response. Please access the webpage using the following link: [ZIM Education Cluster HR Info Webpage](https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/zimbabwe/education).

Pictures from the Field:



UNICEF: School Reopening School Visits for both primary and secondary school in Mutasa District with support from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education at the district.