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26 February 2018

The Chairperson of Parliamentary Committee on Education
Parliament
Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education
Harare

RE: Response to our Petition to Open All Schools for Access to Marginalisation Children

Dear Dr Utete-Masango

We note and thank you for your response to the petition that we submitted with your ministry on the 14th of December 2017 to encourage the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to open doors for vulnerable children to access education.

We acknowledge the great work that the ministry has been doing for years in ensuring that children have access to education in our beloved country. While we agree that the work of the ministry are 'continued efforts' there will always be gaps that the ministry may not prioritise with the urgency that community may expect.

We are of the opinion that the new dispensation enables the ministry to realise that there is urgent need to build trust with communities, strengthen accountability and actioning community recommendations that include access to education by the marginalised.

In the first 100 days of the new dispensation, we would be encouraged to see our proposal as one of the achievements by the Ministry. Our recommendations to the ministry in our comprehensive petition and further media engagements were that:

- a) The Minister to release a circular to instruct all government primary school authorities to allow access to children whose parents cannot pay full amounts to be enrolled while parents negotiate payment plans.
- b) We take note of the invitation by the Ministry for further engagement and dialogue and wish to highlight that the issue of access to education is urgent and constitutional. So while we can dialogue and exchange notes a day missed by those out of school children can never be gotten back, and that we cannot negotiate access to children education for children as it is mandatory for the government to put mechanisms such as the circular in place to ensure children's rights to education.
- c) We note with pleasure the invitation by the Minister to the TaLI Director to engage in an MOU and also by Permanent Secretary as she mentions some of our partners have MOUs. This comes as a dawn of the dispensation to us considering how difficult it was for child protection organisations to work with the ministry in the previous years. For example, TaLI has sought to obtain an MOU with the ministry since 2014 without response. This is in spite of a number of meetings that TaLI held with the then Permanent Secretary and other senior staff in the Ministry.
- d) We also want to highlight that this platform for Every Child In School has seriously engaged the minister from day one including several meetings that we set up with his secretary when we came and unfortunately we never got to constructively discuss with him as he was always busy. This petition is thus a formal communication between the citizens and the ministry regarding this important matter.

We wish to highlight that while the response was received on the 30th of January at our offices, it had been written on the 8th of January. We have since further engaged the parliament to support this cause. On the 5th of January the Minister was asked in parliament regarding this issue to which he promised the Parliamentarians and the nation that the

Permanent Secretary was looking into the issue and would respond to it. The minister said the same thing on a radio programme on SFM on the morning of the 5th again where he was a guest with Ms Mashayamombe. In both instances, the Minister promised to look into the circular however it is almost two months and nothing has been done.

As the President's 100 days in office with the new Ministers come to an end, we invite the Ministry to:

1. Seriously put children at the centre of this dispensation and urgently put in place mechanisms like this requested circular to ensure that children have access to education, and that costs of education are recovered in a manner that put children's constitutional rights first.
2. That the minister urgently addresses the malpractices in schools including the so called 'gogogoi fees' that have become a hinder to many vulnerable children whose parents are being demanded full payment of school fees before their children have access to schools.
3. That the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education embraces the new dispensation that requires speedy responses and trust engagement with citizens to take our country forward.
4. That the minister looks into some of the recommendations that we made from day one, of introducing an 'Education Fund' to be funded by various sources such as an 'Education Tax' where citizens can pay as little as 50c from their incomes towards this fund, and also investors who are coming; to contribute even a 0.05% of their income towards education and also for them to build schools around their communities of operation within their 5years of operation.
5. That this 'Education Fund' gets completely dedicated to learners welfare, school fees and infrastructure development, and not pay teachers or any government expenditures. Reporting of expenditure of this amount being publicly made each year to the citizens.
6. That the ministry urgently enacts laws that promote and protect children's rights to education according to our constitution such as an urgent alignment of the Education and Children's Act with the Constitution.
7. That the ministry accounts more to citizens by listening as well as informing the citizenry on processes taking place according to citizens recommendations.
8. In the spirit of engagement in dialogue, the platform is looking into hosting an 'Education Indaba' to discuss the status of education with specific focus on enrolment access and we hope by this time the ministry would have already executed the petition.
9. That the Ministry considers the 'proposed circular' that we understand the Minister received from the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee which we had worked on for ease of implementation.
10. We are available for an urgent meeting should the minister want to meet regarding this. We remain informed by the availability of the Minister and the Permanent Secretary since our last three attempts we could not see the minister as he was busy.

Yours faithfully

Ms Nyaradzo Mashayamombe on behalf of ECIS Platform.

CC:

Minister Prof Mavima

Parliamentary Committee On Education

The President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

Tag a life International (TaLI) , Zimbabwe National Council for the Welfare of Children (ZNCWC), Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ), Mambure Trust, Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), UDACIZA, Justice for Children (JCT), PROWEB, Female Students Network (FSNT), Forum for African Women Educationalists Zimbabwe (FAWEZI), Research Advocacy Unit, Higher Life Foundation, Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI), Zimbabwe Women In Politics Alliance, Rebuild Sakubva (RESA), World Vision, Issues Pane Nyaya, Katswe Sisterhood, Zimbabwe Alliance, Girls and Women Empowerment Network Trust (GWEN), Zimbabwe Women In Politics Alliance, Shamwari Ye Mwanasikana (SYS) Citizen Participation Trust, Shanduko, Jointed Hands Welfare Organisation, Zimbabwe Activists Alliance, Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Parents for Handicapped Children Association.