



FEBRUARY 2023

# FACTSHEET

## EDUCATION IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT

Access to education must be prioritized to accelerate progress toward all the Sustainable Development Goals and the government of Zimbabwe's 'Vision 2030' agenda.



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# Overview

In Zimbabwe, education is a fundamental constitutional right that should be guaranteed to every citizen regardless of gender, ethnicity, colour, race, disability, or creed. The United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 sustainable development goal number 4 (four) advocates for inclusive and equitable quality education which promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all and is in line with the national legislative framework in Zimbabwe. Section 75 of the Zimbabwe Constitution says, 'every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has a right to – (a) basic State-funded education, including adult basic education'. However, Zimbabwe has done much but not enough to realize the goal of provision of basic state-funded education.

In January 2023, ZPP joined the rest of the world in commemorating the 'International Day of Education' on 24 January under the theme "to invest in people, prioritize education". The United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 24 January as the International Day of Education in celebration of the role of education in peace and development. Without inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong opportunities for all, Zimbabwe cannot succeed in achieving gender equality and breaking the cycle of poverty, among other socio-economic targets. During the month of January 2023, ZPP documented numerous cases in different communities, including Silobela, Danganvura/Chikanga, and Hurungwe West, in which children were



*Parents, "children need protection in public spaces."*

denied access to the classroom due to non-payment of tuition and levy fees. On 16 January at Tsungubvi Primary School, Ward 3 in Glendale, students with outstanding fees and missing textbooks were denied entry into the school premises by the headmaster. Access to education must be prioritized to accelerate progress toward all the Sustainable Development Goals and the government's 'Vision 2030' agenda.

**Section 75 of the constitution says 'every citizen and permanent resident of Zimbabwe has a right to – (a) basic State-funded education, including adult basic education.'**

In 2020, President Emmerson Mnangagwa signed into law the Education Amendment Act which required the government to provide free basic education in line with provisions of section 75 of the 2013 constitution. The administration which took over from Mugabe in November 2017 under the “New Dispensation” has constantly promised to roll out universal free education since 2018, targeting learners in marginalized communities to implement the policy countrywide. However, a survey conducted by ZPP established that since January 2023 many pupils from urban and rural marginalized communities were turned away from school over non-payment of tuition fees. Pupils were spotted roaming the streets on their way back home which further infringed on their rights to personal security. In terms of victim disaggregation by sex, ZPP observed that both boys and girls were equally affected as a significant number of them were seen travelling back home. On 8 January, the Herald reported that the gradual implementation of the free education program was expected to commence in the first term of 2023 when schools opened. Primary and Secondary Education ministry spokesperson Taungana Ngoro said the free education initiative had gathered momentum citing that about 5 million learners from schools across the country were targeted to benefit from the program. “It’s called Basic State Funded Education where we are providing tuition fees to all our vulnerable and underprivileged learners. We are expecting that the number will increase gradually as we move towards a complete basic state-funded education,” he said. He said no school was allowed to send away a child for non-payment of fees. “The school is supposed to have engagements with parents. No learner should have interrupted education. The parents should approach the school to negotiate when having challenges,” Ngoro said. However, findings from

the ZPP’s monitoring exercise show that many pupils across the country failed to access classrooms over non-fees payment, which raised eyebrows operationalizing the policy.

On 23 January 2023 pupils at Rusvingo Primary school in Highfield West, ward 26 were turned away from school for not paying tuition fees. It is alleged that School Development Committee (SDC) members were telling pupils to return home and collect fees. From as early as 07:35 hours pupils were seen going home to collect fees. In Glenview South at Glenview 2 primary school in ward 32, it was alleged that all pupils with outstanding tuition fees and levies were turned away from classes by the School head. Pupils were also told not to report to school until payment was received by the school authorities. The incident was reported on 23 January 2022. In some of the incidences recorded countrywide, learners were told not to report to school until payment was received by the school authorities.



In Mazowe South, Glendale, at Tsungubvi primary school in ward 33, on 16 January pupils with outstanding tuition fees and school textbooks due for handover were denied entrance by the school head. It was alleged that pupils were told not to report to school until a payment was made to the institution. ZPP has some of the names of the pupils who were denied their right to education at the school.

In Mashonaland West, Chegutu West at David Whitehead primary school, learners were turned away after a decision was made by the SDC of the school not to allow pupils who had not paid up levies and tuition fees. Reports indicated that members of the SDC and the headmaster were stationed at the school gate premises turning back all learners who had arrears.

In Manicaland, Dangamvura/Chikanga constituency when schools opened on 9 January, pupils from Chikanga Primary, Sacred Heart Primary, and Murahwa Primary, were purportedly dismissed from taking part in the lessons for failing to pay school fees. The children were turned away as soon as they entered the school's premises. Some children were seen walking back home while others were seen roaming the streets on their way home. This was contrary to the government's promise of free education and government assistance programs for teaching staff.

In Midlands, Silobela, since 15 January, a disturbing trend had been noted where pupils were turned away for almost 4 continuous days for not paying tuition fees in violation of the education policy in Zimbabwe. Beginning the first term, most schools in Silobela both primary and secondary were turning away pupils for non-payment of fees. Only a few students who had paid up were allowed to access classrooms. Most parents were facing financial problems which largely affected minors as they were constantly turned away. A snap survey carried out by ZPP established that Msilahobe Primary, Ntobe Primary, Mpinda Primary, and Ndlamantuli Secondary schools turned away pupils over non-tuition fees

payment.

The trend was the same in Matabeleland North and South provinces in Tsholotsho, and Beitbridge. In Tsholotsho South at Tsholotsho High School, it was reported that the school head barred all students that had outstanding fees from 2022 from attending lessons. A similar trend was noted at Beitbridge Primary; it was alleged that the Headmaster turned away students that had outstanding fees. Others returned the next day, yet some were marked absent from school.

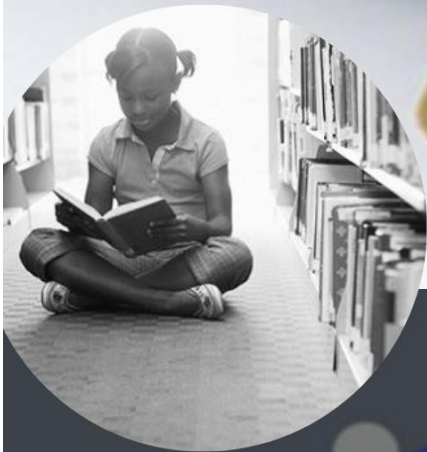
In Kadoma Central, at Mupamombe Primary Ward 5, the school head sent away students for non-payment of tuition fees and not purchasing school uniforms at the school. Pupils who allegedly purchased school tracksuits from private suppliers were turned away.

In Mashonaland East, Murehwa at Rukunguhwe school pupils were denied access to classes for outstanding tuition fees by the school head on 2 February.

In Manicaland, in Chipinge a minor with a disability was turned away at Chimana Primary school for not paying tuition fees. He was reportedly denied access to classes before being turned away together with other pupils to only return with full fees. The school head identified allegedly issued a directive to teachers to send pupils home to collect their parents/guardians or return with money for fees. In another recorded case in August 2022, ZPP recorded a case in Masvingo West, where an epileptic minor was denied enrollment at Chirichoga primary school in unclear circumstances. The school head allegedly refused to enroll the child giving unclear excuses and leaving the guardian in torment and distress.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. In line with the Dakar Framework that calls for the allocation of over 20% of total budget to education, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development should allocate more resources to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
2. The state and ministries responsible should also make sure that the infrastructure at learning institutions across the country is upgraded to be disability friendly in preparation for the enrolment of PWDs in the drive for the eradication of segregation in the enrolment process.
3. The State and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) should craft and enforce a clear policy that bars institutions from turning away pupils over non payment of tuition fees.



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