Zimbabwe Education Cluster
Humanitarian Response & COVID-19 Sitrep: 11 June 2020

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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 and targeted under the COVID-19 pandemic. The cluster is targeting to reach them with various activities to address their needs.
- **63,325** people have been reached with HRP related activities with **243,670** people being reached with COVID-19 related activities as of May 2020.
- The cluster is appealing for **US $41 Million** through the Humanitarian Response Plan 2020 and **US $11.5 Million** through the newly launched COVID-19 Addendum.
- **20** operational partners within the cluster with activities planned, ongoing or completed.

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 last year, 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 of the more than 3.4 million children of school going age (3 to 12 years), at least 1.2 million (35 per cent), 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 is expected to have 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. Prolonged school closures are likely to have a major and negative affect 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 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.
- The MoPSE is considering and announced plans to reopen schools in a phased approach, starting with final year classes (Grade 7, Form 4 and 6) to enable students to sit for national examinations. While school closures have increased the risk of some learners permanently dropping out of school, opening schools in a context of increasing cases loads and without a well-resourced health response also represents major health risks for children, teachers and school communities.
To add to these challenges, schools, which traditionally fund their daily operations from user fees will likely be resource-constrained because of the inability of parents to pay school fees and the increased burden of operating schools.

- The cluster is targeting **3.5 million** learners in early childhood education, primary level and secondary level through prioritization of activities.

**Humanitarian response**

- As of end of May 2020, a total of **63,325** people have benefited from various activities implemented by cluster partners as part of the Humanitarian Response Plan of 2020.

- A total of **243,670** people have benefited from COVID-19 related activities related to the overall education cluster strategy and the HRP COVID-19 addendum.

- **UNICEF** provided financial and technical support to the MoPSE to help develop radio lessons and cover the cost of broadcasting lessons once and other community radio stations, including Khulumani radio station, National FM, Radio Zimbabwe, Classic 263 and Power FM Radio in both English and indigenous languages. In addition, UNICEF has distributed a cumulative 49,269 books (ECD story Books and My Story Workbook for Children) to benefit 11,582 children (5,688 boys and 5,894 girls) in six districts (Binga, Kariba, Mwenezi, Insiza Gokwe North, and Zvimb). Some of these books are being translated into Braille for distribution, together assistive devices, for Children with Disabilities. For the reporting period, UNICEF also supported the printing and distribution of posters to raise awareness on COVID-19. As the epidemic continues, UNICEF is currently procuring hygiene kits for 3,773 schools in addition to cooking and serving utensils for 100 schools., with modification of ECD books into braille and distribution of assistive CWDs.

- **Save the Children** is supporting distant learning outreaches to enable vulnerable children to continue learning during the crisis. To this end, Save The Children has reached 4,000 boys and girls from the targeted 20,000 in Chitungwiza and Epworth with mobile awareness programming. A total 200 volunteers are currently working to address the learning needs of children induced by the COVID-19 epidemic.

- **CARITAS ZCBC Education** is supporting the production of face masks for learners. Specifically, the organization has, with the help of Youth Alive, provided enough materials to produce 17,100 face masks for vulnerable and at-risk learners in 33 schools in the Catholic Diocese of Mutare. Further, the organization is purchasing of disinfectants and sanitizers as well as printing additional copies of ZCBC Child Safeguarding Policy books as part of the preparations for the reopening of schools supported by the Diocese. The CARITAS Education team has also been visiting schools to assess the requirements for COVID-19 compliance in readiness for school re-opening.

- **FOST** has printed 2400 posters on COVID 19 for distributing to 502 schools in Manicaland and Mashonaland Central Provinces. 100 Household visits were done in Manicaland to monitor and provide Psycho-Social Support to children and their caregivers. FOST continues to share information and updates on COVID 19 using virtual platforms such as WhatsApp groups. These messages have a weekly reach of over 2,000 community volunteers, stakeholders and beneficiaries.

- **World Vision Zimbabwe (WVZ)** trained 208 teachers and volunteers in 18 school, on the use of the Mobile Learning Platform (MLP) developed to help children access learning. In addition to this, WVZ trained 117 teachers and volunteers on disaster concepts. Through Education Cannot Wait (ECW) funding, WV distributed a total of 1,068 IEC materials (4 sets of COVID-19 posters) across 12 locations, including Provincial Education offices. Through IGATE program led by WVZ in partnership with CARE, the organizations have conducted a professional development literacy course for over 1,000 teachers using WhatsApp; supported 87 rural schools in community learning/study circles; dispatched business planning module and support to 800 out of school girls and young women.

- **Child Protection Society (CPS)** has distributed food to 100 schools to enable families to prepare at least one meal a day for ECD children. Distribution was through caregivers who were collecting the food items at the school while observing social distancing. The food distribution has 8,688 ECD
learners (4,320 male and 4,368 females) in Gwanda, Rushinga and Zvimba districts. Each learner received 8kgs of Corn Soya Blend, 2kgs premix Maheu, all of which are to be prepared at household level. The CPS has successfully implemented this programme with support various stakeholders, including local ECD teachers, Village Health Workers, District Schools Inspectors, the Department of Social Welfare, the Rural District Councils and local COVID-19 Committees.

- **UNESCO** continues to Support MoPSE to resource and upload the Open Education Resource (OER) online digital learning portal. MOPSE and UNESCO will test the beta-version of the portal, finalize the structure and upload resources during the work week of June 15, 2020.

- **Plan international** has developed 5 clips of Public Service Announcements on COVID-19, each in English, Shona and Ndebele. These messages, which target children, teachers and school communities across Zimbabwe, are set for dissemination through national and community radio stations. A total of 138 Community Volunteers from 5 districts have been trained on facilitation of community based Non-Formal Education programs as a means of enhancing continuity of learning during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Plan has also drilled boreholes in 6 schools in Chimanimani and Chipinge districts to promote provision of clean water in preparation for schools re-opening. The organization has teamed up with the Civil Protection Committee to facilitate the training of 240 teachers, SDC members and community volunteers on Disaster Risk Reduction in Chipinge District.

- **Higher Life Foundation (HLF)** has developed another online platform called Akello Digital Classroom in addition to the Ruzivo Smart e-Learning solution that brings both teachers and students using interactive live lessons and an Akello e-Learning Library to promote education continuity. The online platform enables students to access recorded videos, slides and exercise while the e-Learning Library will afford the students an opportunity to borrow textbooks. The Foundation facilitated online Hand Washing and COVID-19 Education sessions that focused on the COVID-19 disease, symptoms and prevention to 568 teachers.

- **FACT Zimbabwe** has started community group parenting sessions with 8,858 caregivers of children enrolled in the Children Tariro Orphans and Vulnerable Children Program being implemented in 6 districts in Manicaland and Masvingo provinces. The sessions will equip the caregivers with skills to communicate effectively with their children, protecting them and supporting as they grow especially in view of their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Catholic Relief Services (CRS)** conducted Sinovuyo positive parenting sessions to caregivers and their teenagers through SMS and WhatsApp messaging. Cognitive Behavior Therapy is one of the critical services offered through WhatsApp, SMS messaging and through phone calls. Viral load monitoring, adherence support of Children living with HIV and sharing of COVID-19 information was done through SMS and WhatsApp messaging, while ECD services (MUAC, EID, developmental milestone tracking) were done through the VHW by leveraging on routine clinical reviews of mothers and their babies.

- **World Education Inc/Bantwana** supported joint monitoring visits with the education and health ministries to disseminate information on school preparedness in COVID-19 prevention and response. Based on feedback from the monitoring visits, the most notable needs outlined were the need for updated prevention and response health information and child rights-based awareness at community level; ‘Back to School’ guidelines for teachers and students; humanitarian/responsive budget provisions at national level; and comprehensive information on alternative learning platforms for children.

- **REPSSI** has conducted sensitization and awareness workshops in 8 Districts - Binga, Chitungwiza, Chivi, Epworth, Gokwe North, Mudzi, Mwenezi and Rushinga covering basic COVID-19 information and safety precautions; provision of psychosocial support to children, how to keep them engaged during the lock down period.

- **HOSPAZ** is delivering virtual services to Children living with HIV children exposed to HIV, and children on ART to ensure they adhere to medication. To date, a total of 3,995 CLHIV and 3,012 exposed children have been reached. HOSPAZ is supporting survivors of sexual abuse offering PSS services in conjunction with the Department of Social Welfare. To date, a total of 36 GBV survivors are receiving CBT sessions weekly. HOSPAZ has also started following up on Exam fees beneficiaries to find out the children’s circumstances following indications that schools will be opened soon for exam beneficiaries. In total 212 grade 7 and 513 Form 4 students will be reached via phones.
Gaps and constraints

- Inadequate Human and Financial Resources: While partners have supported the development of the Education Cluster COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan, many continue to face human and financial resource constraints to respond to the urgent needs of learners. Financial challenges induced by the economic crisis and lockdown threaten the capacity to respond to the health and education needs to learners.

- Reduced Mobility and Access: Both partners and Government staff are facing fiscal and technical constraints to enable staff to work remotely and respond to the needs of learners. To add to the challenge, the lockdown has also reduced the mobility of staff, with implications for the implementation of response activities. While Government issued some letters following the initial lockdown, some partners are facing renewed mobility challenges during the second phase of the lock-down. Time-critical solutions to focus on learners who cannot access digital or radio lessons, due to coverage or household considerations are minimal and need to be addressed further to enhance response.

- Misinformation and Communication Gaps: Lack of information and deliberate misinformation about sector plans continue to threaten the national buy-in of critical stakeholders such as parents, teachers and learners.

Coordination

- Despite the national lockdown and technical challenges related to communication, partners have continued to convene virtual meetings every week, to discuss and address issues related to the proposed response. In addition, the cluster has established Technical Working Groups 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](#).

- The cluster is currently having weekly coordination meetings with partners every Tuesday from 1430Hrs to 1530Hrs. The Cluster has also established WhatsApp groups to ensure regular communication and collaboration around response plans.

- Currently working with the ICCG to develop an addendum into the Humanitarian Response Plan as part of inputs derived from the Education draft COVID-19 Strategy.

Pictures from the Field:

- Figure 1: Child Protection Society distributing food packs to caregivers to prepare at least one meal a day for ECD children

- Figure 2: Save the Children distributing PPE and Non NFI that will help them fight COVID-19 in Chitungwiza.