



Zimbabwe National Council for  
the Welfare of Children

## PETITION TO THE MINISTER OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION; EVERY CHILD IN SCHOOL!

1. Tag a Life International (TaLI), a Girls and young women's rights organisation in partnership with Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC), Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ), Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe (FAWEZI), Mambure Trust, Research Advocacy Unit (RAU), Higher Life Foundation (HLF), Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI), Justice for Children's Trust (JCT), Katswe Sisterhood, World Vision Zimbabwe, Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), Issues Pane Nyaya, UDACIZA, Female Students Network (FSNT), Zimbabwe Alliance, PROWEB, and other civil society and religious organisations are hereby launching the **Every child In School (ECIS)** campaign. The campaign is calling on the government of Zimbabwe to urgently restore the legacy of education in Zimbabwe by allowing the hundreds of thousands of marginalised children who are out of primary school to go back to school. Many have been kept out of school due to the inability by parents or guardians to pay the required school fees when they are looking for places to enrol their children. We are asking the Minister of education to release a circular to this effect immediately so that those children who are out of primary school because they could not pay the required school fees can be given places in public schools and not be discriminated against because they cannot pay. These children should have access by the second week of January 2018 when all schools open.
2. ECIS platform commends the President E. D. Mnangagwa who, in his inaugural speech, stipulated that all the activities that the national security institutions aim to achieve in the new trajectory must be focused on overall human security from disease, hunger, unemployment, illiteracy and extreme poverty. The new president and the global community commended Zimbabweans' ability to maintain peace and order during the processes of transition, attributing that to education. However, as current leaders, we risk having a whole generation of uneducated people owing to the deterioration of the education system and the inaccessibility to free education in this current dispensation, a situation which is against the human rights of children.
3. The ECIS initiative understands that Education is a compulsory right in Zimbabwe, and every child has the right to attain basic education according to Zimbabwe's constitution section 75.
4. ECIS campaign concretes upon frameworks set by the Convention on the Rights of the Child purport: the best interests of the child, protection of rights, social security, access to information, survival and development, asserted in Article 4. Zimbabwe ratified this convention a long time ago.
5. We highlight the Zimbabwe Constitution which, in section 75(a), stipulates that the State must take all practical measures to promote a basic-state funded and compulsory education for children. The State is also expected "to take reasonable legislation and other measures, within the limits of the resources available to it, to achieve the progressive realization of the right set out" (Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act, 2013).

6. We however note that it remains a fundamental and un-negotiated right for all these children who are out of school to be given a chance at education, just like those who are within the schools are protected by existing policies. The state has left this responsibility to the evidently struggling parents and guardians who constitute the majority of the unemployed population in Zimbabwe. As a result, many children are not enrolled in school.
7. The platform is concerned by the socio-economic challenges such as the high rates of child marriages, child labour, trans-generational poverty and the current numbers of failure of enrolment of many living below the poverty line those failing to stay in school.
8. The platform submits that according to research every year, more than a million school age children are at the risk of either dropping out of school or not enrolling at all. 6.6% of primary and 20.6% of secondary school children were not in school in 2014 (Child labour Survey 2014), and 68% of these children failed to enroll in school due to financial reasons leading to 23.3% failing to complete primary education, whilst 58% were just demotivated to enroll, probably due to the same reasons (MoPSE Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2020).
9. The platform acknowledges that Zimbabwean government has been facilitating state-funded education in accordance to its mandate in the Education policy, however many children have failed to access it, and on record, more than 350 000 pupils failed to access facilities such as BEAM owing to bureaucratic incompetence (The Herald newspaper 17 March 2015).
10. The platform believes that a large investment in education is irrefutably fundamental in curbing poverty and under-development. Additionally, its role globally is undeniably essential in the building of any society, hence its inclusion in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with primary education being viewed as a catalyst in the reduction of major problems that we face today, particularly in Zimbabwe.
11. ECIS consortium believes that human security and literacy can be ensured by guaranteed non discriminatory free access to education. The government's investment in human capital and provision of education is essential to quality life as well as the nation building process and the sustainability of future generations to come.
12. The ECIS platform strongly submits that basic free compulsory education is one of the first steps to the rebuilding of our nation.
13. Every child in school (ECIS) campaign is therefore calling for:
  - I. ***All primary children to be enrolled in school beginning of January regardless of financial capabilities, disabilities, sex, race, and that all children must be able to access primary education without discrimination;***
  - II. ***The Minister of Primary and Secondary School to immediately release a circular to instruct all public primary schools to accept enrolment of all primary level children who ordinarily are unable to pay their schools fees. This applies to children who have spent time out of school whether for a term or a number of years.***
  - III. ***All public schools to enroll ALL primary children including those who have dropped out.***

- IV. *Legislators, parents and school authorities, that once the pronouncement is made by the minister, they must ensure access and enrolment for all children in all the 10 provinces, especially in rural areas, as well as to place deliberate measures in monitoring access to education and enrolment in schools.*
- V. *Reformation in the education policies to become more lenient and accommodative and not conditional, which will eventually lead to 'Every Child In School' in alignment with the African Child Rights Charter.*
- VI. *The platform and others working within the children's rights, to commit to working with the government, and promise to diligently promote access to education and commitments made by leadership.*

*Thank you!*

*Twitter; @eciszw #ECIS @tagalife*

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