



POLICY BRIEF:

KIX EMIS PEER REVIEW

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION | ZIMBABWE



INTRODUCTION

The KIX Africa 19 Hub has organized a July 2023 mission of internationally accredited Peers from GPE partner Ministries of Education – Lesotho, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda– to support a review of the Ministry of Education, Zimbabwe’s national EMIS. The review will refer to the continental EMIS Norms and Standards Framework, adopted by African Union in 2010 and SADC Ministers of Education in 2012.

More recently the KIX Africa 19 countries have updated this framework to include new standards in terms of the use of technology, cyber security, data privacy, data system integration and learner unit record keeping best practices among others. This new KIX AU EMIS Norms and Standards accommodates new norms and standards on sector wide policy, data privacy, cyber security, learner unit record systems, data storage protocols, new technology platform integration and dashboards, data warehousing, disaster recovery, integration of IDP/Refugee data, learning assessment data integration, submission of SDG 4 and CESA indicators, among others.

Member states jointly refined and reviewed the framework through various virtual engagements. The new framework produced in 2021 was then applied by national teams in the GPE partner countries to not only pilot the framework but to provide a baseline against which the international peers will conduct a review engaging with the key national players on strategies to improve standards and the overall data system.

BACKGROUND TO KIX AFRICA 19 HUB

The Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) Africa Hub is a knowledge exchange platform for the KIX program, a joint initiative between the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC). The consortium of UNESCO IICBA (secretariat), UNICEF ESARO, and the African Union are the regional

learning partners managing the KIX Africa 19 Hub. The purpose of the hub is to facilitate the effective exchange, mobilization, and utilization of evidence, knowledge, and innovation for education policy review, formulation, and implementation among 19 Anglophone countries in Eastern, Western, and Southern Africa along six thematic areas.

These themes include:

1. Improving teaching and learning
2. Strengthening learning assessment systems
3. Strengthening early childhood care and education
4. Achieving gender equality in and through education
5. Leaving no one behind; and
6. Meeting the data challenge in education

The KIX Africa 19 Hub aims to improve policies and practice that will strengthen national education systems within GPE partner countries to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 for quality, equitable education for all and expedite the implementation of the African Union (AU)'s Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA).

MEETING THE DATA CHALLENGE IN EDUCATION

Based on the May 2020 KIX 19 assessment of Developing Country Partner's (DCPs) needs, a **KIX Data Challenge** strategy, coordinated by the African Union's Institute of Education for Development (AU IPED), was developed in 2021.

As part of this Data Challenge strategy, AU IPED has been organizing a series of learning and capacity building events with Ministries' Directors of Planning and EMIS staff to exchange knowledge on challenges, lessons learnt, and strategies for improving practices in education management information systems needed for sector wide improvements in the delivery of education and training. In addition to ensuring an alive network, all these representatives were connected via a Whatsapp Community of Practice which linked to events, such as webinars on integrating learning assessment surveys to EMIS for use at different levels from schools upwards.

The African Union undertook missions to the Regional Economic Communities of SADC, ECOWAS EAC and IGAD to ensure high-level for support for the KIX Data Challenge Strategy and more specifically for updating their regional EMIS Norms and Standards frameworks. Additionally, the KIX EMIS focal points enrolled in an online examination which was a rigorous assessment of their knowledge of best practices, norms and standards that comply with the framework. This would qualify them as knowledgeable assessors for peer reviewing and supporting other

countries in determining their compliance with the revised continental EMIS data quality assessment framework. Eighteen KIX Ministry EMIS experts, all of whom had participated in the KIX Data Challenge on EMIS series, wrote the AU IPED examination and qualified at 70% and above as expert Assessors of Regional EMIS Norms and Standards.

AU IPED issued KIX certificates of accreditation. These 18 EMIS experts represent the cadre of Peer Reviewers who will be called upon to review and verify other member states' national EMIS assessments which are to be used in this next phase.

Task Objective of International Peer Reviews

The goal of this task is to facilitate the international EMIS Peer Reviews in the selected KIX countries by accredited KIX EMIS Assessors and experts to support a country to generate a National EMIS Norms and Standards Assessment and Action Plan that will be endorsed by national stakeholders, the relevant Regional Economic Communities, the AU IPED and KIX 19 Secretariat.

Using the revised KIX framework, the international team will review the national assessment drafted by the targeted Ministry's Planning/EMIS unit and develop supporting evidence, provide knowledge exchange on dealing with common challenges by engaging with key producers and consumers of data in the Ministry and local education groups of key stakeholders.



THE PROFILE OF ZIMBABWE



Zimbabwe is a landlocked country in southern Africa with an area of 390,757 square kilometres. It has 10 provinces and 60 districts and a population of around 15.7 million, with 67 percent residing in rural areas.

The country has been heavily affected by HIV/AIDS, with an adult prevalence rate of 12.7 percent.

The economy faces challenges due to hyperinflation, political instability, and a low-income GDP per capita of \$1,300. Government spending is 29.7% of GDP. The service sector contributes 60 percent to the economy, and agriculture and mining are important for exports. Zimbabwe has significant reserves of minerals like chromite, coal, asbestos, copper, nickel, gold, platinum, and iron ore.

Real GDP growth is estimated to have slowed to 3.4 percent in 2022 from 8.5 percent in 2021 on the back of worsening agriculture conditions and macroeconomic instability. Due to low rainfall, agricultural output contracted by 14 percent, after growing at double digits in 2021. Triple-digit inflation constrained private sector demand, while fiscal austerity limited growth of government demand and investment.

Despite investments in education, access to quality education and skills gaps remain challenges. A more skilled workforce is needed, especially in technology, engineering, agriculture, and entrepreneurship, to drive economic growth. (Source World Bank 2021)

EDUCATION SECTOR

The Zimbabwe government's vision for its country in ensuring a literate and productive society is grounded in its 10-year National Development Strategy (NDS I 2021–25). The 2021–2025 National Education Sector Plan on which it is premised, aims to improve access, quality and equity with a gender and inclusive focus, in order to enhance the relevance and applicability of skills, institute an appropriate curriculum and best practices in teaching at all levels and provide learner safety nets with school feeding and nutrition.

The education sector in Zimbabwe faces several challenges that impact the quality and accessibility of education. Limited financial resources pose a significant hurdle, with budgetary constraints and economic challenges resulting in inadequate funding for infrastructure development, educational materials, and teacher training. Teacher shortages are also a pressing issue, especially in rural areas, where experienced educators are scarce. The departure of qualified teachers due to low salaries and better opportunities abroad exacerbates the shortage and affects student-teacher ratios. Additionally, insufficient infrastructure, including classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and sanitation facilities, hampers the learning environment and impedes the delivery of quality education. The school-aged population is projected to increase from over 6.7 million in 2021 to over seven million in 2025 which will place additional pressures on resources (Zimbabwe Education Statistical Report 2021).

In 2021 in under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MPOSE), there were 7 057 ECD centres, 7 081 primary schools and 3 066 secondary schools. Urban and rural primary schools constitute 23 percent and 77 percent, respectively, while urban and rural secondary schools constitute, respectively 24 percent and 76 percent. The majority of primary schools (75 percent) are run by government, with just 25 percent are under non-government entities. Government run secondary schools constitute 71 percent, in contrast to non-government schools which make up 29 percent (Zimbabwe Education Statistical Report 2021).

A key challenge facing the education sector is the mismatch between the skills taught in schools and those demanded by the job market, which is increasingly informal in nature. Zimbabwe has one of the proportionally highest informal sectors globally. This discrepancy leads to high levels of graduate unemployment and a shortage of skills in crucial sectors. Moreover, access to quality education is inequitable, particularly between rural and urban areas. Limited school availability at the secondary and tertiary levels perpetuates educational disparities.

The Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey 2019 (MICS) reports that there is near parity between males and female pupils in net attendance and completion rates in early childhood, primary and upper secondary. However, there is a noticeable disparity between males and females in school attendance at lower secondary (55 percent for males and 65 percent for females), and children from the richest households are four times more likely to attend lower secondary than those from the poorest. School completion outcomes are the most equitable for primary schooling although significant disparities with respect to rural-urban and household wealth still exist. The situation worsens considerably in higher levels with the majority of rural youth, particularly girls, not having completed lower secondary schools.

Furthermore, the overall education budget remains low, despite the government's efforts to allocate a significant portion of funds. This constraint affects the availability of educational resources, teacher salaries, and the overall quality of education. The issue of teacher remuneration has remained persistently a threat to education service delivery, primarily because inflation has continued to erode their earnings to the point of rendering teacher incapacitation. The Education Budget was reduced in USD terms between 2019 and 2020, from USD 1.132 billion to USD 532.2 million. Budget costs for salaries dropped from over 90 percent of the education budget in 2019 to less than half that in 2020 (ESA 2021).



Zimbabwe's total budgeted expenditure on education as a percentage of total government expenditure (excluding debt servicing) was 21.6 percent in 2019 (GPE 2023). However, overall budgetary commitment to education fell to around 17.5 percent of total planned government expenditure in each of the following three years due mainly to the combined economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and, more recently, to deteriorating domestic and international economic conditions.

Zimbabwe is highly dependent on donor funding for most non-salary expenditure, which has been provided through programs as well as, to some extent, on parental contributions to fees and additional charges. Between development partners, a multi-donor pooled funding mechanism, the Education Development Fund (EDF), has helped coordinate funding and resource mobilization for the sector. Zimbabwe is utilizing a GPE education system transformation grant, largely focused on improving equitable access with funding of USD 76 million. Zimbabwe joined the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) in 2013 and is classified as a partner country affected by fragility and conflict in fiscal year 2022. Zimbabwe signed a partnership compact 2022 - 2026 (December 2022) with development partners and stakeholders, called the Education Coordination Group, on its GPE System Transformation Grant to ensure equitable access to relevant quality education for all children.

Political and economic instability in the country also disrupts the education sector. It creates uncertainties, disrupts the continuity of education, affects the morale of teachers and students, and hampers long-term planning and development in the sector. Multiple humanitarian challenges to the education system including inclement weather and climate change continue to pose shocks and threats. The persistent fragile macro-economy remains the major challenges to education, with increasing chances of inequities and reduced access impacting on learning outcomes. Parents, to a large extent, provide funding for education. If the burden on family finances is too high as a result of the poor macroeconomic conditions, problems of education access and equity will be further exacerbated. Learners find it difficult to stay in school when there are opportunities to engage in other activities that generate income, so as to address the inequities of poverty. In addition, the under-resourcing of government schools has powerfully encouraged the growth of private education which caters predominantly for children from richer households.

Efforts are being made by the government and various organizations to address these challenges and improve the education sector in Zimbabwe. Sustained investments in education, policy reforms, and targeted interventions are necessary to overcome these obstacles.

There is a need to prioritize adequate funding for education, attract and retain qualified teachers, enhance infrastructure, and bridge the skills gap between education and the job market. Additionally, addressing disparities in access to education and mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning are critical for a robust and inclusive education system.

By addressing these challenges and investing in education, Zimbabwe can create a conducive learning environment, equip students with relevant skills, and contribute to the development of a skilled workforce that can drive economic growth and social progress.

EMIS CAPACITY

Zimbabwe's EMIS follows the traditional model of reliance on an annual school census form (ED46) which provides data to a centralized database at the head office of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MOPSE). The analysis is disaggregated by gender. Limited analysis is done on girls and boys with disabilities. There is also a large amount of data collected in the school census that are not presented in the Annual Statistics Report. In the last few years, the annual statistics report has been delayed due to COVID-19, and they have only been produced at national level, and they are available to all citizens that have access to the internet through the MOPSE website. Adequate mapping of schools/wards/clusters/mother, satellite and unregistered schools is not yet established and there is a need to establish the water, sanitation, and hygiene status (WASH) in the schools. The WASH status mapping is currently ongoing. Registered schools are those schools registered with the MOPSE. Satellite schools are those schools granted authority to operate before registration while construction is in progress at the designated site. These schools operate under the supervision of a registered 'mother' school. The Head Teacher of the mother school oversees the administration of the satellite school, which is led by a teacher in charge whose salary is funded through the mother school. Not all teachers at the satellite school are qualified. These schools cannot be registered exam centres until they are registered schools. To support the profiling of pupils for special needs and to facilitate the assessment of pupils, there is a need to further develop the EMIS to include individual girls' and boys' data and to use this to demonstrate the learning outcomes for the sector. Analysis of learning assessment data at Grade 2, Grade 7, Form 4, and Form 6 takes place annually and it is disaggregated by gender. The Grade 7, Forms 2, 4 and 6 results are shared yearly with the public through press statements which demonstrates transparency of learning outcomes data within the sector. In conclusion, Education Sector data are collected regularly, but the utilisation of the data in planning is not systematised. Analysis is done and the results disseminated at national level.

However, it is not necessarily used at local level for planning, monitoring and projections. There is a need to develop local capacity, including IT resources along with available automated dashboards. (GPE 2022)

As a member of the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation (KIX) programme under Africa 19 Hub, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoPSE) representatives participated in a series of EMIS training webinars and seminars, and in updating the 2012 African Union's EMIS Norms and Standards Assessment Framework on which they assessed their own system in November 2021. Based on the 5-point scale national self-assessment on 15 EMIS Norms and 84 standards, Zimbabwe achieved a cumulative score of 77 percent compliance with these standards. (AU KIX 2021) This is relatively high as compared to the other 17 participating GPE KIX Africa 19 countries which averaged 75 percent on their national self-assessments of their EMIS.

The 2021 National EMIS Self-Assessment indicates that the MOPSE's **enabling policy and regulatory framework** needs updating. There are no consequences for institutions failing to either register with MOPSE or provide requested data. The EMIS policy is not finalized neither is a formal written understanding with the NSO and as such needs to clarify stakeholder roles and responsibilities across the data value chain, requirements for planned database integrations, cybersecurity measures, data storage protocols, safeguarding of individual data privacy and usage for statistical purposes that are compliant with international standards, among other things. Additionally, policy on cyber security and data confidentiality is needed. Data sharing across multiple government agencies and with development partners is weak (African Union KIX 2021).

The 2021 EMIS Self-Assessment indicates that the MOPSE has some challenges with **adequate resource availability and utilization** for effective EMIS. Although there are qualified staff at headquarters, they are insufficient in number, particularly in provinces and districts, and those in post need

further training and updated technical skills, particularly in database management and reporting tools. This is planned for districts. The Ministry's EMIS is highly dependent on UNICEF. However, the funding flows to support EMIS from internal and external sources are not consistent and hence interrupt the supply of timely data. COVID 19 lockdown on schools also affected the EMIS functions which delayed the capture and processing of 2020 and 2021 Annual School Census. It is not clear what measures are in place for a disaster recovery mitigation should the database fail or fall over.

The 2021 Self EMIS Assessment ranked the MOPSE's compliance with best practices with **statistical processes and EMIS methodologies as high**. The score is on par with the average KIX Country scores for these standard which indicates Zimbabwe is abreast in this area. However, it indicates that it has some challenges in this area, particularly in pilot testing new data tools, questionnaires, adopting rigorous data verification processes, updating survey methodologies, using data warehousing, and rapid assessments for humanitarian crises. It is notable that the Ministry intends to merge Teacher Development Information

System(TDIS) with EMIS so that data for teachers is collected and stored in TDIS then merged with EMIS. Data capture has been decentralized to districts and there are plans to decentralize further to schools.

On **education information reporting**, the 2021 Self-EMIS Assessment the Ministry viewed is approach as highly compliant with achievements above average in providing the sector statistics, which are relevant, accurate and reliable, timely, coherent, comprehensive, comparable, over time, and readily accessible by users (AU KIX 2021). This is despite the MOPSE's challenge in reporting on the last census data during COVID period. Currently, feedback to schools to make comparisons is not being done but it is planned.

Additionally, Zimbabwe reports on 10 of the 12 key international education indicators to UIS, which meets the benchmark of 10 indicators defined by GPE. The international standard is that a higher number of education indicators reported to UIS reflects a country's commitments to improved availability, quality and timeliness of data reporting (GPE 2022).

EXPECTED IMPACT

The outcomes of this mission, in addition to a report produced by the expert peers, are the following:

- An enhanced relationship between the national education actors in Zimbabwe and the KIX Africa 19 Hub, in particular other Ministries of the same Regional Economic Community, in this case SADC
- A renewed commitment to knowledge and innovation exchange between the Ministry of Education, Zimbabwe and other Hub countries on common challenges and solutions;
- An internationally supported data quality assessment, based on regional norms and standards by which the Ministry of Education, Zimbabwe can use as a roadmap to inform management information policy development and narrow the gap between policy and practice;
- A consensually agreed KIX EMIS recommendations for an action Plan addressing data quality systems which will guide the country's engagement on the implementation of a national plan.