

# Education for All: Myth or Reality for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children in Zimbabwe?

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## Abstract

*The freedom of Zimbabwe from colonial rule in 1980 brought with it the vision of Education for All by the year 2000. A number of initiatives were implemented in order to benefit the once disadvantaged children who were kept out of school due to the discriminative colonial policies and the adverse effects of poverty. These new policies which accompanied the ushering in of independence were received with jubilation and enthusiasm as the majority of black people hoped to acquire education for purposes of their personal and national development. The educational programmes that followed saw an increase in literacy levels and also an improvement in the general infrastructure earmarked for education. This made the Zimbabwean education system the envy of many, including those beyond its borders. However, as Zimbabwe entered into the new millennium, it had missed its target of affording each and every child an opportunity to learn. A plethora of factors impeded the accomplishment of the vision. This paper, therefore, seeks to make a critical examination of such factors in a bid to establish the feasibility of the concept of 'education for all'. The research focused on whether the education policies that were put in place, as well as their implementation, were cognizant of the challenges of orphaned and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe. The paper will interrogate processes of policy formulation, policy implementation as well as policy evaluation in the education system in Zimbabwe. It will try and find out if these processes are not making it difficult for orphaned and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe to access education, thereby impacting negatively on their personal development and national development respectively. The motivation to focus on orphaned and vulnerable children is inspired by the continued increase of orphans and vulnerable children in Sub-Saharan Africa in general, and Zimbabwe in particular as a result of the HIV and AIDS pandemic, in addition to increasing poverty levels. The research went further and investigated whether there are any mitigation measures that have been put in place to ensure the accessibility of education to orphaned and vulnerable children. Questionnaires, unstructured interviews and general observations will be used in gathering data relevant for this paper.*

**Keywords:** *Orphan, Vulnerable, Education for All, policy, HIV and AIDS*

## 1. Introduction

Education forms the bedrock of any nation (Unicef Update, 2002). It represents Zimbabwe's largest investment in development and one of the country's greatest successes. The country boasts of one of the highest literacy statistics in sub-Saharan Africa (Unicef Update, 2002).

Though Zimbabwe is a signatory to a number of Declarations which seek to accord every child access to education it has faced a number of challenges in trying to realize this dream. Some such Declarations are the Jomtien Declaration of 1990 which adopted the Education for All policy. Though Zimbabwe had adopted this policy at independence the Jomtien Declaration helped it redefine and refine the policy to suit world expectations. The country also embraced the ideals associated with the 1999 Johannesburg Framework of Action in Sub-Saharan Africa and the 2000 Dakar Plan of Action (Unicef Update, 2002). From the Dakar resolutions, the country came up with a National Plan of Action for Children which became the focal point for all Education for All (EFA) strategies.

However, for Zimbabwe, fulfilling the goals of these Declarations has not been easy. This paper therefore seeks to critically examine the challenges that are leading to the failure. The paper makes orphans and

vulnerable children its special focus. Orphan in this paper will mean any child who has lost one or both parents due to HIV and AIDS or otherwise, while vulnerable children will refer to those that are living in extreme poverty. In 1991, the Ministry identified the most vulnerable sections of society and the marginalized groups as rural women, girls, abandoned children, street kids, the disabled, refugee children, child orphans, AIDS child victims, children of the poor, the disadvantaged populations and groups living in the remote rural areas and in the large-scale commercial farming areas, etc (UNESCO Report, 2000). It was argued that the historical events in the country have impacted negatively on orphans and vulnerable children's access to education. This research reveals that the centralized process of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation has in most cases left out the real needs of orphans and vulnerable children in as far as education is concerned. The effects of HIV and AIDS exacerbate the condition of the group under review such that the researcher was compelled to call for an integrated approach to the process of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Such an approach is one that looks at the interface of the education policy, the AIDS policy, and some such policies that are designed to deal with children's issues.

The research was carried out in Harare in Mabvuku/Tafara district. The researcher, however, acknowledges that the majority of the orphans and vulnerable children live in Zimbabwe's rural areas. In order to ascertain challenges and opportunities for Orphans and vulnerable children, a total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to children with ages ranging from ten to fifteen years. The purpose of the questionnaire was to establish the difficulties this group of children is facing in trying to access education and also what they think should be done to alleviate these difficulties.

#### ***An Overview of the Pre-Independence Education System***

Before independence in 1980, a dual system of education existed in Zimbabwe; one that specifically was meant for blacks and another one for whites. The minority government had concentrated upon providing compulsory and free education for white children between the ages of 5 and 15 years (Encyclopedia Britannica). Most blacks who managed to receive an education during this period did so at mission schools with the fees of the majority of students being paid by missionaries or through mission churches. As a result, only a minute number of black children had access to education. This failure by most children to access education left them vulnerable to poverty. At independence the government of Zimbabwe committed itself to correct this anomaly.

#### ***Education for All: The Post-Independence Vision***

Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980 and inherited the colonial education system which was segregatory. The colonial system had managed to keep the majority of black Zimbabweans out of school. In order to deal with the injustices of colonial rule the government had to come up with policies that would incorporate and benefit the black majority. The government adopted an intentional policy of giving priority to education. In this case, the principle of 'Education for all' was espoused. The first major reform in the education sector was the unification of the separate education systems to remove anomalies and inequalities (Kapungu, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200712280161.htm>). Education was declared a human right and was regarded as a powerful tool for social and economic transformation (UNESCO Report, 2000). In order to allow the most vulnerable children access education, primary school education was made free and compulsory.

The policy of 'Education for all' received an overwhelming response from the once disadvantaged blacks. The enrolments in schools increased significantly and most schools both in rural and urban areas were forced to introduce what in Zimbabwe is known as 'hot-sitting'. In this case, double shifts where a section of the school would attend school in the morning while another attended in the afternoon were instituted. The increase in enrolments gave rise to the need for buildings (Kanyongo, G.Y. <http://chll.finders.edu.au/education/te/articles/vbnl/kanyongo/paper.pdf>.)

This led government to embark on a massive construction of educational infrastructure. Communities played a major role in the expansion programme. For example, in Zimbabwean rural schools, parents contributed through molding bricks, providing sand and other building materials available in their local communities. The number of primary schools increased from 3161 to 4504 while the 197 secondary schools that were there before independence were increased to 1502 by 1989 (UNESCO Report, 2000). From 1980 to 1990, orphans and vulnerable children were given the opportunity to access education just like any other child. During this period, Zimbabwe achieved one of the highest number of primary school children attending school (Encyclopedia Britannica). For example, primary school enrolments rose from 820 000 in 1979 to 2, 080,000 in 1990 (Encyclopedia Britannica).

As more schools were built and enrolments increased, the burden became so huge on government shoulders. Therefore, as government pursued its vision of 'Education for All', it became evident that issues of sustainability of the programme had to be considered taking into account that the economy had begun to show signs of distress. It became apparent that the policy adopted in 1980 had its own weaknesses. According to the UNESCO report (2000), the policy formulation process of 1980 was hurriedly done and highly centralized; the goals and targets were not cast within a time frame; the policy was largely an act of faith as strategies were neither well-defined nor focused and it did not take into cognizance the availability of resources to fulfill set targets (UNESCO Report, 2000). It was therefore a populist policy which to a greater extent ignored most of the fundamentals of policy formulation. Communities which were supposed to benefit from the policy did not contribute when the policy was being formulated. As a result, the people could not claim ownership of a policy that was imposed on them. The euphoria of gaining independence led them to blindly support the policy without a full understanding of its implications on the economy. When eventually the government failed to sustain the programme financially, a lot of parents and children felt cheated. The policy of free primary education had not lived long to benefit the most deserving children, i.e. orphans and vulnerable children.

In 1990, government succumbed to the pressure from the IMF and the World Bank to introduce economic reforms. The Economic Structural Adjustment Programme was introduced in January 1991. Under this programme, government had to introduce new strategies to address the economic challenges facing the country ((Kanyongo, G. Y. <http://ehli.finders.edu.au/education/iej/articles/vbri/kanyongo/paper.pdf> )

Among the aims of ESAP was the cutting of government spending in order to reduce the budget deficit and cost recovery on social services. In this case, the government had to redefine its education policy to suit the demands of ESAP. For example, education budgets were significantly cut and user fees were introduced. Urban parents were expected to fund their children's education by paying for levies, stationery and the construction and maintenance of buildings (UNESCO Report, 2000). Although in the rural areas, education remained 'free', parents were expected to contribute small amounts for building fund. This had a direct impact on the accessibility of education to orphans and vulnerable children whose parents and guardians could not even afford the required building fee. In the urban areas, the introduction of ESAP incapacitated a lot of parents who then found it difficult to financially support their children's education. The economic decline of the 1990s saw the cost of education sky-rocketing thereby compounding the condition of a number of children whose parents were either out of employment or had been infected by HIV and AIDS leading to their death. Muzondidya (2009) notes very well that, "government cutbacks in education subsidies made it inaccessible to the majority of the poor and unemployed, and the introduction of user fees under ESAP further reduced school enrolments" (Muzondidya, 2009). Balleis (1993) concluded that ESAP reversed one of Zimbabwe's great successes of the 1980s in the educational field and caused a serious decline in educational standards of generations to come.

The further devaluation of the Zimbabwean dollar in 1997 led to rising inflation. As a result, the disposable incomes of many working parents were reduced and they failed to pay school fees for their children. Those pupils who could not pay were turned away from school. Furthermore, the weakened social structures of extended families failed to cope in looking after these children due to the hostile

economic environment, thereby pushing quite a number of affected children into the streets. In order to cushion orphans and vulnerable children, government introduced the Social Dimensions Fund (SDF) in which government would pay children's tuition fees.

As the year 2000 dawned, it was clear that the post-independence vision of education for all by this period had not been achieved. This was evidenced by the drop out rate both at primary and secondary schools and by the number of children who were living in the streets. In 2002, a UNICEF report indicated that from 1992 to 2002, 50 percent of the children who were eligible to enter school had failed to get access to education (Unicef Update,2002). From 1990 the Education for All programmes had faced many challenges. Some of the challenges required a redefinition of strategies and policies to suit the new order (Unicef Update,2002). The implementation of the existing policies was hampered by lack of financial resources. The SDF was declared broke in 1998 leaving a lot of orphans and vulnerable children without assistance. A survey carried out by the Central Statistical office in 1998 showed that children from poor households had their enrolment at school delayed or, if they enrolled at all, they would eventually drop out. Statistics indicated that in 1998 the drop out rate at primary level was 2.5 %. When compared with non-poor households the survey found out that non-poor household children entered school earlier than those from poor households (Unicef Update,2002). In 1999, the educational system in the country started showing distress signs resulting in the downward spiral which persists today. In this case, the gains made during the first decade of independence were adversely affected if not completely reversed (Unicef Update,2002).

#### *The state of Education in Zimbabwe beyond 2000*

The socio-political situation that obtained in the country from 2000 directly affected the delivery of education to children. UNICEF notes that major challenges confronted Zimbabwe in the last decade: the HIV and AIDS pandemic, increasing poverty levels and a polarized political environment (Unicef Update, 2002). The land reform that took place in 2000 after the rejection of the constitutional referendum saw a number of children being displaced. Indigenous black people moved from rural areas where they used to receive formal education into farms where there were no schools or infrastructure to support the provision of education. Chirongoma (2009) notes that, "as farming communities were disrupted, the economy deteriorated, leading to increased poverty and reduced access to education...." The land reform had brought with it socio-economic and political uncertainties. It took place against a background of severe economic decline. As a result, government failed to provide both the physical as well as the human resources to cater for education in the resettlement farms thereby undermining the realization of some children's rights to education (Unicef Update,2002). UNICEF reported that the land reform programme disrupted the education of about 100 000 primary school children and 21 000 secondary school children. (Unicef Update,2002). Most of these children have not enrolled back to school up to this day. As one travels along Zimbabwe's major highways, one is bound to notice young children of school-going age busy selling vegetables, milk or firewood from the farms.

As alluded to earlier, when the SDF was declared broke a number of children were left without assistance. In 2000 the government introduced the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM). BEAM's main development objective was to prevent irreversible welfare losses for poor households who resorted to extreme coping mechanisms, like withdrawing children from school, in response to increasing poverty (Zimbabwe: The Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) at <http://www.wahenga.net/index.php/views/country-update-view/zimbabwe-the-basic-education-assistance-module-beam/>)

At its inception, the programme covered orphans and vulnerable children from Grade 1 up to Form 4 by assisting with tuition fees, levies and examination fees. The school development associations (SDAs) which included parents' representatives played a key role in identifying children who were eligible to benefit from the programme. The strength of the programme lied in the fact that government was working closely with communities to develop sustainable structures with a desire to assist vulnerable children.

Until its suspension in 2008 due to hyper-inflation, BEAM had assisted a lot of orphans and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe's rural schools as well as those in high density suburb schools in urban areas. Statistics released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that by 2009, over 4 000 000 children had benefited from BEAM (United Nations Report, 2005).

In 2005, the government embarked on *Operation Murambatsvina* in which 'illegal' structures were demolished. A lot of families who were staying in these structures were displaced and the majority of them relocated to the rural areas and farms. From figures released by the United Nations, about 700 000 people were directly affected by the operation (United Nations Report, 2005). A survey carried out by the United Nations made the following findings: In about 40% of the sample plots one or more person(s) had relocated to the rural areas; an estimated 30 000 households affected by Operation Murambatsvina were caring for orphans, and hundreds of children were displaced from their families during the operation; about a third of the families who remained in the affected areas continued to live in the open (Unicef Report, 2005) even five months after the demolitions. Furthermore, the Rapid Assessment on the state of education in Zimbabwe carried out by the National Education Advisory Board in 2009 showed that the percentage of children in urban areas in the 90 schools looked at, shrank from 57,2% in 2003 to 55,4% in 2009 (Chakanyuka, et.al, 2009). While the assessment attributed this movement from urban to rural areas to high fees charged at urban schools, it failed to acknowledge the adverse effects of Operation Murambatsvina. This had a direct negative impact in the delivery of education especially to vulnerable children. The fact that the operation took place in May when schools had just opened for the second term, means that the affected children were abruptly removed from school with no plan of where and when they would be readmitted into schools. After assessing the effects of the operation, Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka said;

Hundreds of thousands of women, men and children were made homeless, without access to food, water and sanitation, or health care. Education for thousands of school age children has been disrupted..... The vast majority of those directly and indirectly affected are the poor and disadvantaged segments of the population. They are today deeper in poverty, deprivation and destitution and have been rendered more vulnerable (United Nations Report, 2005).

A visit to a slum which sprung up after the operation in the outskirts of Tafara high density suburb revealed that since the operation a number of children have not been able to go back to school. One child who responded to interview questions said, "Since Operation Murambatsvina, I have not attended school because my parents cannot afford to buy a new uniform and pay fees at the school I have to attend. They just concentrate in finding food for us"(Interview with an affected child in Harare, 24 October, 2009).

The hyper-inflationary environment that prevailed in the country between 2007 and early 2009 also directly affected the delivery of education especially to orphans and vulnerable children. During this period, parents and guardians were expected to top up fees several times within a term. A lot of parents were not able to pay the required fees leading to a number of children dropping out of school. On the other hand, teachers' salaries were made meaningless by the rate of inflation (a teacher was earning equivalent of US \$2/month). As a result, for the larger part of 2008, teachers were on industrial strike. Children attending government schools had less than a month of official learning. Official figures released by the Progressive Teachers' Union of Zimbabwe show that during this period, school children only had 26 days of official learning. This was exacerbated by the political violence that characterized the period before and after the March 2008 election. Teachers had been branded enemies of the State as it was alleged that they were supporting the opposition. The majority of teachers serving in the rural areas and high density suburbs in towns and cities became victims of this violence. As they fled from their stations, children were left with no one to teach them. Orphans and vulnerable children were the most affected. Most teachers who were on industrial action were conducting informal lessons from their homes

and students were expected to pay directly to the teacher something which poor parents and guardians of orphans found difficult to do. Well-to-do parents transferred their children to private schools where they had already started paying fees in foreign currency and learning at these schools was never disrupted. This clearly shows that while other children continued to receive educational instruction even when teachers were on strike, orphans and vulnerable children were left out because they could not afford to pay for the informal learning in teachers' homes. Moreover, their parents and guardians could not afford to enroll them in the most expensive private schools.

In 2009 after the formation of the inclusive government, the national economy was officially allowed to use foreign currency meaning that school fees had to be paid in United States dollar, Euro, British Pound, South African Rand or Botswana Pula. Schools demanded that fees be paid in full before pupils were admitted in class. A lot of children who could not afford the fees remained out of school during the first term of 2009. BEAM was at this time suspended implying that orphans and other vulnerable children were closed out of the education system. In February 2009, the States in Transition Observatory found out that at one school in the high density suburb of Harare just 30 percent of the students who had paid fees in foreign currency were allowed to attend school (Idasa Report, 2009). The other 70% at this school was being denied access to education.

### ***Policy challenges in the Education sector in Zimbabwe***

One of the major factors affecting education delivery in Zimbabwe has to do with processes of policy formulation, implementation and evaluation. Since 1980, the process of formulating policy has been centralized within government. In most cases, even teachers who are key players in policy implementation are not consulted when policies are being formulated. Consultation is important in that it helps policy formulators with clues of what is feasible and manageable within a specific environment at any given time. Most teachers felt that if government had consulted them in 2008, national examinations would have been suspended because no meaningful learning took place.

It is worse currently when within certain quarters teachers are still viewed as enemies of the government. Policies are made by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture while schools and communities are expected to implement them. To make matters worse there are times when policies are changed overnight. For example, during the first school term in 2009, the Minister of Education, Sport and Culture, announced that no school was allowed to charge fees in foreign currency only to backtrack on this announcement within the same term and gave foreign currency figures which pupils attending government schools were supposed to pay. There was no consultation with schools or parents. The Ministry imposed fees on government schools and in most cases they were not paid (Chakanyuka, et.al 2009). Parents resisted this imposition.

Furthermore, when examination fees for 'O' and 'A' levels were announced, the Minister made it clear that no candidate would be allowed to write examinations without paying in full. Over 70 percent of the eligible candidates failed to pay and in October 2009, the Minister shifted positions and permitted the students to write and then pay later. In such cases, the Ministry should have consulted parents and negotiated with them until common ground was reached on the examination fee amount. Teachers are a major stakeholder because they are the ones who are going to mark the exam scripts. In previous years, Zimbabwean teachers have downed tools during marking due to non-payment. In 2009, teachers who examined the Grade Seven National examinations were only told after marking that ZIMSEC (The National Examination Board) could not pay them immediately despite the fact that they were promised to be paid timeously. Furthermore, the 'O' and 'A' Level national examinations which normally take place between October and November of each year were delayed and were written within two weeks, that is, between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2009. This greatly compromises the credibility of the examination process when candidates are not given relief in-between examinations. The group that is affected most by this is that of orphans and vulnerable children because rich parents have since moved their children to the Cambridge Syllabus whose charges are out of reach for the majority of poor parents.

For example, when the Grade Seven results came out in January 2010, rural schools recorded a zero percent pass rate. Financial problems and the chaos at the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council were cited as the reasons for the poor performance (The Sunday Mail, 17 January 2010).

When policies are changed overnight, it implies that they are never put through the due processes of policy evaluation. Kitamura (2009) argues that evaluation of past policies constitutes an indispensable part of public policy formulation. When this aspect is ignored and new policies are put in place, the result in the Zimbabwean education system has been silent rejection of those policies. For example, currently most schools are secretly operating independently. For instance, while government policy says parents should not supplement teachers' salaries, some schools are demanding that on top of fees and levies, pupils pay an average of US\$2 every week directly to the teacher (this is common for primary schools). A teacher at a primary school in Mabvuku said she only teaches those who would have paid. Those who manage to pay the fees and levies but fail to pay the teacher allowance are not being attended to. This is happening at a time when the Ministry does not have resources for the monitoring exercise. It is imperative that implemented policies be monitored to provide feedback for subsequent policy-making cycles. In most schools visited, teachers reported that they had not been supervised for a long time now.

While classroom doors are open in most schools in Zimbabwe, not every child in it is accessing education. The researcher went to observe a Grade 4 class at a primary school in Tafara during a reading lesson. Out of the 60 pupils in that class, 7 (11.6%) managed to get marks ranging from 5 to 8 marks out of 10, while 43 (71.7%) failed to read one English word correctly. A Grade 7 class at the same school was given a General Paper mock test in preparation for their national examinations. After 10 minutes into the exam, more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the class was no longer responding to questions on the question paper. After the examination, the pupils raised concerns that they had not learnt most of the stuff asked in the paper. The same paper was given to a Grade 5 pupil who attends a private school, and he got 47/50 (94%). This scenario should be a cause for concern for the Ministry of Education, Arts, Sport and Culture. It is clear that orphans and vulnerable children who attend most of the government schools are being short changed in as far as the delivery of education is concerned.

### ***Challenges and opportunities for orphans and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe***

A range of challenges face orphans and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe in their bid to access education. Despite successes recorded in the first decade after independence, access to education by orphans and vulnerable children has been adversely affected by the socio-economic-political difficulties as well as the HIV and AIDS pandemic. It is estimated that over a million children have been orphaned by HIV and AIDS in Zimbabwe alone.

### ***HIV and AIDS***

Quite a number of children in Zimbabwe have been affected and infected by HIV. In 1999, UNICEF estimated that 57 000 to 100 000 children were living with HIV infection. The majority of the children were those who were infected by their mothers during pregnancy (Unicef Update, 2002). Most of the infected children do not know their status because their parents and guardians are not forth coming to give consent for their testing. Some of them are victims of religious doctrines which forbid members of particular churches from getting medical attention at clinics and hospitals. For example, members of the Johane Marange Apostolic sect, forbids its members from getting professional medical help. As a result, these children spend long periods out of school due to ill-health. School administrators highlighted health problems as one of the major challenges impeding orphans and vulnerable children's access to education. It was difficult to find statistics of the number of children infected by the virus from the respondents to the questionnaire because Zimbabwean laws forbid one to ask about people's HIV status. However, HIV prevalence rate in children below 14 years is currently estimated at 2.1 percent while children between 15 to 24 years have a prevalence rate of 7.5 percent (The Herald, 30 October 2009).

The affected children include those that have been orphaned by HIV and AIDS and those whose parents are sick from the virus. These children face various challenges which in most cases prevent them from accessing education. Many children in Zimbabwe are leaving school after the death of parents or guardians due to HIV and AIDS. Most of these children are heading families as well as looking after their sick parents. The most notable effect is absenteeism from school by these children which in turn leads to poor performance. The Joint Learning Initiative on Children noted that children whose parents are infected with HIV but are still living face obstacles that prevent them from enrolling in school, succeeding, and completing cycles (JLIC Report, 2008). From attendance registers availed to the researcher, it was evident that at times these affected children are at times out of school for more than two weeks. The other notable finding from this research was that not only girls are looking after ailing parents, but boys as well. The interviewed children highlighted lack of resources in terms of food, medicines and protective clothing as their major challenges as they look after their sick parents. Quite a number of them said they could not study productively while living in the same house with a parent who is sick and they very well know that the parent will not get better. It is this psychological effect of HIV and AIDS on children which affect their performance at school. In the end most of them opt out of school. Hence, HIV and AIDS pose significant challenges in terms of educational access and performance.

### **Poverty**

Poverty is one of the greatest barriers to educational access worldwide (JLIC Report, 2008). Increasing poverty levels in Zimbabwe has made children more vulnerable. Government assistance through BEAM only covers for fees, levies and examination fees. Orphans and vulnerable children have to find uniforms, exercise books, pens etc. In most cases these children fail to get these. At school they have to deal with teachers who demand that every child be properly dressed. UNICEF notes that at schools in Zimbabwe, there has been little guidance on other aspects of school roles in response to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children (Unicef Update, 2002). 67 percent of the respondents have had to return home on a school day because they were not dressed in complete uniform. For 43 percent of the students it was because the tie was slightly different from what is required at their respective schools. At most primary and secondary schools in Mabvuku and Tafara pupils were putting on torn uniforms and the majority of the children revealed that their parents do not afford to buy them brand new uniforms. Usually the uniforms are purchased from students who would have outgrown theirs or those who would have finished Form four or would have withdrawn from school due to one reason or the other. When BEAM was resuscitated in February, the programme no longer covers secondary school students but has been confined to primary school pupils only. This means that after primary school, the majority of orphans and vulnerable children are going to drop out of school; hence their cycle of poverty becomes difficult to break because with a Grade 7 certificate they will not be able to get meaningful employment. Even at Primary school, BEAM does not cater for every orphan and vulnerable child. There are others who are left out during the vetting process. The National Education Advisory Board noted that though Orphans and vulnerable children constitute more than 50 percent of children in Zimbabwean schools, the programme has become cumbersome, bureaucratic and problematic (Chakanyuka, et.al, 2009).

Despite these various challenges, opportunities still exist for orphans and vulnerable children in Zimbabwe. A number of initiatives which are designed to keep them in school are being put in place especially by non-governmental organizations. In Mabvuku and Tafara, fees for most orphans and vulnerable children are being paid by an organization called Mavambo. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) has entered into partnership with Save the Children Alliance, UNICEF and education authorities in an endeavour to restore displaced children's access to education especially in the Manicaland Province. In this case, schools and their water and sanitation facilities will be refurbished. Textbooks, stationery and recreational materials are also going to be provided (<http://www.iom.int/jahia/media/press-briefing-notes/pbnAF/cache/offence?entryId=25376>). Such endeavours will at least ensure that a fraction of the orphans and vulnerable children get some access to basic education.



## Conclusion

This paper has shown that Zimbabwe achieved a lot of success in the first decade of independence in its bid to provide universal education. It highlighted that post-independence commitments were not sustainable against the backdrop of economic decline. The paper noted that the introduction of ESAP negatively affected the delivery of education to orphans and vulnerable children as a result of inflation, the increase in the cost of living, the fall in disposable incomes and increased unemployment through retrenchment. This was exacerbated by the effects of HIV and AIDS which has left many children orphaned and vulnerable. It has been shown that these children face difficult challenges as they try to access education in Zimbabwe. It has also been shown that weaknesses in the processes of policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation have created barriers in the delivery of education to orphans and vulnerable children. In most cases, lack of consultation of all stakeholders has greatly affected the efficiency and effectiveness of the Zimbabwean education system. This has been attributed to among other things, the politicization of the education system. It can therefore be concluded that the global Education for All goals have in recent years lagged far behind in Zimbabwe.

## Recommendations

- The issue of orphans and vulnerable children should be of primary concern to policymakers. Signing of declarations which states the education for all policy without putting support systems in place for orphans and vulnerable children will not yield much. Policy formulators must ensure that children, especially orphans and vulnerable children participate when policies that have to do with children are being formulated.
- There is need for better harmonization and integration of strategies outlined within policies to maximize synergy. For example, policy formulators need to harmonise education policies with AIDS policies in order to avoid overlaps which in the end negatively impact on the personal development of orphans and vulnerable children.
- Apart from issues of school fees and other educational costs orphans and vulnerable children need more specific interventions in order to enable them to rise above barriers to enrollment, good performance and completion of school cycles.
- If the problems bedeviling the education sector are going to be dealt with in such a way that will benefit orphans and vulnerable children, there is need for a systemic approach which deals with all problems in the sector. Piecemeal solutions will not alleviate the problem.

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