

For Immediate **Release**

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COVID19 has disrupted our way of life as we know it, including how children access education which is a basic and fundamental human right. Schools were shut down and have remained so owing to Covid19 and a desire by government to control its spread.

There is now an attempt by the Ministry of Education to ensure that children's learning is undisrupted and continues, this move is commendable, but as Every Child in School-ECIS Campaign, led by Tag a Life International (TaLI) and supported by ZNCWC, ECOZI, WCOZ and children and civil society groups in Zimbabwe, we have noted some gaps which need urgent attention.

The government of Zimbabwe through parliament must act urgently to defend the gains of education in our country during this Covid-19 pandemic, and it is the basis upon which we have presented our petition to parliament for this cause. To seriously and urgently pay attention to children who have no access to currently provided mechanisms that include access to radios and television where lessons have already begun.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe is clear on none discrimination and equal opportunities for all, we note with concern that the recent measures by the Ministry of Education are discriminatory in nature and therefore violate sections of the constitution of Zimbabwe.

We cannot discriminate the poor in accessing education, government can not push a policy that leaves over 50 percent of our children without access to education yet expect them to sit for the same examinations at the end of the year.

Lessons for children through radio while noble, leave out more than 80 percent. Of the population of learners, some cannot afford the radio sets, some do not even have the radio signal and others are struggling owing to power shortages.

Areas like Gwanda, Beitbridge, Kwekwe and parts of Manicaland do not receive ZBC radio signals which means close to 40 percent of our communities who have no access to radio signal will be left out.

The radio classrooms also leave out another population, namely those in our society who cannot hear and those who need special attention, the disability groups.

Education must be available to all, not one child must be left behind, it is with this in mind that we have approached, The parliament of Zimbabwe with a petition to ensure government is forced to provide solutions that provide education to everyone.

ECIS therefore encourages the Zimbabwe government to look to other countries that have aggressively mobilized and allocated resources to make sure every child in the hard to reach areas are reached by education during this time. Others have used community radios, community mega-phone radios and practical efforts to ensure that children including from vulnerable groups are reached by interventions.

ECIS makes the submission that, the most affected children out of this pandemic is the girl child, who if left for a long time un-occupied, maybe next exposed to abuse, early marriages and exploitation that maybe difficult to reverse.

In these principles Tag a Life International (TaLI), is supported by 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 and Zimbabwe Parents for Handicapped Children Association Umzingwane AIDS Network, Hope Alive Child Network, SthandiweChild Care Centre, D.P Foundation, Child and Guardian Foundation, Christian Legal Society, Voice of the voiceless - Multiple Foundation, WWT, HOCIC, Progress Trust (Bubi), Impumellelo Trust, Kwa- Foundation Trust, Scripture Union Bulawayo, Cacile Trust, Sinethemba Women and Youth Trust, Vlulindlela Trust, Revival of Hope Trust, Queens Park Development Association, Sir Humphrey Gibbs Centre, Sir Humphrey Gibbs Centre, Young Women, Youth and Adolescents, Sthandiwe Children's Home.

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