

# Evaluation of the Teacher Effectiveness and Equitable Access for Children (TEACH) Programme in Zimbabwe

Volume 1 - EVALUATION REPORT

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## Acknowledgements

This report presents the final evaluation of the TEACH Programme in Zimbabwe. Commissioned by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Zimbabwe, this study reflects months of rigorous, consultative, and collaborative efforts grounded in ethical and contextually responsive methodologies.

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Conducting this evaluation in Zimbabwe involved navigating a complex education landscape shaped by economic challenges, school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and other factors. Despite these constraints, Athena Infonomics – together with local experts and implementation partners – upheld high standards of rigour and inclusivity, ensuring that the findings reflect the realities faced by schools, teachers, learners, and communities.

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## List of Abbreviations

ATL	Accelerated Teaching and Learning	EQs	Evaluation Questions
AWET	Apostolic Women Empowerment Trust	ERIC	Ethical Research Involving Children
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module	ESA	Education Sector Analysis
CALA	Continuous Assessment Learning Activities	ESPR	Education Sector Performance Report
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education	ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
CBC	Competency-Based Curriculum	ETF	Education Transition Fund
CBM	Christian Blind Mission	FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
CDTS	Curriculum Development and Technical Services	GBV	Gender-Based Violence
CE	Community Educator	GDP	Gross Domestic Product
CoGE	Champions of Girls' Education	GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
CPD	Continuous Professional Development	GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion
CTEMD	Centre for Teacher Education and Material Development	GEC	Girls' Education Challenge
DEO	District Education Officer	GPE	Global Partnership for Education
DSI	District School Inspectors	GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
ECD	Early Childhood Development	GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
ECG	Education Coordination Group	GPI	Gender Parity Index
ECOZI	Education Coalition of Zimbabwe	GPS	Global Positioning System
EDF	Education Development Fund	GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
EDT	Education Development Trust	HBC	Heritage-Based Curriculum
EFA	Education For All	ICF	International Climate Fund
EFDT	Education Fund Development Trust	ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ELP	Earling Learning Policy	IEP	Inclusive Education Policy
EMIS	Education Management Information System	IP	Implementation Partner
EPSC	Education Partnerships Steering Committee	ISOP	Integrated Skills Outreach Programme

LTPP	Learner-To-Trained-Teacher Ratio	PTR	Pupil to Teacher Ratio
MAXQDA	Max Quality Data Analysis	PTTR	Pupil to Trained Teacher Ratio
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning	PLC	Professional Learning Communities
MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning	PSNE	Primary and Secondary Non-Formal Education
MIC	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys	PTUZ	Provincial Teachers' Union Zimbabwe
MHTEISTD	Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development	PwFD	Pupils with Functional Difficulties
MRCZ	Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe	PVO	Private Voluntary Organisation
MoEPD	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development	RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
MoFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development	REA	Rural Electrification Agency
MoICT	Ministry of Information and Communications Technology	REPSSI	Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative
MoPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education	RDC	Rural District Council
NDS 1	National Development Strategy 1	RID	Research and Innovation Directorate
NER	Net Enrolment Rate	RIP	Revised Inspection Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation	SAGE	Supporting Adolescent Girls' Education
NFE	Non-Formal Education	SDC	School Development Committee
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee	SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
OOS	Out-of-School	SEL	Social and Emotional Learning
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children	SEN	Special Education Needs
PDO	Professional Development Officers	SFP	School Financing Policy
PEO	Provincial Education Officer	SIG	School Improvement Grant

<b>SIG WASH</b>	School Improvement Grant for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene	<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedure	<b>STEAM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics
<b>SPPRS</b>	School Performance and Progress Reporting System	<b>STG</b>	System Transformation Grant
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences	<b>TIC</b>	Teacher-in-Charge
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights	<b>TDIS</b>	Teacher Development Information System
<b>SRO</b>	Senior Responsible Owner	<b>TEACH</b>	Teacher Effectiveness and Equitable Access for Children
<b>SPPRS</b>	School Performance and Progress Reporting System	<b>TEACH-IC</b>	TEACH Implementation Committee
<b>SPSS</b>	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences	<b>TLM</b>	Teaching and Learning Material
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights	<b>ToC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>SRO</b>	Senior Responsible Owner	<b>TOR</b>	Terms of Reference

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## Executive summary

### Introduction

**About the Evaluation:** In 2025, the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) commissioned Athena Infonomics, with support from Consilient Research and JIMAT Consult, to evaluate the Teacher Effectiveness and Equitable Access for Children (TEACH) Programme. The evaluation assesses TEACH's effectiveness in improving equitable access, teaching quality, and learning outcomes, as well as its contribution to system strengthening and resilience in Zimbabwe's education sector.

**Zimbabwe's education context:** Zimbabwe's education system faces persistent socio-economic challenges driven by economic pressures, infrastructure gaps, and equity barriers. These have been compounded by external shocks such as Cyclone Idai, COVID-19, and recurrent El Niño droughts. Despite these constraints, education remains a national priority, anchored in the 2020 Education Amendment Act mandating free and compulsory basic education. The Education Sector Strategic Plan (2021–2025) emphasises access, quality, and resilience, aligned with Zimbabwe Vision 2030 and SDG 4. The system serves approximately 5.89 million learners, with 83 percent of primary and 79 percent of secondary schools located in rural, low-income communities. Pupils with Functional Difficulties (PwFD) remain underrepresented, signalling continued access barriers and likely under-reporting. Foundational learning outcomes show mixed progress: in 2023, 70.1 percent of learners met Mathematics and 78.1 percent met English standards. Grade 7 pass rates improved from 37 percent (2020) to 45.2 percent (2023), while Form 4 pass rates stood at 30.1 percent. The transition from Form 4 to Form 5 remains a major dropout point, with over 80 percent of learners leaving the system at this stage (EMIS 2023–2024). Key challenges include limited financing, inadequate infrastructure, and persistent equity gaps. While 97 percent of primary and 87-89 percent of secondary teachers were qualified (EMIS 2019–2020), learner-teacher ratios remain high in rural schools. In 2020, the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) supported over 585,000 vulnerable learners, though coverage was uneven across provinces.

**TEACH Programme:** The UK Government has been a key education partner through successive programmes totalling over GBP 200 million since 2012. Building on this foundation, TEACH (GBP 55.54 million, 2019–2026) was launched to improve learning outcomes in Zimbabwe. TEACH operates through six interlinked components: Component 101: Equitable Access, including School Improvement Grants (SIGs) and community engagement (GBP32.35 million); Component 102: Teacher Professional Development (TPD) (GBP 12 million); Component 103: Monitoring, Technical Assistance, and Evaluation; Component 105: School Solarisation; Component 106: Supporting Adolescent Girls Education (GBP 5.15 million); and Component 107: Education Innovation, including Social Emotional Learning in Pre-Primary Schools (SEL) (GBP 500,000).

### Methodology

**Evaluation approach:** The TEACH Programme evaluation questions employ a mixed-methods approach guided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Evaluation Criteria, assessing effectiveness and equity contributions through nine core evaluation questions covering impact,

effectiveness, sustainability, relevance, efficiency, and coherence. It assessed both outcomes and processes against the programme's Theory of Change (ToC) and Log Frame, focusing on learner enrolment, Grade 7 and Form 4 examination results, teaching quality, accountability, equity, and system strengthening. All activities adhered to FCDO's Ethical Guidance, OECD-DAC Quality Standards, and Aid Transparency Standards.

**Data collection and analysis:** The evaluation used a mixed-methods design, analysing SIG (2017–2024), EMIS (2019–2024), and TPD datasets, and administering surveys to 210 students (including 38 PwFD), alongside 175 KIIs with national and sub-national stakeholders (PEDs, DSIs, teachers, head teachers, and school leaders) and 80 FGDs with SDCs and parents across eight provinces. These interviews captured trends in access, teaching quality, inclusion, and system strengthening. Quantitative and qualitative data were analysed in parallel, with deductive analysis guided by evaluation questions and inductive identification of emergent themes. Findings were triangulated and synthesised to generate key findings, conclusions, and recommendations, applying a cross-cutting GEDSI and sustainability lens across all levels of analysis.

**Key Limitations:** Inaccessible school-level EMIS and Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment (ZELA) data confined analysis to district aggregates and self-reported perceptions. The cross-sectional design without counterfactual groups and non-randomised interventions targeted at the lowest-performing districts complicated causal inference. Compressed timelines following COVID-19 further limited analytical depth. As a result, the evaluation provides strong evidence across all evaluation criteria but not a rigorous impact assessment on learning outcomes.

## Key findings

**Relevance (EQ.7):** TEACH's design is strongly aligned with national education priorities, including foundational learning, equitable access, and resilience-building. The programme adapted effectively to shifting policy environments and shocks (COVID-19, drought), ensuring continued functionality of over 4,400 low-resourced schools. Its GEDSI integration strengthened inclusive teaching capacity and access to functional schools. However, systemic constraints, such as limited inclusive infrastructure, uneven investment in satellite schools, and entrenched social norms, restricted the scale and depth of impact.

**Coherence across the education system (EQ.9):** Collaboration between TEACH and MoPSE has matured into a structured governance model, enabling joint planning, coordinated inspections, and greater use of EMIS data for decision-making. Coordination among implementing partners is clear, but cross-component synergies remain underutilised, limiting opportunities for integrated delivery. External coherence with national and donor efforts improved significantly after 2021 through joint inspection and monitoring initiatives, but district-level coordination and GEDSI integration remain fragmented, signalling a gap between policy and operational coherence.

**Effectiveness – Equitable access to learning (EQ. 5):** SIGs significantly improved school functionality and infrastructure across 72 districts, particularly benefiting rural and satellite schools. Solarisation in 148 schools expanded access to digital tools and evening learning. However, declining SIG coverage, persistent rural-urban disparities, uneven gains in

inclusivity, and limited disability accessibility due to inadequate resources and planning raise concerns about the sustainability and inclusiveness of these gains. Community engagement through Safe to Learn campaigns and school fairs improved attendance and created safer learning environments. Early indications show improved attitudes and enrolment, but longer-term impacts remain uncertain due to persistent gaps in infrastructure and teacher capacity. The SAGE Phase II programme reached 5,027 out-of-school girls, including married adolescents and girls with disabilities, achieving measurable literacy and numeracy gains. However, challenges persist in scaling vocational training, integrating assistive devices, and securing government ownership.

**Effectiveness – Teaching quality and leadership (EQ.3):** The TPD component trained 44,000 teachers across 42 districts, improving classroom confidence and teaching practices. However, structural barriers such as low teacher motivation, limited access to quality education, and inadequate infrastructure continue to restrict sustained improvements in learning outcomes, particularly in remote areas. Leadership training yielded positive effects by enhancing supervision, morale, and instructional quality through structured toolkits and targeted interventions, though its integration into broader school management remains uneven. TEACH's efforts to incorporate GEDSI principles into teaching practices achieved initial gains in awareness and mindset but struggled to drive consistent classroom change due to gaps in practical guidance and systemic reinforcement. Meanwhile, the Think Equal SEL project remains in the early stages, with its effectiveness yet to be seen.

**Effectiveness – System strengthening and accountability (EQ.4, EQ.6):** TEACH supported key system-wide reforms in Zimbabwe, contributing to the development of policies such as the Early Learning, Inclusive Education, School Financing, and Non-Formal Education policies. The programme also aligned training frameworks and fostered stakeholder dialogue, although delays in policy approvals and reliance on donor funding have constrained long-term institutionalisation. TEACH advanced Zimbabwe's EMIS and inspection systems, and financed 8,661 school inspections, supported critically by fuel provision; however, inequities, dependency on subsidies, and weak follow-up on inclusive tools have limited progress on GEDSI outcomes. Capacity-building efforts at national and sub-national levels enhanced governance and technical skills but remained uneven, particularly among district committees, underscoring the need for sustained institutional integration.

**Impact – Learning outcomes (EQ.1, EQ.2):** The impact of the TEACH Programme on learning outcomes and equitable access remains promising but mixed. Evidence suggests incremental improvements in Grade 7 and Form 4 pass rates, with stronger gains for girls than boys. Notably, fewer TEACH-supported districts recorded 0 percent Grade 7 pass rates in 2024, though progress remained gradual and below levels observed in stronger-performing districts. The clearest measurable impact was observed under SAGE Phase II, where girls from highly marginalised populations, including married girls, never-schooled learners, and girls with disabilities, recorded significant literacy and numeracy gains. Learner survey data indicated perceived improvements in literacy and numeracy across schools, although the absence of ZELA 2024 school-level results and the cross-sectional design limited robust attribution. Self-reported outcomes, small sample sizes for PwFD, and timing constraints on data overlap (such as between TPD and SIG) further constrained analysis. Despite these limitations, triangulated evidence from EMIS trends, stakeholder interviews, and primary

surveys indicated that TEACH contributed to widening access, reducing extreme underperformance, and embedding inclusive practices in Zimbabwe's education system.

**Value for Money (EQ.8):** TEACH demonstrates credible Value for Money (VfM), combining cost control with equitable reach. Efficiency gains were achieved through cluster-based TPD, SAGE hubs, and digital platforms. However, high fuel costs, solar maintenance gaps, limited provision of assistive devices, and delayed training for 16 percent of new school heads constrained returns. VfM monitoring remains incomplete, particularly around cost-per-learning-gain metrics, highlighting a key area for system strengthening.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The TEACH Programme has made **significant but uneven contributions to strengthening Zimbabwe's education system** between 2019 and 2025. It has **improved functionality and learning environments** in thousands of rural and satellite schools through SIGs, solarisation, SAGE, and community engagement. These interventions, closely aligned with national education priorities, were **critical in sustaining learning continuity** during economic and climate shocks, including COVID-19. However, **declining SIG coverage, funding volatility**, and gaps in the maintenance of solar assets have undermined the durability and sustainability of access gains, particularly in poorer rural and satellite schools.

The TPD component **increased teacher participation, peer collaboration, and classroom confidence**, and school leadership training has contributed to improved instructional support. However, **low teacher motivation, weak ICT infrastructure** and **inconsistent local leadership** has limited the depth and persistence of these outcomes. At the system level, TEACH **supported policy development, inspection reforms, and EMIS enhancements**, but institutionalisation remains incomplete and donor-dependent, leaving reforms vulnerable to financing shocks.

**Learning outcomes show incremental but uneven gains.** National Grade 7 pass rates have risen, and **zero-pass schools have declined, but Form 4 pass rates remain low.** Persistent structural inequities, especially between satellite and well-resourced schools and for learners with disabilities, and the **absence of disaggregated learning data** continue to limit transformational impact. The challenge of **marginalised boys** emerged during the period but was largely unaddressed by TEACH. These challenges are compounded by **weak district-level implementation capacity**, which affects the programme's scalability and sustainability.

To address equity gaps and build on TEACH's achievements, the evaluation identifies eleven priority **recommendations** for FCDO, implementing partners, and the Government of Zimbabwe:

1. **Strengthen equitable access and retention:** Co-locate infrastructure, TLM, teacher capacity, BEAM incentives, and EMIS-enabled targeting to improve enrolment and retention of girls and boys in the most disadvantaged schools.
2. **Sustain school functionality:** Increase and regularise SIG payments, strengthen governance, and link financing to results through RBF and capacity-building measures.
3. **Enhance sustainability of TPD:** Decentralise delivery, strengthen mentorship and follow-up, and build TTC capacity for equitable teacher deployment.

4. **Formalise a national CPD framework:** Support an updated CPD Framework and Teacher Professional Council to institutionalise standards and incentives.
5. **Invest in ICT integration:** Embed ICT within CPD and pedagogy, expand infrastructure and connectivity, and pair with solarisation for scale.
6. **Strengthen data systems:** Build capacity for EMIS and ZELA use, ensure data quality assurance, and improve MoPSE–ZimSTAT coordination.
7. **Modernise school inspections:** Pair e-inspections with offline tools and self-evaluation methodologies and align feedback and incentives with school improvement.
8. **Embed GEDSI and inclusive education:** Deepen inclusive education skills, invest in assistive resources, and strengthen monitoring of inclusion at all levels.
9. **Adopt a Gender Transformative Approach (GTA):** Engage boys, men, and community leaders to address exclusionary norms and support marginalised learners.
10. **Strengthen GEDSI monitoring:** Improve data systems to track learner experiences and non-visible disabilities, with clear feedback loops.
11. **Consolidate domestic financing and leadership:** Strengthen MoPSE leadership, finalise the School Financing Policy, and integrate RBF to help sustain reforms.

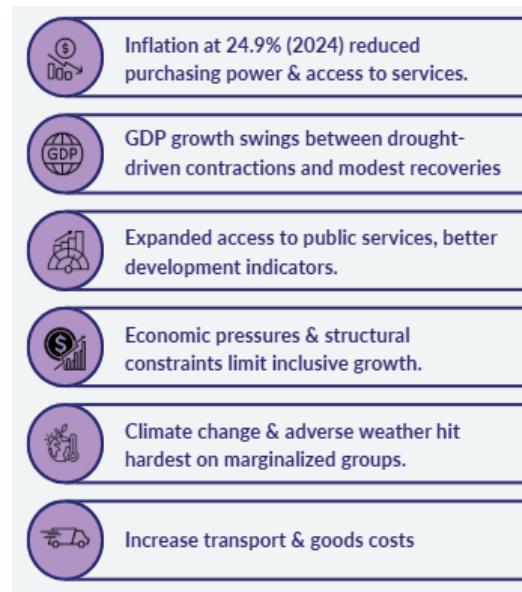


## Section 1: Introduction

Athena Infonomics was commissioned by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) UK to undertake the impact assessment of the Teacher Effectiveness and Equitable Access for Children (TEACH) Programme. This assessment, dubbed the TEACH evaluation, has generated insights into the effectiveness of the programme in achieving its intended outcomes and impact. Athena is supported by Consilient Research and JIMAT Consult in the delivery of this evaluation.

This section (Section 1) details the context of Zimbabwe’s education system and introduces the TEACH Programme and its components. Section 2 elaborates on the methodology applied for this evaluation, the limitations faced during evaluation and ethical considerations. Section 3 discusses the key findings from the study, categorised according to the select OECD-DAC evaluation criteria – Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency (Value for Money) and Impact. Section 4 lists the conclusions and key lessons learnt from this evaluation. Section 5 provides recommendations based on the findings from the evaluation that may benefit future programming by FCDO, MoPSE and the other implementation partners, and for other similar programmes.

**Figure 1: Socio-Economic Landscape of Zimbabwe**



### 1.1 Zimbabwe context

#### 1.1.1 Socio-economic landscape of Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has expanded access to public services and improved development indicators in recent years, although persistent economic pressures and structural constraints continue to limit inclusive and sustained progress. The economy has experienced extreme volatility, with GDP growth swinging from contraction during drought years to modest recovery periods. External shocks from climate change and adverse weather patterns have compounded these economic challenges, all of which disproportionately affect the most marginalised. High fuel prices have further exacerbated economic pressures, driving up the cost of transportation and goods, and indirectly affecting school attendance, service delivery, and operational costs for rural and remote schools. Despite these constraints, the Government of Zimbabwe has maintained a commitment to education as a fundamental pillar of the country's development strategy. Though there have been improvements in enrolments and infrastructure, disadvantages have persisted across gender, geography, and socio-economic lines.

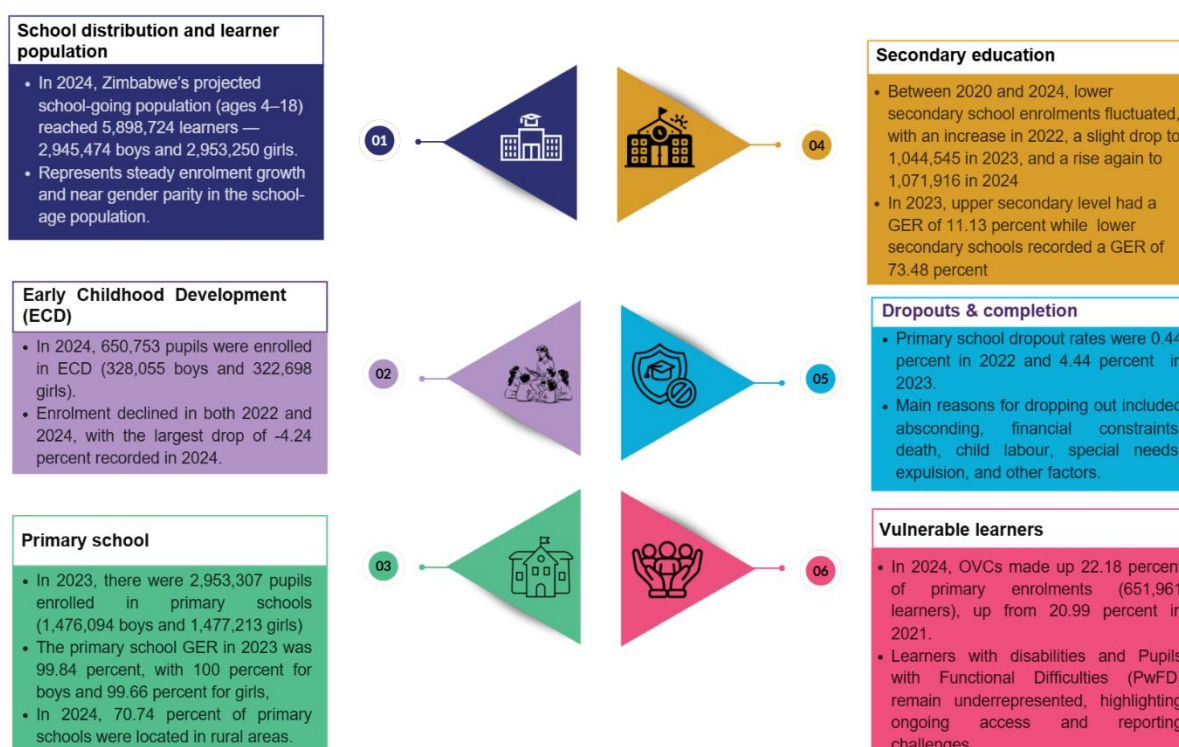
#### 1.1.2 Education in Zimbabwe

**Government education policies and priorities:** The 2020 Education Amendment Act to the Constitution mandates free and compulsory basic education for all children, while also encouraging inclusive education practices, through a 2-7-4-2 model – two years of ECD, seven years of primary education, four years of lower secondary (Forms 1–4), and two years of upper

secondary (Forms 5–6), with key national assessments. Under the leadership and oversight of MoPSE, the *Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2021–2025* outlines the primary operational roadmap, focusing on expanding access, improving quality, strengthening institutional systems, and promoting resilience. The strategic framework is embedded within broader national development priorities, including Zimbabwe Vision 2030<sup>1</sup> and the National Development Strategy 12, while simultaneously aligning with international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4. The 2024 Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy reinforces this direction by making ECD attendance mandatory before Grade 1 to strengthen foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

**Access to education (including GEDSI):** Overall, Zimbabwe’s projected school-going population (ages 4–18) reached 5,898,724 learners in 2024 (2,945,474 boys and 2,953,250 girls), up from 5,834,471 learners in 2023 (2,915,070 boys and 2,919,401 girls), reflecting stable enrolment growth and near gender parity. However, the majority of Zimbabwe’s schools (P3 and S3) continue to be located in rural areas, serving lower-income communities. In 2024, 70.74 percent of primary and 72.38 percent of secondary schools were situated in rural locations (EMIS 2024), underscoring the continued rural concentration of education infrastructure and associated access and resource disparities.

**Figure 2: Zimbabwe’s education context**



Source: *Primary and Secondary Statistics Report (MoPSE, 2022-2024)*

<sup>1</sup> The Vision 2030 of Zimbabwe aims for an Empowered and Prosperous Upper Middle-Income Society by 2030.

<sup>2</sup> NDS 1 (2021-2025) of Zimbabwe supports the delivery of Vision 2030 and emphasises the importance of education in human capital development.

**Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC):** Learners with disabilities face difficulties with respect to access as well as attainment of appropriate learning materials. In 2024, OVCs constituted 22.18 percent of total primary enrolments (6,51,961 learners), with provincial proportions ranging from 9.67 percent in Harare to 26.77 percent in Matabeleland South. By comparison, the national primary OVC proportion in 2021 was 20.99 percent, indicating a slight increase over the period. Pupils with Functional Difficulties (PwFD) remain underrepresented in both primary and secondary enrolments, reflecting persistent access barriers and likely under-reporting.

**Learning outcomes (including GEDSI):** Zimbabwe’s education outcomes declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the Grade 7 pass rate dropping from 43.7 percent (boys) and 50.0 percent (girls) in 2019 to 34.3 percent and 39.6 percent in 2020 (national average 37 percent, below the 52 percent (Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) target). Learning outcomes have since improved but remain below pre-pandemic levels. The national Grade 7 pass rate rose to 45.18 percent in 2023 (boys: 40.77 percent, girls: 49.22 percent), up from 39.83 percent in 2022 and 40.98 percent in 2021 (EMIS 2023). At the lower primary level, foundational learning showed mixed trends: in 2023, 70.10 percent of learners met expected standards in Mathematics and 78.13 percent in English, compared to 75.30 percent in Mathematics and 77.10 percent in English in 2022 (EMIS 2022, 2023). Secondary school outcomes remain a challenge: In 2024, a total of 33,746 learners dropped out of secondary school, with 56.86 percent of these being girls. The Form 4 to Form 5 transition remains a critical dropout point, with 82 percent of learners exiting the system at this stage (EMIS 2023), a pattern that is consistent with 2024 data showing persistently low upper secondary completion (10.61 percent) and capacity constraints in higher levels of education. In this regard, completion and transition rates continue to reflect deep structural inequities (EMIS 2024). Lower secondary completion was 64.90 percent in 2024, while upper secondary completion remained very low at 10.61 percent, down from 14.36 percent in 2020.

### 1.1.3 Challenges in the education sector

Systemic barriers continue to limit equitable access to education, reduce learner retention, and weaken learning outcomes, particularly for children from rural areas, low-income households, and marginalised populations.

**Teaching capacity:** The Government of Zimbabwe has sought to address sectoral inequalities by leveraging its experienced teaching workforce, with over 97 percent of primary and 87-89 percent of secondary teachers qualified (EMIS 2019; 2020).

**Curriculum development and quality:** Zimbabwe made progress in education quality through the Heritage-Based Curriculum and National ICT Policy in Education, but implementation faced major challenges in rural areas due to infrastructure gaps, digital divides, and shortages of teaching materials and devices.

**Figure 3: Challenges faced by Zimbabwe’s education sector**



**Education financing and budget allocation:** Zimbabwe's education financing remains below global benchmarks, with MoPSE allocations falling from 14.9 percent of the national budget in 2023 to 13.7 percent in 2024, leaving limited resources beyond salaries for infrastructure, learning materials, and inclusive services, despite growing calls for gender-sensitive budgeting.

**Equity and inclusion barriers:** Despite progress, equity gaps persist as satellite schools remain under-resourced, children with disabilities face major access barriers, and girls disproportionately drop out due to pregnancy and early marriage.

**Impact of external shocks:** Zimbabwe's education sector has been severely disrupted by external factors. MoPSE, supported by donors such as GPE, implemented a multi-pronged response to mitigate learning loss and protect vulnerable learners.

## 1.2 The FCDO and the TEACH Programme

### 1.2.1 FCDO and supporting education in Zimbabwe

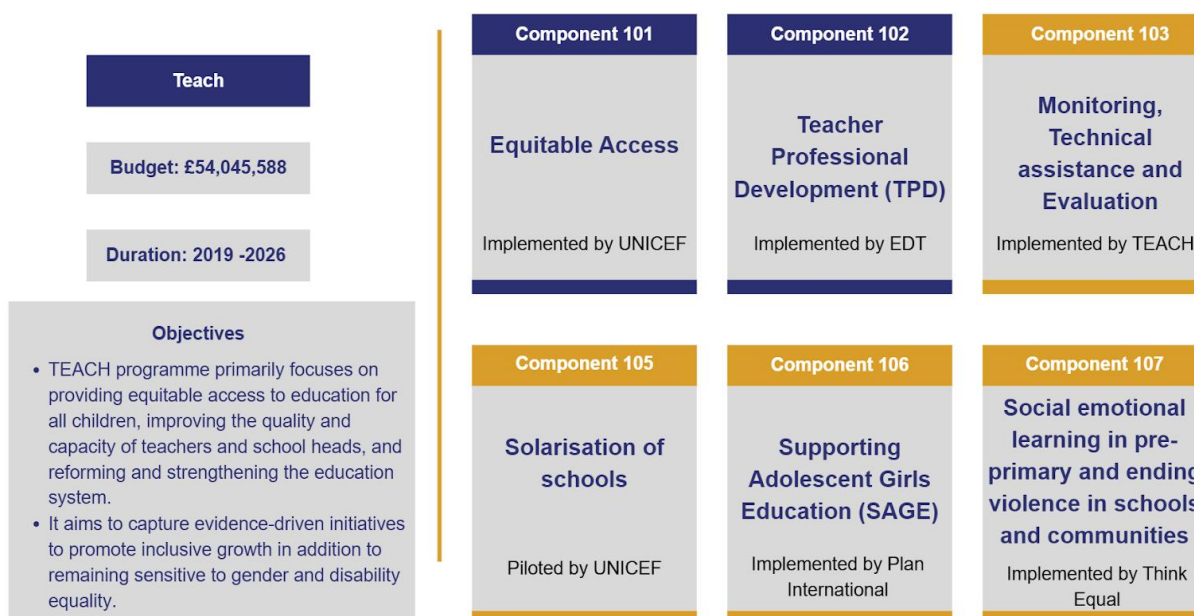
The UK Government, through the FCDO and the British Council, has been a key partner in Zimbabwe's education sector. Its support has included a mix of bilateral, multilateral, and centrally managed programmes aimed at improving access, quality, inclusion, and resilience across the education system. Early contributions included the Education Transition Fund (GBP 24M, 2012-15) and the Education Development Fund Phase 2 (GBP 35M, 2015-19), both implemented by UNICEF to support textbook provision, SIGs, curriculum reform, and non-formal education. The Zimbabwe Girls' Secondary Education Project (GBP 39.9M, 2012-23) and the Girls' Education Challenge (2013-21) focused on enhancing girls' learning outcomes and reaching marginalised learners, including children with disabilities and those out of school. FCDO, which remains the largest global contributor to the GPE with roughly 15 percent of total funding, also plays a strategic role as the coordinating agency for GPE in Zimbabwe. In this role, it facilitates collaboration between government, donors, and partners. GPE has helped channel over USD 120 million into the country since 2013, contributing to school rehabilitation, disaster risk preparedness, improved functionality, and enabling foundational literacy and numeracy. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK government provided additional support (GBP 7M, 2020-22) to strengthen school safety and remedial learning, including through expanded WASH interventions.

### 1.2.2 Teacher Effectiveness and Equitable Access for Children (TEACH) Programme

Building on long-standing investments and partnerships, FCDO, in collaboration with MoPSE, launched the TEACH Programme in July 2019, to safeguard and strengthen Zimbabwe's education system. The programme aims to improve learning outcomes across the country while ensuring that no learner is left behind. Grounded in the experience of the earlier UK-supported Education Development Fund (EDF), TEACH builds on past lessons to drive systemic change. Implementation is led by four key partners – the Education Development Trust (EDT), UNICEF, Plan International, and Think Equal – each responsible for specific components of the programme. While FCDO leads programme design, financing, planning, and technical support, MoPSE plays a central role in regulation, quality assurance, monitoring, and stakeholder coordination.

TEACH is structured around six interlinked components that collectively support capacity development for teachers and school administrators, promote policy reform, and expand access to clean energy through school solarisation. These interventions are designed to foster a more inclusive and resilient education system, marked by higher teaching quality and equitable access, particularly for marginalised learners, including those with functional difficulties.

**Figure 4 : Components of the TEACH Programme**



Source: TEACH Annual Reviews (FCDO, 2019-2023)

**Table 1: Description of the components of the TEACH Programme**

Component and implementing partner	Description	Geographies of intervention
TEACH Component 101: Equitable access (2019-2026, GBP32.35 million)	It aims to improve educational equity in resource-constrained schools through three pillars: equitable access, quality education, and systems strengthening. It addresses barriers such as limited learning materials, exclusion of vulnerable learners, and inadequate support for girls, especially in health and STEM. The interventions include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School Improvement Grants (SIGs) for under-resourced P3, S3, satellite, and special schools, prioritising high-need cases. Base grant: USD1,500, plus USD 50</li> </ul>	The programme operates across 57 of Zimbabwe’s 72 districts, spanning the provinces of Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Masvingo, Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South, and Midlands

Component and implementing partner	Description	Geographies of intervention
<p>Implementing partner: UNICEF</p>	<p>(remote schools) and USD 100 (schools with Disability Resource Units), up to USD 1,650.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Childhood Development (ECD) promotion and community outreach (fairs, parental engagement).</li> <li>• Systems strengthening, including leadership training, school monitoring, inspections (fuel support), and policy contributions.</li> </ul> <p>Programme tracking and learning efforts are embedded through regular school inspections, capacity building for school leaders, and data-driven decision-making linked to curriculum and resource planning. As of 2024, UNICEF also assumed leadership of the Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment (ZELA) under the Global Partnership for Education-System Transformation Grant (GPE-STG) framework.</p>	
<p>TEACH Component 102: Teacher Professional Development (TPD) (2021-2026, GBP12 million)</p>	<p>EDT works with Zimbabwe’s education ministries to improve foundational literacy and numeracy, especially for marginalised girls and children with disabilities. The programme is built on capacity building, systems strengthening, and research and learning. It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedagogical training for pre-service and in-service teachers on the new curriculum, with gender-responsive and inclusive teaching approaches.</li> <li>• Disability inclusion through accessible materials (Braille, large print) and a Gender &amp; Social Inclusion Module reaching 44,000 teachers.</li> </ul>	<p>EDT operates across 42 districts in 8 rural provinces (Manicaland, Mash Central, Mash East, Mash West, Masvingo, Mat North, Mat South and Midlands) for TPD and CPD (Continuous Professional Development), focusing on the least-resourced and lowest-performing schools. School inspections are conducted nationwide across all 72 districts, excluding two urban provinces.</p>

Component and implementing partner	Description	Geographies of intervention
Implementing partner: EDT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• T-GROW775132 coaching model to improve classroom practice, inclusion, and safety.</li> <li>• Strengthened school inspection systems, embedded safeguarding, and harmonised curriculum across institutions.</li> </ul> <p>EDT led the development of the Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment (ZELA), which informs national policy and tracks foundational learning. It also contributed to drafting the Early Learning Policy (approved in 2023) and the Teacher Development Information System (TDIS). Additionally, dashboards have been developed to track the implementation of safeguarding and inclusion measures.</p>	
<p>TEACH Component 103: Monitoring, supervision, technical assistance and evaluation</p> <p>Implementing Partner: EDT, UNICEF, FCDO, MoPSE</p>	<p>The TEACH Monitoring, Evaluation, and Research Learning (MERL) framework is designed to assess and enhance teacher effectiveness and equitable access to quality education in Zimbabwe. It tracks and improves teacher effectiveness and equitable access to quality education in Zimbabwe. It combines multi-level monitoring, i.e., training, outputs, outcomes (via EMIS/ZELA), context, and results, with internal and independent evaluations using OECD-DAC criteria. Methods include pre and post assessments, lesson observations, surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Quarterly to annual reporting, spot checks, and joint visits ensure accountability, adaptive learning, and evidence-based policy for sustainable education improvements.</p>	Cross-programme
TEACH Component 105:	The initiative seeks to provide reliable, sustainable energy to under-resourced	The solarisation project is currently being

Component and implementing partner	Description	Geographies of intervention
<p>Solarisation of Schools (Pilot programme) (Launched in 2023)</p> <p>Implementing partner: UNICEF (in collaboration with MoPSE)</p>	<p>schools by installing solar power systems, thereby enabling digital learning and improving school management. To date, solar systems have been installed in 148 of the targeted 150 schools. This project contributes to global clean energy targets and aligns with the FCDO's International Climate Fund (ICF) indicators for improved energy access.</p> <p>Certification and installation monitoring is jointly conducted by the Ministry of Energy and the Rural Electrification Agency (REA). Additionally, training manuals were disseminated for proper system usage and maintenance.</p> <p>The Research Methods International (RMI) Evaluation of the Solar Systems in Schools Project in Zimbabwe was commissioned out of the budget.</p>	<p>implemented across seven districts, focusing on schools in rural and under-served areas. This includes Buhera, Chipinge and Nyange in Manicaland, as well as Beitbridge, Gwanda, Insiza and Matobo in Mat South.</p>
<p>TEACH Component 106: Supporting Adolescent Girls Education (SAGE) (2023-2026, GBP 5,151,710)</p> <p>Implementing partner: Plan International (with the support of MoPSE and FCDO)</p>	<p>SAGE Phase II (2.5 years) is implemented to address barriers for 5,027 highly marginalised out-of-school girls aged 10-19. Building on Phase I (2018-2023), which reached 13,400 girls in 11 districts, Phase II targets subpopulations including young mothers, married adolescents, girls with disabilities, Apostolic communities, Kalanga minorities, girls who never attended school, and those in labour. The programme delivers four components: Accelerated Teaching and Learning via 93 community hubs; life skills through Champions of Girls' Education; vocational pathways (community-based and TVET); and safeguarding for safe learning. It is delivered by a consortium including</p>	<p>It operates across 11 districts in 4 provinces: Manicaland (Chimanimani, Mutare Rural, Mutasa), Bulawayo (Reigate, Imbizo, Khami), Matabeleland South (Bulilima, Redcliff, Harare South, Epworth, Harare), and Mashonaland East (Mutoko).</p>

Component and implementing partner	Description	Geographies of intervention
	<p>The Open University (UK), CBM, and AWET.</p> <p>The MEL framework focuses on outcome-level indicators including literacy and numeracy scores, attendance rates, and empowerment indices.</p>	
<p>TEACH Component 107: Education Innovation (2024-2026, GBP500,000)</p> <p>Implementing partner: Think Equal</p>	<p>Think Equal implements Social Emotional Learning and Ending Violence in Schools and Communities for children aged 3-6 through a consortium led by EDT (logistics, coordination) and REPSSI (training). The 29-week classroom intervention uses storytelling to make emotions such as frustration, sadness, and resilience accessible, delivered in 16 local languages with voice recordings for inclusivity, including visually impaired children, and aligned with Zimbabwe's Harmonized Basic Curriculum. A “saturation” approach within schools mitigates teacher attrition, with resources kept as school property. Each trained teacher delivers the programme to new student groups annually for two years, supported by training for head teachers, district inspectors, and cluster chairpersons. Think Equal coordinates with MOPSE at all levels, with teachers as primary feedback channels due to safeguarding and confidentiality constraints.</p> <p>Monitoring efforts focus on gathering insights, identifying best practices, and understanding how teachers use materials and how students engage with contextualised stories. Peer learning is also supported through</p>	<p>Think Equal operates across 18 districts in three provinces, namely Mashonaland Central, Manicaland, and Matabeleland South. District selection built on the one-year inception phase and EDT’s pilot presence, aligning with FCDO guidelines to start in TEACH districts where EDT was already delivering Teacher Professional Development.</p>

Component and implementing partner	Description	Geographies of intervention
	WhatsApp groups and calls, enabling ongoing reflection and adaptation.	

Source: TEACH Annual Reviews (FCDO, 2019-2023), TEACH Programme Documents

### 1.2.3 TEACH Programme: Gender equality, equity, poverty, and inclusion dimensions

The TEACH Programme operates within Zimbabwe’s challenging development context, addressing multiple intersecting crises, including economic instability, hyperinflation, and climate change, all of which have limited government revenue and thus, education funding. This has led to under-resourced schools, teacher shortages, educational inequities, and compromised education quality, especially for vulnerable populations such as girls and children with disabilities. The programme’s Theory of Change aims to create a strengthened and sustainable national education system that improves teaching quality and equitable access for all, through targeted mechanisms and cross-cutting strategies addressing systemic inequalities. While girls and women have achieved gender parity in enrolment, women remain underrepresented in school leadership, a gap TEACH addresses by training over 44,000 teachers through its Gender and Social Inclusion Module to promote women’s leadership and inclusive education, which includes special education needs training, accessible learning materials in formats such as Braille and large print, and inclusion of teachers with disabilities in professional development.

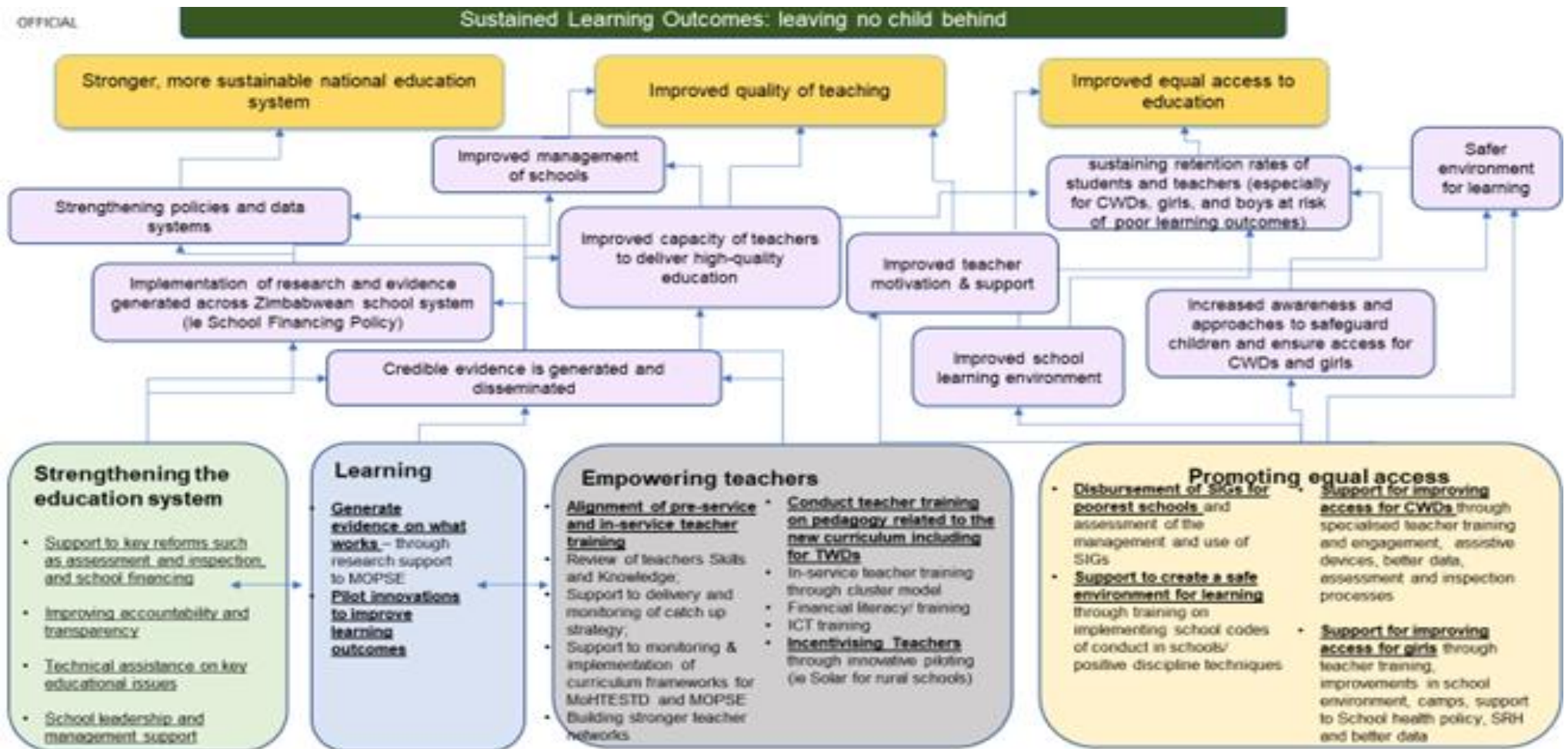
TEACH also tackles barriers like early marriage and pregnancy, major causes of dropout among girls, through its SAGE component that supports 5,000 marginalised out-of-school girls with literacy, numeracy, and life skills training. The Think Equal component promotes social and emotional learning in 1,000 pre-primary schools to challenge harmful gender norms early childhood onwards, while school solarisation initiatives alleviate energy poverty that affects remote schools to improve learning environments and safety. Equity and poverty impact are addressed by prioritising the poorest rural schools, providing School Improvement Grants to over 1,000 disadvantaged schools with very low fee payment rates to fund essential infrastructure and resources. Disability inclusion is systematically integrated through accessibility improvements, teacher training, inclusive professional development, and targeted support for children with disabilities. Overall, this holistic and targeted approach ensures that the TEACH Programme not only improves educational quality and access but also drives systemic change toward a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable education system in Zimbabwe.

### 1.2.4 TEACH Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) for the TEACH Programme serves as both an implementation guide and evaluation framework, demonstrating causal pathways through which interventions enhance equitable access to education for marginalised children, including pupils with functional difficulties. The ToC and the accompanying logical framework establish key indicators at each stage to support monitoring, impact measurement, and data-driven

programme adjustments. TEACH aims to foster a more inclusive and resilient education system characterised by improved teaching quality and accessibility, measured through indicators including access to functional schools, retention rates, enrolment of pupils with functional difficulties, dropout rates, and achievement in core subjects. While the programme expects long-term benefits in teaching quality and equitable access for all children, the COVID-19 pandemic's negative impact on learning outcomes has necessitated significant downward revisions to pass rate targets for Primary Grade 7 and Secondary Form 4.

Figure 5: TEACH Theory of Change



Source: TEACH Impact Evaluation Terms of Reference (FCDO, 2024)

### 1.3 Objectives and purpose of the TEACH evaluation

The evaluation of the TEACH Programme aims to assess the programme's effectiveness in improving teaching quality, equitable access to education, and learning outcomes between 2019 and 2025. The assessment follows the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and examines the validity of the programme's ToC. A mixed-methods approach has been used, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative insights from stakeholders.

The purpose of this critical examination and exploration of the programme has been to generate valuable insights on the programme and inform future education programming in Zimbabwe, potentially guiding a successor programme to TEACH. In this way, the evaluation is expected to ensure that the lessons learned from TEACH contribute to a more effective and equitable education system in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the evaluation is planned as a learning- and utilisation-focused exercise, with the current implementation partners and MoPSE as the key audiences. The evaluation and its outputs are expected to inform policy and future programming by identifying best practices and lessons learned to shape future education investments and policy decisions, both in Zimbabwe and internationally.

The scope of the evaluation covers the entire TEACH Programme but focuses its empirical work primarily on Component 101 (Equitable Access under UNICEF) and Component 102 (Teacher Professional Development under EDT). Components 105 (Solarisation), 106 (SAGE Project), and 107 (Think Equal) are referenced using existing evaluations but not empirically assessed. The evaluation will primarily benefit FCDO, MoPSE, TEACH implementation partners, and other education sector stakeholders in Zimbabwe.

### 1.4 Reading the TEACH evaluation report

#### 1.4.1 Guide to reading the evaluation report

The evaluation report is structured to provide a strategic overview of the impact of TEACH and detailed evidence for technical readers. The organisation of this document is as follows:

- **Executive summary** presents the key findings, conclusion and recommendations in concise format for readers seeking an overview of the impact of TEACH.
- **Section 1: Introduction** sets out the country and education sector context, describing the TEACH Programme and outlining the purpose, scope and evaluation questions guiding the evaluation.
- **Section 2: Methodology** details the evaluation design, analytical frameworks, data collection methods, and sampling approach. It also highlights key limitations and mitigation strategies, and ethical considerations, inclusion and safeguarding followed during the evaluation process.
- **Section 3: Findings** present the main body of evidence, structured largely by the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria and explicitly aligned with the evaluation questions (EQs). Each subsection provides introductory context explaining the relevance of the criterion and EQs covered, integrating primary and secondary data, quantitative and qualitative findings, with case studies, figures, and illustrations where relevant, summary findings that synthesise results against EQs, and a Strength of Evidence box assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the evidence base.

- **Section 4: Conclusions and recommendations** synthesise the evaluation findings into overarching conclusions that are linked to actionable recommendations for FCDO, MoPSE, implementation partners, and wider education sector stakeholders.
- **Section 5: Annexures** include the evaluation framework, detailed tables on sample achieved and their demographics, consolidated list of stakeholders interviewed, data collection tools, supplementary quantitative data analysis models and case studies, glossary providing definitions of acronyms and technical terms, evaluation team structure and roles, ethical approval certificate and additional evidence not included in the main body. The Annex Volume are listed separately in Volume II.

#### 1.4.2 Use and influence plan

The plan outlines the key stakeholders, their anticipated uses of the evaluation’s outputs.

**Table 2: Stakeholders and evaluation use**

Stakeholder Level	Stakeholder	Evaluation Use
Primary	FCDO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To support the development of new business case.</li> <li>• To support evidence-based programming and programme adaption.</li> </ul>
	MoPSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To refine education policies and plans (including Zimbabwe’s education sector strategic plan), improve national education policy implementation, ensure enhanced inclusion and access to education, and strengthen teacher training, education financing and other system strengthening measures.</li> </ul>
Secondary	UNICEF, EDT, Think Equal, Plan International (and other implementation partners)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve programme design, scale up successful interventions, and strengthen inter-agency collaboration.</li> <li>• To inform future funding decisions for programmes in Zimbabwe’s education sector.</li> </ul>
Tertiary	In-country and global education programmes, donors, World Bank, UN agencies, GEC, GPE, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To shape future investments and initiatives in Zimbabwe’s education sector.</li> <li>• To contribute to global education policy discussions.</li> <li>• To help garner additional funding for education in Zimbabwe.</li> <li>• To support civil society efforts to push for better teacher conditions and inclusive education policies.</li> </ul>

**How to use this report:** Policymakers and decision-makers may prioritise the Executive Summary and Section 4, while technical staff and education sector partners are encouraged to engage with Sections 2 and 3 for methodological detail, evidence, and Strength of Evidence.

The use and influence plan, developed during the inception phase, was also used to inform the evaluation. By providing guidance on the priorities of each stakeholder type and the potential application contexts, the plan contributed to shaping the evaluation and more specifically, the recommendations that were generated from this evaluation.

The final evaluation reports and linked dissemination activities will inform the development of the business case and concept note for the upcoming phases of the TEACH Programme. According to the FCDO Senior Responsible Owner (SRO), the timing of these documents remains uncertain until the budgetary and strategic impacts of the recent cuts are further clarified. While clear timeframes are unavailable, the core work of business case development will take place after the conclusion of this GEMFA contract, ensuring that the evaluation outputs will be on time to inform the business case development.

**Alignment with other stakeholders:** The evaluation was strongly aligned with the needs of the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) and other stakeholders in TEACH. MoPSE was involved from the outset, not only in informing the methodology and inception report, but also in approving the selection of the Athena team to undertake the work (including ensuring sufficient involvement of national research partners and experts) to ensure alignment of interests in the study. MoPSE also played a critical role in engaging sub-national PEDs and DSIs on behalf of the evaluation, in gaining access to GoZ schools, as well as in the co-creation of data analysis for EMIS. Other TEACH implementation partners were actively engaged throughout the study, with a particular emphasis on avoiding duplication by making full use of partner monitoring data from TEACH components as well as other existing evidence (see Annex 5.6). Finally, all partners were provided with an opportunity to validate findings at the draft stage of the final report, including providing updates and corrections where any factual inaccuracies within the report were found. Recommendations are designed to be forward looking and utilisation focussed, including considering the current context and future direction of FCDO and its partners.

Further information on the validation and dissemination of findings is explained in [Section 2.2.3](#). Additional information related to the use and influence plan is included in Annex 5.14.

### **1.4.3 Governance and management of the evaluation**

The evaluation delivery team consists of 10 core members, supported by researchers, enumerators, and field staff, ensuring a gender-balanced composition. The team has expertise in education, impact evaluation, gender and inclusion, and data analysis. The team is led by Mr. Jonathan France. Project delivery is supported by the project manager and quality assurance lead to ensure timely and high-quality outputs. The study upholds research ethics and safeguarding guidelines set by FCDO's Ethical Guidance (DFID, 2019), OECD-DAC Quality Standards (OECD, 2010), and Aid Transparency Standards (IATI), prioritising safeguarding principles, informed consent, and data protection. A robust three-tiered quality assurance framework, involving Athena's internal Quality Assurance Lead, the FCDO Zimbabwe team, and EQUALS, ensures methodological rigour and alignment with learning priorities. Stakeholder engagement follows the United Nations Evaluation Group principles,

fostering collaboration and inclusivity throughout the evaluation process. Further details on the evaluation team included in Annex 5.11.

## Section 2: Methodology

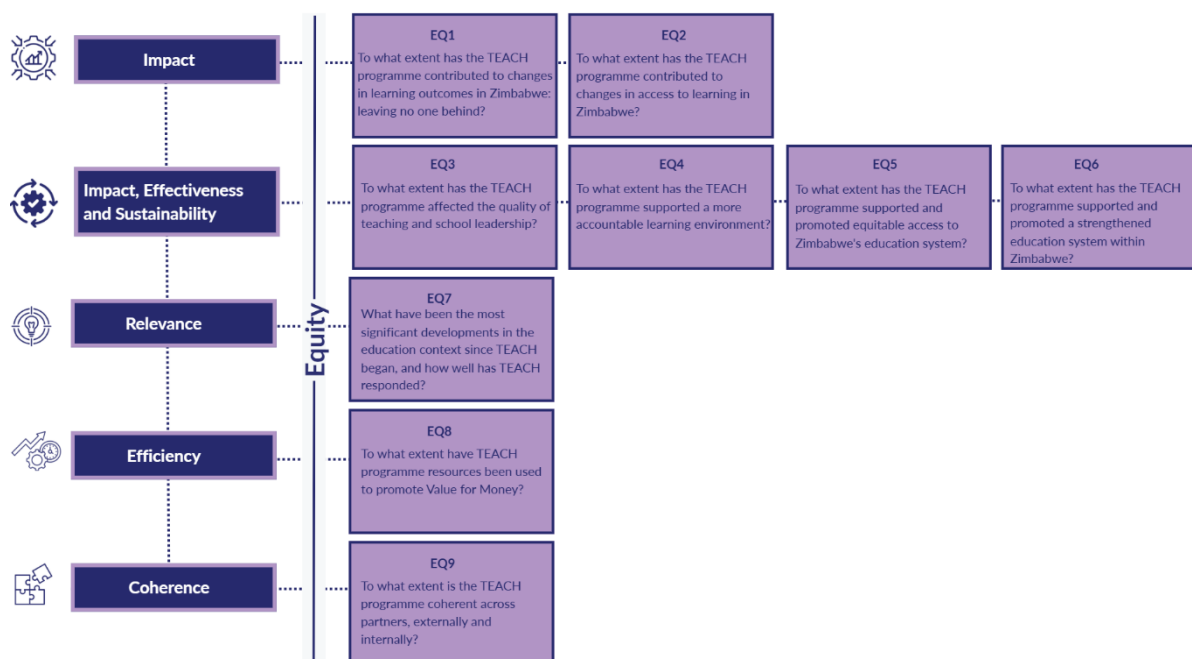
This section details the evaluation approach and methodology for assessing the TEACH Programme. It also discusses the limitations of the study and the ethical considerations associated with the study.

### 2.1 Evaluation approach and questions

The evaluation questions (EQs) are framed by the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria (Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency: Value for Money, Impact), with a focus on measuring the effectiveness and equity-contribution of TEACH against the anticipated results in the ToC and log frame, using a mixed-methods approach. The quantitative evidence from national datasets (EMIS and ZELA) and primary surveys were triangulated with qualitative insights from stakeholders at national, provincial, district, and school levels to generate insights on the TEACH Programme’s contribution towards improvements in the education ecosystem in Zimbabwe.

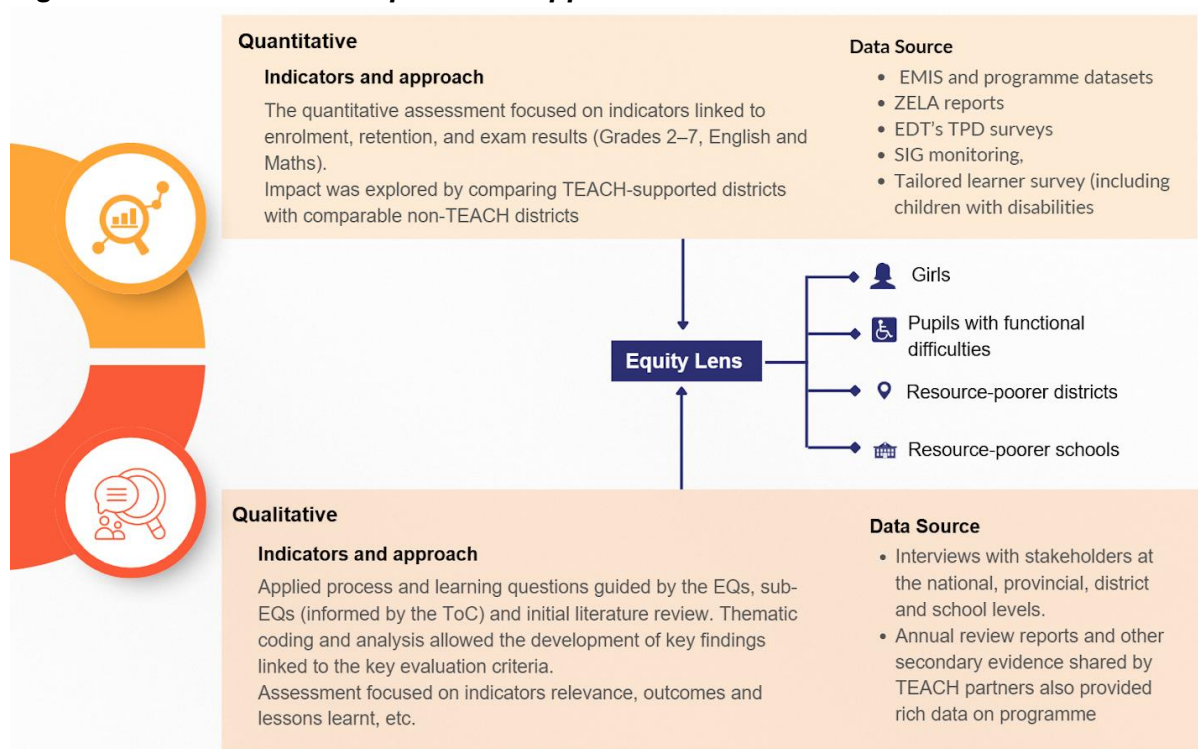
The EQs for this study build upon the objectives and learning priorities of the study. Supporting sub-EQs were developed based on a literature review of relevant programme documents, introductory calls with implementation partners, review of secondary data sources and validation sessions with FCDO. The use of Sub-EQs allows the evaluation team to disaggregate broader EQs into specific areas of interest to effectively and precisely map relevant data sources and ensure that supporting evidence can be gathered and triangulated across multiple sources to improve strength of evidence for each EQ. Detailed Evaluation Framework is included in Annex 5.3.

**Figure 6: Evaluation Questions**



The evaluation used mixed-methods combining secondary and primary data.

**Figure 7: Quantitative and qualitative approaches used in the evaluation**



This mixed-methods approach allowed both a system-wide assessment of access and quality and a granular understanding of TEACH’s contributions to the education landscape in Zimbabwe.

More details on the approach, the complete evaluation framework, including all sub-EQs, judgement criteria, data sources, stakeholder sample, and analysis methods can be found in Annex 5.4, Annex 5.5 and Annex 5.7.

## 2.2 Data collection and analysis

A variety of methods and techniques were used to carry out the evaluation. The evaluation drew on the interlinked methodological components mentioned below across two workstreams:

### 2.2.1 Desk review and secondary data

The evaluation employed two complementary streams of non-systematic literature review and analysis to establish a robust secondary evidence base.

First, **national education datasets** – including EMIS (2019-2024), ZELA (2021-2023), and Education Sector Performance Reports (ESPRs) that coincided with the TEACH implementation period – were systematically reviewed to assess overall system performance and learner outcomes. These sector-wide data sources provided critical insights into trends in enrolment, progression, retention, and learning outcomes, offering a macro-level benchmark against which TEACH’s contributions could be situated.

Second, the evaluation team conducted an extensive desk review of programme-related documents spanning all TEACH components, including:

- FCDO planning documents (e.g., Addendum to the Business Case, memorandum of understanding, and other records accessed through DevTracker).
- Programme-level strategic documentation, such as the 2019-2024 Annual Reviews, successive versions of the Logical Framework, Value for Money (VfM) assessments, and Accountable Grant agreements across TEACH components.
- Financial and grant-related assessments, including SIG Verification Reports, SIG Expenditure Analysis Reports, SIG Rapid Assessments, and SIG Fraud Reports.
- Implementation partner reports and monitoring data, covering inception reports, approval letters, implementation and annual plans, progress reports (annual, bi-annual, and quarterly), baseline studies, MERL tools, benefit statements, case studies, and other monitoring data (e.g. TPD data covering training attendance, teacher and leader competencies, and teaching quality/classroom observations; SAGE Learner Progress Assessment).
- MoPSE policy and operational school monitoring documentation, such as Consolidated National Fuel Narrative Reports; inspection-related circulars, dashboards and case studies.
- TEACH research studies co-produced with MoPSE, including the Women in Research Leadership Study, Zero Percent Pass Rate Study, and Blended Study Report among other documents.

Documents were accessed through multiple channels, including direct provision by TEACH implementation partners (UNICEF, EDT, Think Equal, Plan International), retrieval from FCDO’s DevTracker, and liaison with MoPSE to access sub-national repositories. The cut-off period for document review, coding, analysis, and triangulation was April 2025. However, given the iterative nature of the evaluation, the evaluation team also incorporated additional evidence received from IPs (Implementation Partners) up to August 2025, including the Think Equal Annual Narrative Report 2024-2025 and the EDT Third Bi-Annual Assessment Report 2025. This ensured that analysis reflected the most recent updates on key results related to access to education and learning outcomes. To maintain rigour, inclusion criteria were applied: only documents that directly addressed activities under each TEACH component, or that were produced by implementation partners were retained for in-depth analysis. Documents with little or no relation to TEACH were excluded, except where they provided necessary validation or contextual grounding of programme timelines; for example, documentation from SAGE Phase I as it does not fall in the ambit of the TEACH programme.

Taken together, this corpus of documentation provided foundational evidence on the key results achieved by TEACH during its implementation period. It also enabled the evaluation team to identify knowledge gaps requiring further exploration or corroboration/triangulation through primary data collection (Key Informant Interviews [KIIs]), Focus Group Discussions [FGDs] and the impact assessment. Triangulation strengthened the evaluation team’s ability to estimate the range of likely impacts, test the relevance and plausibility of change pathways, and situate TEACH’s achievements within broader sectoral dynamics.

### 2.2.2 Primary data collection – national and sub-national stakeholders

Data collection followed a multi-tier approach to capture insights from different levels of the education ecosystem in Zimbabwe. Primary data collection kicked off with a dedicated field visit to Zimbabwe by the Team Lead and the Zimbabwe Education Expert to engage with strategic national-level partners of TEACH. These consultations included discussions with FCDO Zimbabwe, MoPSE and other TEACH Implementation Partners. In addition to these consultations, interviews were also conducted with non-TEACH development actors, including international development actors (Campaign for Female Education [CAMFED], etc.) and Zimbabwean education sector stakeholders such as Education Coalition of Zimbabwe (ECOZI) and Provincial Teachers' Union Zimbabwe (PTUZ). List of national-level respondents interviewed as part of data collection is included in Annex 5.4.

The evaluation team also engaged with a number of primary sub-national TEACH stakeholders through KIIs, FGDs and surveys (after pilot testing of select tools) at the provincial, district and school levels as mentioned in Table 3 below (more details on details and demographics of school-level learners' are provided in the Annex 5.4). The data collection teams conducted a pilot in Zimbabwe the week following the training, to test the quantitative surveys with learners and PwFD, and qualitative guides for KIIs with the teachers and the head teachers. KII guides were slightly shortened after the pilot, since it was observed that the original tools required more than an hour to be administered.

Applied sampling approaches: A multi-method sampling approach was applied, incorporating purposive and snowball sampling to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives from key stakeholders. Sampling was carried out in three levels:

- a) **National-level respondents:** They were selected primarily through purposive sampling, based on their role, expertise, and experience with the TEACH Programme. The strategy targeted stakeholders critical to programme delivery and outcomes. Additional respondents (EDT coordinators) were identified through referrals from initial key informants. The full list of 35 individual National Level Respondents is included in Annex 5.4.
- b) **Provincial- and district-level respondents** including education officers, school inspectors and other education system officials: The sampling at provincial level focused on eight focal provinces (with a high number of TEACH implementations in rural settings). Within each province, five districts were selected for further data collection at the school level for a total of 40 districts. These districts were randomly selected, ensuring that in each province we sampled four districts receiving both the TPD and the SIG component, and one district receiving only the SIG component (when possible). KIIs were held with MoPSE provincial education officers or education system officials in up to five randomly selected provinces. KIIs with district education officers were also conducted in eight out of the 40 randomly selected districts.
- c) **School-level respondents:** Data were collected in one school per district. To ensure representation, within each province, at least one school from each category (P3, S3, Primary Satellite, and Secondary Satellite) was included in the sample where possible. Within each district, a sample frame was created of schools that had received the SIG for at least two years and whose teachers and head teachers had participated in the TPD component. Schools were randomly sampled until two criteria were met: (1) Within each province, each of the four school types (P3, S3, Primary Satellite, and Secondary Satellite)

was represented; and (2) The five selected schools were drawn from different eligible districts within each province (except where sufficient districts did not qualify). The table below identifies the respondent categories, the target sample, and sample achieved during data collection.

**Table 3: Stakeholders interviewed and surveyed for the TEACH evaluation**

#	Method	Stakeholders Interviewed	Target Sample	Achieved Sample	Details
1	KII – National level	MoPSE, FCDO, UNICEF, EDT, Plan International, Think Equal	Six teams	Six teams (28 individuals in total)	Interviews (including follow-ups) with TEACH implementation partners validated emerging themes, addressed evidence gaps from the desk review and fieldwork, and enriched understanding of TEACH’s contributions to implementation results as well as systemic and policy reforms. Additional consultations provided comparative perspectives on TEACH’s positioning within the broader education sector.
		GPE, CAMFED, ECOZI, World Vision	Four teams	Four teams (Four individuals)	
		Teachers’ Unions; Centre for Teacher Education - University of Zimbabwe; EDT Coordinators	Three	One teacher Union (PTUZ), Two EDT district coordinators (Three individuals total)	Provided rich evidence on how TEACH interventions influenced access, teaching quality, equity, and broader school improvement.
2	KII – Provincial, district, school level	Teachers	80	79	Interviews with school-level stakeholders captured oversight roles and reflections on TEACH’s contribution to system performance, monitoring, and policy uptake. Provincial officials deepened insights into TEACH’s role in embedding SIGs, fuel
		Head Teachers	40	40	
		Provincial and district officials	15	14	

					support, and TPD within education delivery.
3	FGD – School level	School Development Committees	40	40	Interviews with individuals with direct involvement in school decision-making captured perspective on TEACH components’ implementation at school level.
		Parents	40	40	
4	Survey – School level	Student survey	200	210	Provided rich evidence on how TEACH interventions influenced access, teaching quality, equity, and broader school improvement.
		Survey with Pupils with Functional Difficulties	40	38	

Source: *Sampling Plan and Data Collection Progress (Athena Evaluation team, 2025)*

### 2.2.3 Analysis and triangulation

**Qualitative analysis:** For the **qualitative thematic analysis**, the evaluation team employed a structured thematic approach guided by a carefully developed coding framework. This framework was designed to capture evidence in a systematic and transparent manner, drawing on both secondary documentation as well as KIIs and FGDs.

The coding framework was explicitly mapped to the evaluation framework that aligns with the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. Given the wide spectrum of documentation reviewed, ranging from education sector reports to TEACH Programme-specific documentation, the coding structure was organised into four overarching segments: Education sector context; TEACH Programme background; TEACH effectiveness (aligned to OECD-DAC evaluation criteria); and Complementarity of TEACH with other education actors and programmes. Within these, themes were identified under each segment, which were then refined into parent codes and sub-codes. To specifically capture the effectiveness of TEACH components (i.e., SIG, TPD, SEL, and SAGE Phase II), the coding framework drew on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. This ensured that findings on relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and sustainability were systematically captured. The same structured coding structure applied to both secondary documents and primary qualitative data, ensuring consistency of analysis and comparability across data sources.

Additionally, coding combined both deductive and inductive strategies: deductive coding was anchored to the pre-defined evaluation questions, while inductive coding allowed space for emergent themes to surface directly from the data. This dual approach ensured that the analysis remained closely aligned with the evaluation framework while remaining open to

unanticipated insights. This process enabled us to identify causal mechanisms, contextual enablers and barriers, as well as unintended consequences. To ensure robustness, the coding framework was designed to allow cross-analysis across multiple categories and levels, including school type (primary/secondary), registration status (registered/satellite), geographic context (rural/urban), and GEDSI dimensions. This branching ensured that stakeholder perceptions were not treated in isolation but analysed comparatively, highlighting convergences and divergences across contexts. In the case of interview transcripts, where perceptions converged across different stakeholder groups, such as parents and teachers, it was noted explicitly. Equally, when divergence appeared, the contradictions were flagged rather than smoothing it over. This ensured that the synthesis remained balanced, with careful attribution to stakeholder type and province for validation.

**Quantitative analysis:** For the quantitative analysis, primary data collected from schools (surveys with learners and Pupils with Functional Difficulties [PwFDs]) was merged with secondary data from the Zimbabwe EMIS, data from UNICEF on the distribution of SIG, data from EDT on assessments of teachers and school leaders, and district-level summary statistics of student performance on the ZELA examination in 2023 and 2024.

The quantitative analysis is centred on three main components. First, the analysis explored general trends in educational access and learning outcomes in Zimbabwe, focused on indicators in the TEACH evaluation log frame (changes in learning outcomes, enrolment, retention, improved teaching capacity, etc.). Using triangulation with the qualitative data, we explored how the TEACH Programme is contributing to changes in these outcomes of interest. Second, inferential analyses were used to try and draw casual links (or at least statistical associations) between specific components of the teach programming and improved learning outcomes, enrolment and retention (including girls and Pupils with Functional Difficulties [PwFDs]), improved teaching and school management, improved access to school resources, and improved school monitoring and supervision. While our ability to draw strong inferences was severely limited by lack of access to school-level EMIS data (see Annex 5.8 on limitations), the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression approach was used to examine associations between school improvement grants and school enrolment and access to learning materials. Finally, the pre-post was used to examine the impacts of the Teacher Professional Development Programme on teaching quality, school management, school monitoring and supervision and comparisons of districts with varying levels of TEACH intervention to explore differences in learner outcomes.

In the table below, the various data sources included in the quantitative analysis and the kinds of analysis applied to each of them have been summarised.

**Table 4: Data sources used in quantitative analysis**

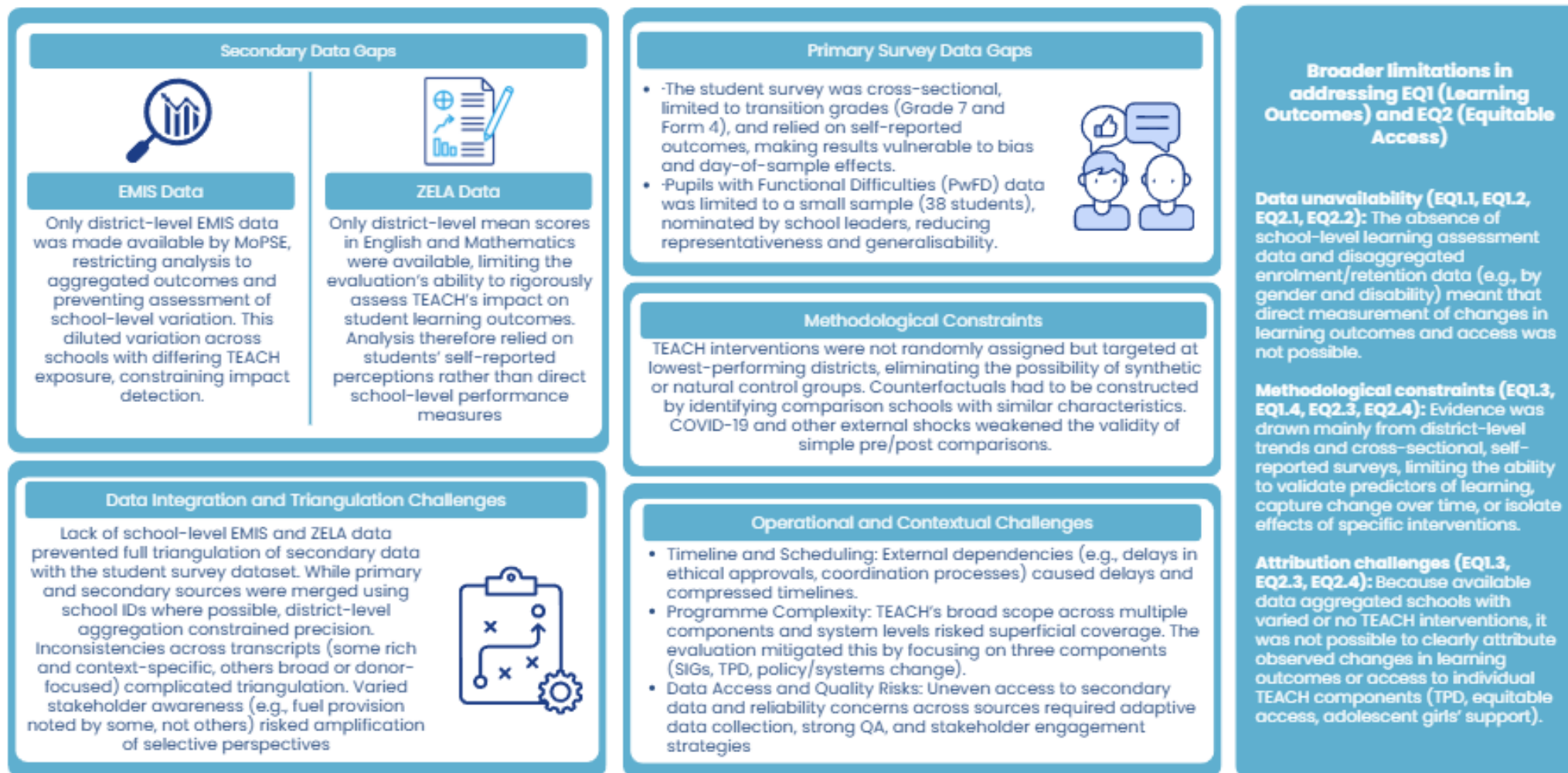
Dataset	Analytical Approaches
Learner survey (primary data)	Summary statistics of student self-reports on learning progress, accessibility, and perceptions of teaching quality. Regression analysis to see if student perceptions covary with TPD training inputs at the district level.

PwFDs survey (primary data)	Summary statistics of PwFDs perception of inclusion and accessibility at school.
Zimbabwe Education Information System Platform	Summary statistics of enrolment and dropout (by gender and disability status), availability of learning materials, and pass rates. Regression analysis to examine relationships between various TEACH components and enrolment and accessibility of learning materials.
UNICEF SIG Administrative Register	Regression analysis to examine how frequency and magnitude of SIG investment at the district level predicts changes in enrolment, access, and student perceptions of learning.
EDT Data on TPD training attendance, lesson observations, school leader competency assessments, and teacher surveys	Summary statistics of changes in teacher proficiency and school leader competency. Regression analysis to examine associations between training intensity at the district level is associated with student self-reporting of learning outcomes and enrolment.
District-level mean ZELA scores for 2023 and 2024 obtained from MoPSE	Summary statistics of district-level ZELA performance

## 2.2.4 Implication of data limitations and deviations in the research plan

The TEACH evaluation faced several constraints that affected the depth and rigour of analysis.

**Figure 8: Challenges faced during TEACH impact evaluation**



As indicated in the above figure, primary data collection allowed the evaluation team to identify perceived improvements and contextual barriers, yet without access to school-level ZELA and EMIS data, it was challenging to validate these perceptions against independently verifiable learning and enrolment outcomes, limiting the extent to which self-reported change could be corroborated.

Additionally, limited availability of component-level external evaluations constrained the evaluation's ability to draw on third-party assessments of specific programmatic components.

**Deviation from the research plan:** All qualitative analysis methods, and most quantitative methods implemented as part of this evaluation were aligned to and implemented according to the Inception Report. Deviations from planned secondary quantitative analysis arose due to the lack of data granularity provided to the evaluation team by MoPSE, in particular for student learning outcomes: English and Math. The evaluation team envisaged accessing some secondary data sources such as student learning outcomes at the student level, and if this was not available, at the school level. However, after multiple requests with support from FCDO were made by the evaluation team to access this data, including meetings between the evaluation team and MoPSE to explain the planned analysis and the insights this analysis could bring to better understand and demonstrate the impact of the programme, it was not possible to access this data at the individual student, or school level. This approach limited the evaluation team's ability to conduct robust econometric analysis for student learning outcomes as it was not possible to observe variation amongst students or schools within aggregated data at the district level. Consequentially, this can dilute or mask some potential TEACH Programme component impacts or contributions to student learning outcomes. For example, it was not possible to determine the impact of SIGs on learning outcomes as SIGs were administered at the school level and not all schools within the same district received a SIG.

### 2.2.5 Strength of evidence

Strength of evidence was assessed as 'Strong', 'Medium' or 'Weak', based upon relevance and quality of quantitative and qualitative data related to each evaluation question (and for example TEACH outcomes of interest), as anticipated in the evaluation framework, and the strength of triangulation across secondary and primary evidence sources.

## 2.3 Ethical consideration, inclusion and safeguarding

Rigorous ethical standards were maintained throughout all evaluation activities, implementing comprehensive safeguarding protocols that prioritise participant welfare, data protection, and methodological integrity. The evaluation approach was anchored in internationally recognised frameworks including FCDO's Ethical Guidance<sup>3</sup>, OECD-DAC Quality Standards<sup>4</sup>, and Aid

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<sup>3</sup> FCDO's *Ethical Guidance* – UK Government's DFID Ethical Guidance for Research, Evaluation and Monitoring Activities (May 2019) - [DFID ethical guidance for research, evaluation and monitoring activities](#)

<sup>4</sup> OECD-DAC *Quality Standards* – OECD, *Quality Standards for Development Evaluation*, DAC Guidelines & Reference Series, 2010 - [Quality Standards for Development Evaluation | OECD](#)

Transparency Standards<sup>5</sup> ensuring that all research activities meet the highest professional and ethical benchmarks while adhering to 'Do No Harm' principles. Overarching principles followed by the evaluation include:

1. **Core ethical principles:** The evaluation used rigorous methods to ensure objective, unbiased, impartial and accurate findings. Strict consent protocols ensured anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, with special safeguards for children and marginalised populations. GDPR-compliant systems ensured secure data handling, storage, and transfer to protect participant information and research integrity.
2. **Child safeguarding protocols:** The evaluation adhered to Zimbabwe's ethical standards with approvals from MRCZ, RCZ, MoPSE, and FCDO; the team underwent safeguarding training with background checks; child-sensitive tools prioritised safety and well-being; and strict compliance with FCDO and UNICEF safeguarding guidelines was maintained.
3. **Gender, Equity, Diversity, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) integration:** The evaluation integrates GEDSI principles through a gender-balanced, diverse team, inclusive design and sampling, questions aligned with the 'Leave No One Behind' framework, and bias mitigation via balanced recruitment and training to ensure accurate representation of marginalised populations.
4. **Ethical approval:** Given the nature of the evaluation requiring working with children, strict ethical standards were maintained. This involved the formal ethical review and approval process to ensure that the research and tools are in alignment with the national standards relevant to the focus of the study. The evaluation plan underwent a two-stage ethical review by the Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe (MRCZ) and the Research Council of Zimbabwe (RCZ), ensuring compliance with ethical standards and considerations for working with children. This included the review and approval of the research design, data collection plan, data collection protocols, consent forms, ethical guidelines for enumerators, data collection tools, details of the field-research team and supporting letters from FCDO Zimbabwe and MoPSE. The review also included assessing the implemented safeguarding considerations in terms of data protection and access to personal data and managing data integrity during the evaluation. IRB Approval Certificate included in Annex 5.13.
5. **Objectivity and addressing biases:** The evaluation team focused on collecting a variety of perspectives and compiling sources of information to ensure the analysis maintains its neutrality and is not unduly influenced by any stakeholder or group. Data collection risked biases such as overemphasis on policy perspectives, social desirability in school responses, and power dynamics limiting openness, especially among children, women, and marginalised populations. To mitigate these, the evaluation used triangulation across respondent types, inclusive sampling to ensure diverse representation, age-appropriate and sensitive tools, and gender-balanced, trained field teams. Randomised school selection and systematic analysis further minimised selection and interviewer bias, ensuring findings reflect a broad range of stakeholder experiences.
6. **Addressing conflict of interest:** To avoid conflicts of interest, the evaluation was conducted by an independent team with no prior involvement in the design or implementation of the TEACH Programme. Methodologies, selection criteria, and

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<sup>5</sup> *Aid Transparency Standards (IATI Standard)* – International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) – rules & guidance for publishing aid and development activity data – [International Aid Transparency Initiative - iatistandard.org](https://iatistandard.org)

reporting processes were transparently documented to prevent undue influence. Oversight mechanisms, including feedback and validation across stakeholders and internal quality assurance, provided additional safeguards. Balanced participation across diverse stakeholders, and triangulation of information from multiple sources, further ensure impartiality and credibility of findings. The team has also been able to work freely and without any interference during the project.

7. **Privacy, anonymity, and data protection:** Confidentiality is maintained, and data is anonymised to protect children’s identities. Research followed protocols and practices to ensure that children are not exposed to risks due to their participation. Anonymity of sub-national respondents is maintained to ensure no adverse effects may result from their participation in the evaluation. For data management and protection, the evaluation has followed standard practices aligned with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) for all collected data. All data is securely stored, and accessible only to the core evaluation team.

## Section 3: Findings

### 3.1 Relevance

This section presents key and supporting findings for EQ7, ‘*What have been the most significant developments in the education context since TEACH began, and how well has TEACH responded?*’. Relevant areas covered include TEACH’s alignment with evolving policies and reforms ([Section 3.1.1](#)), responsiveness to systemic shocks such as COVID-19 and climate events ([Section 3.1.2](#)), and integration of equity considerations into programme design and delivery ([Section 3.1.3](#)).

Strength of evidence	Strong
<p>There is a clear trail of secondary evidence sources confirming the relevance of TEACH and TEACH components to the education context of Zimbabwe, which the evaluation team was able to triangulate with diverse stakeholder interviews from multiple levels to confirm existing data as well as highlighting lessons learnt and areas for improvement. The range and depth of triangulated perspectives provide for <i>strong</i> confidence in the findings on relevance.</p>	

#### 3.1.1 Value added by TEACH in the education sector

**Key finding 1:** *The TEACH design has added significant value with the education context of Zimbabwe through adopting a comprehensive approach - targeting improved access, foundational learning, ECD, non-formal education and system resilience - and providing a platform for other education partners to target specific systems improvements. Gaps have included a focus on teacher retention and issues of Public Financial Management (PFM).*

**TEACH’s design is perceived to be highly relevant and adding value within Zimbabwe’s education sector and specifically its comprehensive, systems-level approach.** The obstacles to educational progress in Zimbabwe are complex and entrenched in structural inequalities. MoPSE (KII) highlighted several inter-related challenges such as deficits in infrastructure (classrooms, materials, power and online connectivity), high enrolment pressures, low reading proficiency, and dropout linked to early pregnancy and child marriage.

This necessitates comprehensive interventions, which furthermore build institutional capacity and sustainability. A range of national stakeholders and TEACH partners (KIIs) emphasised that the relevance of TEACH rests in its comprehensive practical and system-focussed approach to enhancing learning outcomes. TEACH's diverse package covering SIGs, TPD, SAGE, parental engagement, and enhanced data collection and school inspections, including inclusive pedagogies – directly addresses structural vulnerabilities (EMIS 2023; EMIS 2024) by improving school access, foundational literacy and numeracy, teacher capacity and instructional leadership, school accountability and leaving no child behind. In this way, the TEACH Programme has also served as a foundational mechanism to support the delivery of education reforms, equity and system-strengthening by other partners. This holistic approach is well-captured in the TEACH theory of change (Figure 5). Supporting this, an overwhelming majority of provincial and district-level education stakeholders viewed TEACH as highly relevant – particularly in rural satellite and secondary schools where basic infrastructure and teacher capacity to support school functionality are missing.

**A few important gaps were identified in TEACH's holistic approach, namely insufficient motivation and incentivisation of teachers, influencing various systems-blockages related to education finance, and coverage of some secondary schools.** Despite strong overall relevance, some stakeholders highlighted gaps. Teacher motivation and retention remain critically low, tied to remuneration packages and limited domestic financing (KIIs with EDT, UNICEF). It was reported that previous initiatives had attempted to tackle this issue, but that a sustainable solution within Zimbabwe is yet to be found. While TEACH is supporting MoPSE on a School Financing Policy ([Section 3.2](#)), systemic financing constraints continue to limit sustainability. Further downstream challenges were identified with regards to budget disbursement. Public Financial Management (PFM) interventions were said to have been discussed between FCDO and GPE, but were felt to be beyond TEACH's remit, at the time, as well as the skills of partners at the disposal of the programme in Zimbabwe (for example in the absence of World Bank presence) (KII with UNICEF, GPE). At the sub-national level, education department officials in four provinces noted uneven coverage from TEACH, with primary schools benefitting more consistently from SIGs, TPD, and monitoring, while some newly constructed satellite secondary schools (such as in Mutoko in Mashonaland East) remained excluded from teacher training and grants.

**Key finding 2:** *TEACH has progressively withdrawn from the SIG programme and community engagement interventions, due to a shift in TEACH's focus to sustainable systems change; this however left gaps in TEACH's holistic model.*

**SIG support for functional schools has been a critical but financially constrained component of TEACH.** Initially introduced as a flagship intervention under the Equitable Access component, SIGs were the largest investment under TEACH, supporting P3 and satellite schools in rural areas to improve their basic functionality. In 2019 SIGs – previously funded through the pooled Education Development Fund (EDF), which was also DFID-funded – reached 4,357 schools and supported over 1.2 million learners, backed by a substantial GBP10.8 million budget. By 2024-25, and following the withdrawal of KfW support, the total allocation to SIGs from TEACH and GPE had reduced to GBP3.2 million targeting 2,100 schools (with only 671 supported solely by TEACH). The grant amount per school remained modest, with a standard annual allocation of USD1,500 (with additional allocations for distance (USD50) and disability resource units (USD100)) to support broad geographic coverage and

reach all 72 districts. Pre-TEACH, special schools had received up to USD13,000 in 2013. This raised concerns about the trade-off between quantity and quality, and FCDO advised continued monitoring to ensure that inclusivity and learning standards were not compromised (TEACH Annual Review 2022-23). The 2023-2024 Annual Review stated that a more targeted investment model may be required. Stakeholders largely agreed, with one partner suggesting that a payment by results (PBR) model could have been introduced to SIGs to increase relevance (based on evidence of success in other countries), but that FCDO's later withdrawal from the component inhibited this.

**Over TEACH's lifespan, SIGs were de-prioritised and transitioned to GPE, due to financial constraints and sustainability concerns leaving a gap in TEACH's approach to equitable access.** FCDO and partners confirmed that FCDO would no longer provide the bulk of funding for SIG Regular beyond 2024, citing budgetary limitations (accelerated by the further UK Aid reduction to 0.3 percent), focus on foundational learning interventions, and FCDO's strategic shift away from direct grant funding to prioritise sustainability and sector-wide reform (including incentivising domestic financing arrangements). FCDO's exit strategy emphasised a planned handover of SIG Regular responsibilities to MoPSE and other partners, particularly UNICEF and GPE (Annual Review Report, 2023-2024). Nonetheless SIGs represented the key plank of FCDO's equitable access component (including support for marginalised girls and PwFD), within TEACH's holistic model. Following TEACH's withdrawal from SIG, several stakeholders were concerned about the lack of funding for basic school resourcing including from the Government of Zimbabwe considered an essential foundational component of other TEACH interventions such as TPD.

**Community engagement initiatives were introduced to ensure more widespread sensitisation on the benefits of learning and boost enrolment; however, their reduced scale left further gaps in TEACH's approach to equitable access.** Recognising that community-level awareness and engagement are critical to overcoming persistent barriers to enrolment and retention, particularly for girls and PwFD in remote areas, TEACH also introduced community outreach fairs and parental engagement. However, the former activity was discontinued, pending further evidence of effectiveness (TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024), whilst parental engagement activities, aimed at community mobilisation around enrolment in ECD, continued in only 6 districts. FCDO considers that alternative, potentially more sustainable models of community engagement could have been explored, for example further work strengthening School Development Committees (SDCs) to support regularised parent and community participation and tackle dropout. By contrast, MoPSE emphasised the importance of broad-based community engagement, mentioning that traditional village leaders need to be sensitised on the importance of education, especially for girls and PwFD, and held accountable for school attendance.

### 3.1.2 Responsiveness of TEACH to the policy context and external shocks

**Key finding 3:** *Since 2019, TEACH has proved responsive to changing policy priorities within Zimbabwe's education sector – including the Heritage Based Curriculum and ICT Policy - adapting core components and the log frame in response to these changes.*

**TEACH has progressively aligned with evolving education policy, from the Education Amendment Act to the Heritage-Based Curriculum, including through adaptations to TPD and new inclusive components such as SEL.** TEACH's relevance and systems-

focused approach is reflected in its alignment with the Government of Zimbabwe’s Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2021–2025), National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1), and SDG 4 – supporting MoPSE to deliver on key policy and operational goals. However, the introduction of the Heritage Based Curriculum (HBC, 2023) posed new demands for teachers, school leaders, and learners in Zimbabwe. Concurrently, TEACH’s diagnostic studies further showed that 25 percent of Grade 7 pupils and 14 percent of Form 4 pupils are “non-readers”, underscoring the need for expanded literacy interventions and remedial support. Responding to this, TEACH sought to embed Continuous Professional Development (CPD) within targeted schools, through TPD, with a focus on foundational learning, continuous assessment, inclusive teaching pedagogy (e.g. through the integration of the Practical and Inclusive Education Handbook) and a shared understanding with MoPSE on teacher profiles.

*TEACH-TPD is holistic and supports delivery of the curriculum*



TEACH later introduced new components, including SEL in 2023 to enhance early childhood well-being, which responded to the Early Learning Policy (2021) as well as to the HBC and its associated cultural values (alongside FCDO’s interest in promoting global educational innovation), as well as school safeguarding measures. Consequently, Provincial Education Directors (PEDs) and District School Inspectors (DSIs) credited TEACH with helping to “unpack the Heritage-Based Curriculum”, and for supporting the rollout of the Inclusive Education Policy. In settings with perceived stronger policy and curricular alignment (e.g. registered schools in Manicaland and Mashonaland West), TEACH was considered particularly relevant as a mechanism for operationalising national reforms. Further background on TPD and SEL are included in the boxes in Annex 5.9.

**TEACH has supported the roll-out blended learning pedagogies, including adaptations for low resource contexts, further aligning with curriculum reform and ICT policy.** TPD embedded blended delivery through WhatsApp and the Learning Passport (digital platforms used to host and deliver teacher training resources) to enable teachers to access digitised training materials and peer coaching and help bridge gaps between rural and urban schools (KII with MoPSE). Teachers and SDCs (especially in Midlands and Manicaland) confirmed use of digitised resource-sharing for peer learning. In addition, e-inspection tools and dashboards introduced at national and provincial levels reinforced data-driven supervision, aligned with the E-Governance agenda for education systems strengthening ([Section 3.5](#)). Head teachers and PEDs across multiple provinces observed how TEACH had equipped officers with laptops and trained them in digital reporting. Despite these advancements in digital capacity, the TEACH Business Case (Addendum 2025) highlights the lack of internet connectivity as a systemic constraint to achieving equitable and quality learning outcomes, particularly in rural and under-resourced schools. PEDs, head teachers and parents indicated poor internet and power as “critical barriers to ICT use”, underscoring how unreliable access to electricity is widening the digital divide between rural and urban schools. TEACH’s introduction of Solarisation in 2023, in rural areas without grid access, was therefore highly valued by MoPSE (KII) for enhancing access to ICTs (essential for delivering inclusive pedagogies), as well as for boosting teacher productivity and motivation (“*it produces ripple effects on both teaching and learning*”). Some PEDs, DSIs, and head teachers viewed solarisation as a key factor distinguishing TEACH schools from others. In parallel, TPD

adopted low-tech and offline blended training approaches – such as WhatsApp sessions, SD cards, and self-study kits – to address persistent connectivity gaps. Plan International also leveraged solar-powered ICT devices and mobile-based platforms like SMS and WhatsApp to deliver learning content to out-of-school girls in areas without internet access.

**TEACH periodically realigned its log frame in response to these changes and funding allocations.** Several activities, particularly those related to education system strengthening (e.g. EMIS publication, MoPSE staff training) were also phased out due to the completion of these investments. However, despite multiple iterations to the TEACH ToC and log frame, TEACH has maintained its focus on its core outcomes, including enhancing access, quality learning and equity.

**Key finding 4:** *The design of TEACH has proved flexible in responding to external shocks, through rapid adaptations to promote continuity of learning and providing psychosocial support, helping to enhance the resilience of the education sector in Zimbabwe.*

**TEACH introduced blended learning including e-content and radio/TV lessons, Open and Distance Learning, as well as catch-up strategies, to support continuity of learning during COVID-19 and Zimbabwe’s subsequent cholera outbreaks, economic turbulence, and natural disasters like Cyclone Idai.** During the COVID-19 outbreak, the dropout rate at Form 4 surged from 15.9 percent in 2018 to 19.5 percent in 2021 and schools remained closed for extended periods (Annual Review, 2022-2023). The comprehensive and flexible approach of TEACH ensured that it was central to supporting sector resilience during COVID-19, enabling flexible reallocations, catch-up learning, and continuation of CPD, despite delays in procurement and uneven distribution of materials (Education Sector Strategic Plan 2021–2025). Teachers, head teachers and PEDs described using radio, TV, and printed materials to sustain learning during COVID-19 closures, linking blended approaches with continuity even where devices and materials were minimal (reported from Mashonaland West, Manicaland, Masvingo, and Midlands, and by the PTUZ). Some of the specific adaptations deployed by TEACH to promote learning continuity, especially amongst vulnerable populations, include the following:

- UNICEF moved **SIG** verification and rapid assessments online using tools like RapidPro SMS to confirm receipt of supplies and cut travel costs (before since reverting back to offline verification) (KII with UNICEF). Additionally, procurement of radios (through catch-up radio lessons) was critical in mitigating learning losses among marginalised learners during school closures (Annual Review 2021-2022, 2022-2023; KII with UNICEF).
- Through the Learning Passport, first deployed by UNICEF in 2021, TEACH digitised **TPD** modules and leadership resources to support professional learning continuity. Post-COVID, this was expanded to include remedial resources, diagnostic tools, and compressed syllabi to address urgent learning needs (KII with EDT). Concurrently, TPD incorporated key lessons from the pandemic such as integrating the tracking of non-readers into its diagnostic tools.
- **SAGE Phase II** sustained learning and safeguarded well-being by leveraging four support pathways (e-learning, radio-based, TV, ODL) and lockdown adaptations (door-to-door, phone calls, small groups, static hubs). The programme also proved adaptable to broader shocks such as drought and inflation, equipping Community Educators with adaptive strategies to sustain learner engagement including maintaining consistent contact with

students facing heightened vulnerabilities. SAGE also partnered with MoPSE to provide learners with access to the school feeding programme, aiming to boost attendance in areas severely impacted by drought.

- Finally, following the prolonged school closures during COVID-19, TEACH responded with support for SEL, as well as psychosocial support especially for adolescent girls affected by early pregnancy and marriage.

**Log frame output and outcome targets were also amended in response to external shocks.** To avoid overambitious targets amid such external shocks, log frame milestones, for example for teachers and school heads reached, were revised downward from 87,934 to 70,830, following validation from MoPSE’s district-level officers. In some cases, outcome targets were adapted in response to lost learning time. The Grade 7 pass rate target was reduced from 52.8 percent to 47 percent, and Form 4 from 33 percent to 30 percent (Addendum to Business Case, 2025; Annual Review, 2021–2022, 2023–2024).

### 3.1.3 GEDSI relevance of TEACH

**Key finding 5:** *TEACH demonstrates strong relevance to GEDSI priorities through aligning with national GEDSI goals and focusing on capacity development for inclusive teaching and leadership, targeted support for marginalised populations, and progressively disaggregated monitoring systems. However, the programme does not fully account for persistent structural GEDSI gaps found especially among satellite schools, such as lack of infrastructure, specialist personnel and assistive devices, and the underlying drivers that exclude marginalised learners, especially boy learners.*

**TEACH made a strong commitment to building inclusive teaching and leadership capacities, particularly through TPD and SAGE Phase II.** A major TEACH milestone was the rollout of inclusive education resources. The Inclusive Education Handbook was distributed to 9,625 schools, offering frontline staff practical guidance to create inclusive learning environments (TEACH Annual Review 2020–2021). A dedicated Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) Module was also developed and integrated into the national TPD framework, for rollout from September 2023, with an ambitious target of reaching 44,000 teachers in 2024 (TEACH Annual Review 2021–2022). Teachers with special needs received additional support, including 238 session guides in braille and large print, while 87 visually impaired learners received large-print materials (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024). TPD also aligned with national goals on STEM, SRHR, and health education for girls, and promoted women’s leadership. SAGE Phase II component demonstrated deliberate attention to multi-layered exclusion experienced by marginalised populations, through an ecosystem approach to inclusion spanning the household, school, and community levels. 261 adapted learner workbooks and 209 disability directories were disseminated, and a disability inclusion toolkit to support learners in Accelerated Teaching and Learning (ATL) sessions was co-developed by Christian Blind Mission (CBM) and the Open University, along with inclusive pedagogy and assessment tools for Community Educators (SAGE TEACH Annual Report 2023–2024). Finally, CBM trained Mastercraft instructors to better support girls with disabilities in vocational pathways (SAGE TEACH Annual Report 2023–2024). Local stakeholders (including SDCs, head teachers and teachers) generally viewed programme components – such as education re-entry guidelines for girls and disability inclusion – as supporting the broader policy aim of “no child left behind”. Most stakeholder groups also agreed that TEACH addressed the priority

to strengthen teachers' capacity to address the needs of girls and PwFD, through improving teaching confidence, patience, and inclusivity.

**TEACH did not account fully for the resource disparities across schools.** Despite strong agreement on GEDSI alignment particularly amongst national stakeholders, many school leaders considered that the programme's attention to structural gaps was uneven, including accounting fully for the resource disparities across school types, especially in satellite and other under-resourced schools, including in staffing capacity (officials and headteachers in Masvingo and Matabeleland North). Moreover, whilst standard SIG allocations were supplemented by USD50 for remote schools and USD100 for those with disability resource units, the design of SIG funding did not sufficiently address the full spectrum of school development needs, particularly in institutions with large enrolments and extensive infrastructure gaps (interviews with headteachers, SDCs, and officials, especially reported in Manicaland, Masvingo and Midlands). In particular, the scope of the SIG grants fell short of addressing the full range of infrastructure deficits of satellite schools, such as inadequate WASH facilities, contributing to absenteeism among girls, especially during menstruation.

**Significant gaps in targeting boys were highlighted at the district and school levels.** Although TEACH prioritised girls and PwFD, emerging vulnerabilities among boys, especially in economically depressed or mining-affected areas, in provinces such as Matabeleland North and Manicaland, were largely left unaddressed. Dropout due to early labour, including gold panning, was rising among boys in some provinces, yet few interventions specifically targeted their needs (headteachers and officials). Community interventions, such as awareness campaigns, overwhelmingly framed dropout as a girls' issue, rendering boys as one of the most invisible vulnerable learner populations that is marginally targeted and at a higher risk of being left behind.

*We focus a lot on girls, but we are losing our boys*

- DSI, Chimanimani, Manicaland



**The design of the TEACH Programme prioritised the revision of its monitoring framework to reflect inclusion.** New performance indicators were introduced to measure support for marginalised girls, with disaggregation by sex and disability where possible (TEACH Annual Review 2022–2023). A recalibration of TEACH's logframe to shift from school-level to child-level metrics enhanced the accuracy of programme reach estimates. Key indicators were also amended to track the number and proportion of female school leaders and teachers with disabilities (TWDs), aiming to surpass the previous 3 percent representation benchmark (TEACH Annual Review 2022–2023). Teacher training indicators were similarly refined to measure the uptake of gender-responsive and inclusive pedagogy. At a systems level, TEACH worked to embed the Washington Group Questions (WGQs), which provide an internationally validated framework for GEDSI, within EMIS. These measures also aimed to reinforce the use of disaggregated data in district-level planning and supervision by increasing DSIs' capacity to track school re-entry for girls and identify learners with disabilities, representing a shift in how inclusion is monitored and reported (as reported in Manicaland and Mashonaland Central). For additional information on relevance and adaptability of TPD component to curriculum reform, relevance of SEL component to changes in the education

context and enhancing access to education for adolescent girls through SAGE Phase II, please refer to Annex 5.9.

### 3.2 Coherence

This section presents findings for EQ9, ‘*To what extent is the TEACH Programme coherent across partners, externally and internally?*’ The analysis focuses on governance and partnership arrangements of FCDO with government entities such as MoPSE, collaboration with other donors and NGOs including GPE ([Section 3.2.1](#)), and coherence across TEACH’s own components ([Section 3.2.2](#)), including on equity. The analysis highlights TEACH’s added value in providing holistic, system-linked support, combining TPD, strengthened school leadership, inspection, EMIS strengthening, and equity-focused interventions like SAGE and Solarisation. The section also reflects on weaker areas, including fragmented coordination at the district level and limited cross-sectoral institutionalisation of GEDSI concerns.

Strength of evidence	Strong
Comprehensive programme and governance documentation underpins the assessment of coherence, combined with multiple first-hand perspectives from partners engaged in TEACH coordination and delivery. Many of these (for example GPE) were longstanding partners of TEACH, and hence able to track changes and improvements in coherence alongside TEACH and FCDO’s contribution. Therefore, strength of evidence for coherence is rated as <i>Strong</i> .	

#### 3.2.1 Education sector coherence

**Key Finding 6:** *TEACH-MoPSE collaboration has matured into a structured model of governance, with FCDO supporting enhanced coordination platforms and co-implementation, which have strengthened coherence between the two lead TEACH partners (and with GPE) and across the education sector more generally.*

**TEACH has significantly contributed to the evolution of a more structured and strategic education sector governance model in Zimbabwe, including central coordination platforms, steering committees and technical working groups.** FCDO, as the recognised coordinating agency, worked closely with the Government to strengthen alignment. Mechanisms evolved from fragmented bilateral engagements in 2019 to a coordinated, multi-tiered programme governance system by 2023–24, underpinned by formal structures including the Education Coordination Group (ECG) and TEACH Implementation Committee (IC). The recently drafted Education Sector Coordination Terms of Reference (ToR) (2025) reflects a further shift toward more integrated and government-owned mechanisms. While the ECG remains the primary high-level policy forum for strategic coordination (whilst offering expanded representation from multiple ministries, including Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development (MoHTEISTD), and Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (MoICT), as needed), an Education Partnerships Steering Committee (EPSC) now provides greater operational coordination across a wide range of partners. Moreover, Technical Working Groups (TWGs) – covering learner welfare; quality teaching and learning; the curriculum; and climate change, education in emergencies and infrastructure - are being institutionalised.

**Reformed education governance bodies have enabled closer policy alignment, co-design of interventions, and joint implementation under TEACH (for example shared school monitoring).** Enhanced governance structures have facilitated partnerships of TEACH Implementing Partners with MoPSE technical units – like the Learner Welfare and Psychological Services (LePS) and Curriculum Development and Technological Services (CDTS) – supporting policy alignment and capacity building (Education Sector Coordination Draft ToR; KIIs with MoPSE). Through these structures, EDT jointly developed standardised TLM toolkits with MoPSE and supported monitoring systems and educator training. MoPSE’s ‘Partnership Compact’ is reported to have purposefully encapsulated many of TEACH’s priorities, further helping FCDO to secure buy-in to the TEACH Programme (KII with GPE).

[TPD] Materials were codeveloped with the Ministry on numeracy and literacy and pedagogy, and approved by the Ministry

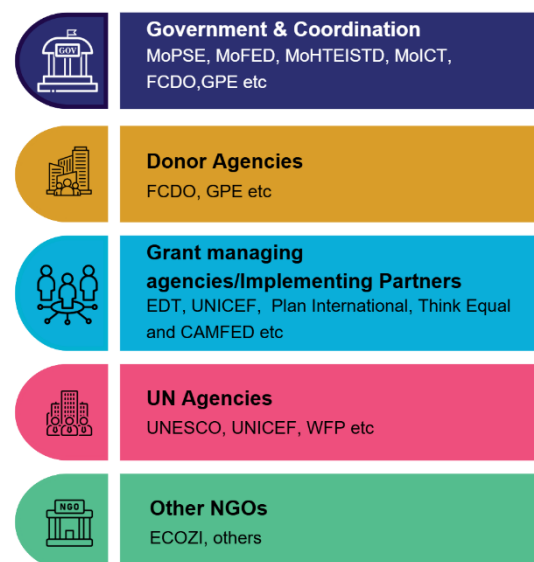
- MoPSE



**The coordination between the major actors of FCDO, GPE and MoPSE has also grown stronger, especially from 2022 onwards.**

Improved coordination with GPE is marked by more synchronised planning calendars and joint monitoring frameworks to minimise duplication and support a coherent delivery model. As noted by GPE, coordination was facilitated by FCDO adopting GPE’s analytical models, through reinforcing the Government’s leadership role, and streamlining governance structures through platforms such as the ECG (KIIs with GPE, EDT). FCDO and GPE specifically collaborated closely on SIGs, with FCDO focusing on SIG Regular and GPE on special additional grants while jointly advancing the initiative in satellite schools and their registration to promote sustainability – seen as a particularly strong example of collaboration and coherence. The SIG handover strategy is designed to streamline donor efforts and avoid duplication, with TEACH focusing more on system strengthening (monitoring tools, engagement with SDCs and community mobilisation, and aligning SIGs with inclusive education and School Development Planning) while the GPE provides direct financial inputs. As a further example of this, GPE and FCDO worked closely together on advocacy for school financing and the development of the school financing policy (KII with GPE).

**Figure 9: Major actors in the Zimbabwe education space**



### 3.2.2 Coherence between TEACH partners

**Key finding 7:** Internal partners to TEACH established strong programme coordination through clear partner roles, joint planning meetings, harmonised SOPs, and aligned logframes, enabling coherent delivery at the programme level, some inter-partner synergies and collaborative risk management

**TEACH partner coherence has been strengthened through quarterly joint planning meetings, technical working groups and harmonised standard operating procedures**

(SOPs). According to the Education Sector Coordination ToR (2025), coherence is strengthened by sector-wide structures like the EPSC and ECG, which promote synergy, partner alignment, and mutual accountability. The resuscitated TWGs, led by MoPSE Directorates and co-led by partners, have become key vehicles for engagement and coordination – particularly on policy development and problem solving (KII with EDT). Log frames also map directly onto the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2021–2025) and the Joint Sector Review matrix (ESSP 2021–2025) to further promote coherence across partners. According to one partner, operational synergies among TEACH partners were also facilitated by the strength of pre-existing relationships, for example cultivated through the Girls’ Education Challenge (GEC). National, provincial and school-level stakeholders across multiple provinces provided examples of internal coordination and harmonised school-level protocols such as coordinated timelines, common tools for offline and Kobo Collect-based supervision, and shared safeguarding activities (interviews with PEDs, SDCs, DSIs, head teachers).

*Coordination within the education sector has improved. Currently, the presence of an education governance document, implementation committees, and education coordination groups has strengthened coherence. These structures help align programming at the policy level and support coordinated implementation, reducing duplication with other initiatives like CAMFED and GPE*

- CSO



**TEACH partner collaboration has enabled real-time innovations, as well as joint implementation on selected initiatives benefitting from shared expertise.** UNICEF and EDT jointly advanced key innovations such as the Inspection system<sup>6</sup>, Learning Passports<sup>7</sup>, and school leadership training, while Plan International and EDT complemented each other across non-formal and formal education interventions, co-developing the Non-Formal Education (NFE) policy, expanding the inspection system (toolbox) to monitor non-formal education, and creating a disability inclusion app to support inclusive teaching practices. UNICEF further supported NFE policy implementation, distribution of remedial learning materials, and joint monitoring with Plan International and EDT, reflecting strong collaboration and collective accountability. Good internal coordination has also supported localisation efforts, such as in the adaptation of safeguarding materials and community sensitisation on inclusive education (Education Sector Governance Structure, 2024).

**Key finding 8:** *TEACH could have more purposefully geographically coordinated (‘layered’) partner interventions in target districts and schools, given that each TEACH component focuses on a different but necessary element of education system strengthening, to maximise collaboration and the benefits of the holistic model.*

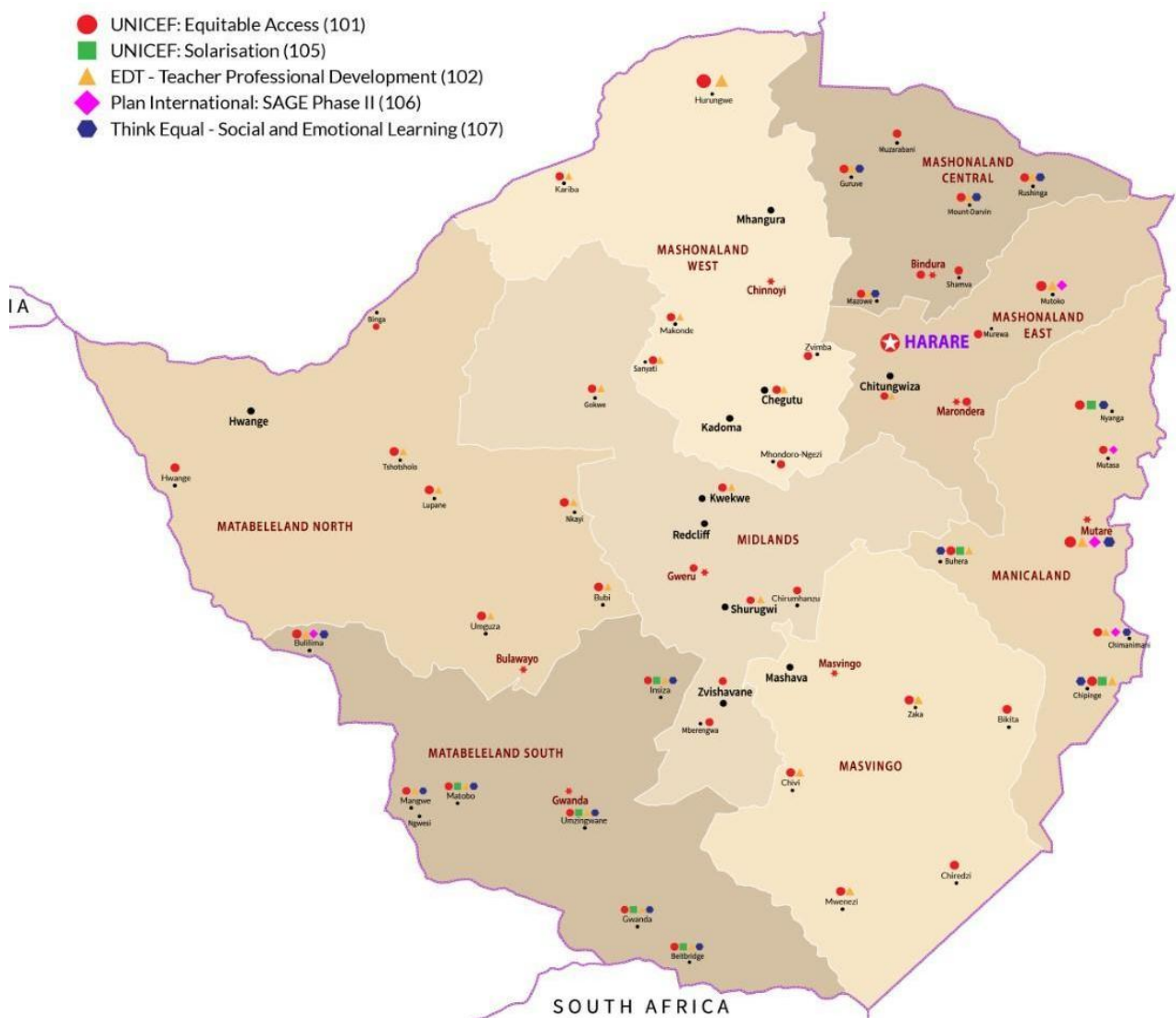
**Core TEACH components lacked deliberate alignment, partly due to the programme’s evolution and flexibility, and partly due to budget constraints.** TEACH partners and other stakeholders highlighted how components including TPD, SIGs, community engagement, and

<sup>6</sup> Formal process through which schools are evaluated to ensure they are delivering quality education, complying with regulations, and improving over time

<sup>7</sup> The learning passport is an innovative solution that will allow students, teachers, parents and caregivers to access their school curriculum, their materials, multiple resources, online activities and develop different life skills.

policy influence are all complementary and necessary interventions for improving learning outcomes. One of the downsides of TEACH’s flexibility however may have been missed opportunities for greater coherence across components (geographically). Many stakeholders observed that no district benefitted from all five interventions (TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024). Implementing Partners noted that whilst coordination has improved over time, a more deliberate ‘layering’ of interventions (e.g., SEL, SAGE, solarisation, safeguarding with SIGs and TPD) within the same communities could have maximised coherence (and synergies - see [Section 3.4.5](#)). Despite improvements in coordination, TEACH’s holistic intervention model was also not always visible at the community level (SDCs, parents and teachers). Figure 10 (below) demonstrates the disparate spread, rather than concentration, of TEACH components.

**Figure 10: Implementation locations of TEACH components**



Source: TEACH impact evaluation Terms of Reference (FCDO, 2024); KIIs and FGDs with TEACH Implementing Partners (Athena Evaluation Team, 2025)

Deeper probing revealed diverging perspectives on this challenge: some partners felt that financial limitations could have been addressed by focusing TEACH interventions on fewer high-need districts, while others, including FCDO and GPE, stressed the importance of broader geographic and school-level targeting to ensure system-wide improvements and inclusivity. However, with different levels of delivery persisting across the education system, TEACH coordination gains at the national level did not always translate into consistent intensity and depth of support at the district and especially school levels, which met all needs (and particularly within under-resourced satellite schools). Strengthening government leadership alongside using coordination forums (Implementation Committee, Education Coordination Group (ECG), EPSC) were seen as key to improving future coherence and complementarity in a sustainable way.

**Key Finding 9:** *Cross-sector coordination within MoPSE and with education partners on GEDSI has been fragmented, although recent steps have been taken to institutionalise enhanced governance of GEDSI, and establish a more coherent approach.*

**GEDSI efforts were embedded in TEACH Programme design, but until recently have lacked systematic cross-sector coordination mechanisms and institutionalisation within MoPSE.** TEACH and its partners have mainstreamed gender and disability considerations into programme design and delivery, with furthermore increased inclusion of civil society and implementing partners with mandates on gender and disability (e.g. Plan International, CAMFED, ECOZI, Save the Children) on the education coordination structures (e.g. the ECG and EPSC). Prior to 2025 however, there was no dedicated GEDSI Technical Working Group (TWG) or formal focal point to advance gender- and disability-inclusive mainstreaming efforts (Education Sector Coordination Draft ToR 2025; Education Sector Governance Structure, 2023). Because of this, stakeholders reflected that cross-ministry alignment and sustained resource provision, for example for PwFD, have been lacking. FCDO and EDT reported that a Learner Welfare TWG, chaired by the MoPSE director, has now been established, and which has supported the development of a Safeguarding and GEDSI Strategy (awaiting final approval) that aligns all MoPSE frameworks and incorporated findings from a recent GPE-sponsored gender audit. This TWG provides an appropriate mechanism for coordinating and advancing the GEDSI agenda going forward. However, to date GEDSI initiatives (internal audits, training of Gender Champions) have been led by consultants or structured around validation workshops, with no clear pathways yet to institutionalised application within MoPSE policies and programmes.

### 3.3 Effectiveness: Improving equitable access to learning

This section includes key and supporting findings for the effectiveness of EQ2, ‘*To what extent has the TEACH Programme contributed to changes in equitable access to learning in Zimbabwe?*’. As detailed in [Section 3.3](#), relevant activities under TEACH’s equitable access component have included School Improvement Grants (SIGs) and Solarisation, designed to enhance access to functional schools ([Section 3.3.1](#)), and a range of community and parental engagement activities ([Section 3.3.2](#)) which included a focus on girls, children with disabilities and ECD. We also cover early findings from SAGE Phase II ([Section 3.3.3](#)), since it explicitly aims to reengage out-of-school girls back into education and training. Sustainability and equity are cross-cutting themes running throughout, but with a specific focus on SIG equity under *Finding 11*. Through applying inclusive education pedagogical approaches, TPD also aimed

to contribute to improving access for targeted GEDSI populations – these findings are covered in [Section 3.3](#).

Strength of evidence	Medium
<p>Whilst findings are derived from a wide range of secondary and primary data, the strength of evidence for EQ2 is rated as <i>Medium</i>. This is because SIG reports do not always differentiate between TEACH-supported and other SIGs, and furthermore stakeholders at the local level did not always make the distinction between SIG Regular, Complementary and WASH when talking about the benefits of SIGs within their communities. Findings mitigate for this weakness within the data by being careful not to overclaim TEACH contribution, based upon the understood focus of SIG Regular. Finally, outcomes from SIGs or community engagement activities are not systematically captured within monitoring data and reports, resulting in a reliance upon primary data and more limited triangulation.</p>	

### 3.3.1 Effectiveness of SIGs in improving access to functional schools

**Key Finding 10:** *School Improvement Grants (SIGs) under TEACH were effective in improving the basic functionality of recipient schools across 72 districts between 2020 and 2023, including rural P3 and especially satellite schools. Whilst SIGs successfully transitioned over the programme period to a greater focus on teaching and learning materials (TLM) and are associated with positive increases in student attendance and school completion, SIG’s final years saw reduced coverage due to funding constraints, highlighting consistency and sustainability concerns.*

**TEACH’s SIG Regular was largely effective in meeting the basic functionality needs of up to 3,000 government and satellite schools, evolving from an infrastructure-centric emergency response towards a more system-aligned delivery mechanism prioritising TLM.** Indicating a peak coverage by 2023, TEACH’s SIG Regular achieved near-universal coverage of targeted P3 and satellite schools in all 72 districts, supporting 2,914 P3 and satellite schools, and the enrolment of 968,514 learners (TEACH Annual Review 2022–2023). The grants enabled these schools to repair infrastructure (e.g. classroom roofs, blackboards) and sanitation, purchase classroom furniture, and procure teaching and learning materials (Teaching and Learning Material (TLM) – such as textbooks, exercise books, aids, stationery). In its initial years, SIG Regular was primarily focused on addressing urgent infrastructural deficits, such as broken windows, unusable toilets, and a lack of teaching aids. This contributed to TEACH Output 2.9 (functional schools) but lacked clear links to learning or inclusive education outcomes. Financial audits and school verifications between 2020 and 2024 confirmed that, over time, TLM became the dominant expenditure category – rising from 17 percent in 2020 to 43 percent in 2024 – while infrastructure spending dropped from 30 percent to 6.6 percent. Furniture investments held steady at 33–35 percent, ensuring that schools still had basic equipment to support TPD-related pedagogy. Matabeleland North and Mashonaland provinces, for example, were early recipients of high investments across TLM, infrastructure, and furniture. In this regard, 169 classrooms were improved in 2023 and 255 in 2024 across verified schools (SIG Verification Reports; SIG Rapid Assessment Reports). This was corroborated by perspectives shared with the evaluation team by head teachers and teachers across multiple provinces, who noted that recent SIG purchases were dominated by books and basic furniture.

**SIG inputs were critical to maintaining minimum operational standards within targeted schools, and particularly within satellite schools.** The Mokoro SIG Impact Study (2021), SIG Verification Report (2024) and successive TEACH Annual Reviews report SIG’s effectiveness in rehabilitating classrooms and restoring minimum functionality. According to these reports, over 90 percent of SIG-supported schools consistently met functionality benchmarks between 2022 and 2024. In particular, satellite schools benefited from TEACH-SIGs as these schools face chronic underfunding and limited infrastructure and often operate with temporary structures and minimal state support. Hence, even modest SIG Regular inputs resulted in disproportionately positive effects on their ability to function (SIG Verification Report 2024). Findings from secondary data were consistently echoed by all beneficiary groups consulted for the evaluation (including head teachers, teachers, officials, parents, and the PTUZ). Head Teachers in Mashonaland East, West, and Midlands repeatedly emphasised that SIGs “*kept schools running*” and “*enabled teaching to happen*”. Head teachers and SDCs also consistently emphasised to the evaluation team that while registered schools upgraded existing infrastructure using SIGs, satellite schools often relied on SIGs for ‘first time’ infrastructure (including furniture, teaching and learning materials – TLM, classroom construction) – of which TLM was critical. Some considered SIGs to be “transformative” for their schools. Reflecting this, officials in Manicaland and Mashonaland East also credited TEACH with registering satellite schools as ZIMSEC centres. Furthermore, in schools with new TLM/furniture (and/or solarisation – see below), teachers and headteachers noted that TPD-linked classroom practices tended to run more smoothly.

**Indirect or unintended benefits from SIGs included upgrades for school ECD facilities.** Several individuals, representing all stakeholder categories, reported that while SIGs did not have an explicit ECD focus, they nonetheless contributed to improving ECD-specific facilities (including TLMs, furniture, child-friendly toilets, and classrooms), and especially in satellite schools where such resources were previously non-existent (SDCs, teachers and head teachers especially in Mashonaland Central, Midlands, and Masvingo). Respondents emphasised that in most cases these benefits were incidental, stemming from broader functionality upgrades (e.g., classroom repairs, solarisation) that improved the learning environment for all grades. EMIS 2024 data show a national ECD GER rise of 5.7 percent between 2021–2023, with notably higher gains in Matabeleland South and Masvingo. According to many respondents, this has been partly attributed to community mobilisation and SIG-related improvements (KIIs with head teachers, SDC, and officials). However, some respondents (for example in Mashonaland East and Midlands) stressed that staffing shortages and lack of ECD-specific facilities and learning materials continued to undermine ECD retention, signalling that early childhood access gains remain fragile without parallel investment in teaching capacity and other resources.

**The effectiveness of SIGs was underpinned by enhanced governance mechanisms and coordination, although community-level participation was reported to be mixed.** According to internal programme reports, several success factors help account for this shift. By 2020–2021, TEACH had introduced school-level planning tools and improved district oversight – including community engagement through School Development Committees (SDCs). From 2021–2022, SIG also became more explicitly aligned with TPD rollout. Outputs 2.3 and 2.8 emphasised improved learning environments to support teaching quality. This successful shift can also be attributed to coordination between UNICEF, EDT (on TPD) and

Plan International (SAGE) across learning and accountability reforms (TEACH Annual Review Report, 2024). While community involvement in SIG planning was generally viewed positively at the district level – with SDCs and parents contributing ideas, labour, and materials – local stakeholders in at least two provinces raised concerns about top-down decision-making, noting that infrastructure priorities were sometimes determined by district offices without adequate consultation.

**Despite its clear benefits, SIG disbursement is reported to have been inadequate or irregular, exacerbating persistent resource gaps (particularly in rural satellite schools), and highlighting sustainability concerns (including limited maintenance planning).** A considerable number of respondents (headteachers, SDCs) stressed that SIG allocations were inconsistent and often inadequate, making them less responsive to schools’ actual needs. Respondents reported smoother operations in better-resourced SIG schools, whilst by contrast under-resourced schools (including satellite schools) cited thin and/or irregular tranches of SIG payments (for example in Matabeleland South and Midlands) – precisely in those schools where additional resources were needed the most.

*SIG should be increased. The needs of the school are too many as against the amount disbursed.*

- Teacher, Chivi, Masvingo



Multiple respondent groups – including headteachers, teachers, and officials – highlighted persistent functionality challenges in satellite schools. While some received basic upgrades, many lacked adequate toilets, learning materials, and inclusive infrastructure (for example reported in Matabeleland North, Mashonaland West and Midlands).

*The classroom has no doors, no desks – even with SIG, it's still a shell*

- Head teacher, Masvingo



Teachers and head teachers also noted that resource gaps persist such as “*shortages of furniture and textbooks... due to overcrowding*” - with under-resourcing particularly acute in satellite schools – highlighting the wider structural challenge of insufficient schools within Zimbabwe (also flagged by MoPSE).

In addition, the progressive reduction in SIG funding further diminished the scale of support available for functional schools in Zimbabwe. Most head teachers and SDCs confirming a marked reduction in SIG disbursements since 2022, and several schools reporting complete cessation of grants. While partially private-funded schools had alternative resource pools, government and satellite schools remained highly dependent on SIGs to maintain basic functionality (TEACH Annual Review 2022–2023; SIG Verification Report 2024; SIG Rapid Assessment Report 2024), highlighting additional sustainability risks. For example, in Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West and Masvingo, headteachers and SDCs described delayed or absent disbursements in 2024, forcing schools to postpone planned repairs or furniture purchases. Parents in Mutare specifically highlighted that “plans for school improvements stalled” due to unpredictable disbursements (whilst FCDO noted that disbursement criteria were not always fully communicated to schools). School leaders and SDCs in Masvingo and Matabeleland North also expressed concern about their ability to

sustain improvements without ongoing financial support, citing broken ramps, blocked toilets and lack of cleaning supplies (likely funded through the SIG Complementary, not SIG Regular) as common issues. Officials emphasised the need for systems-level planning –including district maintenance budgets and ministry oversight – to ensure durable gains.

Primary data highlighted a particular tension or unintended effect from this withdrawal: whilst SIGs may have helped to boost enrolment (especially for girls) in the short-term, this then increased pressure on already limited resources, and particularly once TEACH had de-prioritised and reduced SIG coverage. For example, respondents from schools in Mashonaland West (especially Chegutu), Mashonaland East and Masvingo noted that enrolment doubled following SIG inputs, but that no further grants were received, resulting in worn-out and/or shortages of furniture and shared textbooks.

*SIG provides improvement in classroom resources which makes our lives little easier... which teaching... but this resource is also not sufficient, and we fall short of furniture and textbooks with more children coming in*

- Teacher, Sanyati, Mashonaland West



Overall, this also suggests that a degree of dependency developed upon SIGs and external funding for supporting basic school functionality (KII with UNICEF). SDCs and DSIs suggested that more community awareness and ownership (and continued needs-based vulnerability targeting) needed to be prioritised to better sustain the gains from TEACH. Without sustainable funding from the Government of Zimbabwe and/or other local sources (for example facilitated through the adoption of a new school financing policy – [Section 3.2](#)), gaps in rural schools will likely persist and may widen.

**Key finding 11:** *While SIG Regular contributed to improving the inclusivity of many schools - overall effectiveness was uneven. Support was more effective for girl learners and well-supported registered schools than for learners with disabilities. Strong limitations in minimal GEDSI allocations, persistent inequities in satellite schools, and weak sustainability planning prevented SIGs from more consistently enabling equitable access to functional learning environments across various learner populations and geographies.*

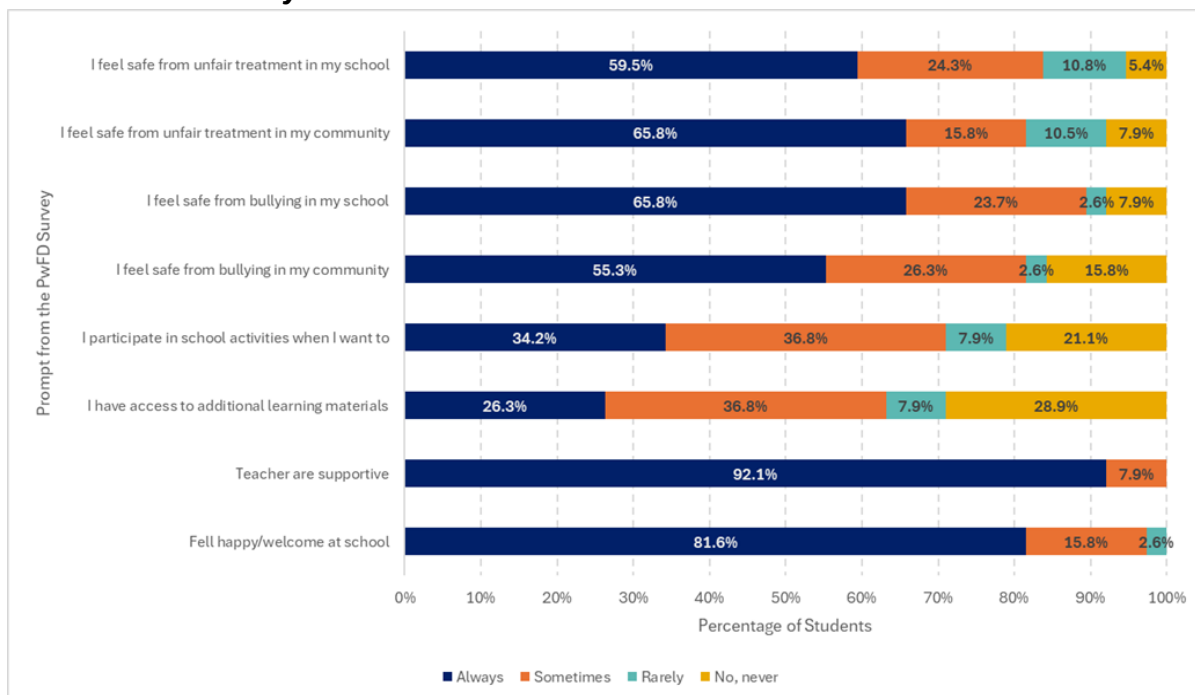
**GEDSI allocations under SIG Regular remained minimal and insufficient to address structural exclusion, with persistent disparities in satellite schools further limiting the reach of SIG investments.** Despite the stated commitment to inclusion, budgetary allocations for gender and disability-specific needs under TEACH-SIGs were extremely limited. Between 2020-2024, special needs allocations increased only marginally – from 0.72 percent to just 0.9 percent of the total budget (TEACH Annual Review 2021–2022; SIG Verification Reports 2020–2024). There were no dedicated budget lines earmarked for gender equality or disability inclusion, which significantly constrained the programme’s ability to invest in inclusive learning materials or assistive technologies. This was particularly the case in satellite schools, already facing acute shortages of essential infrastructure and materials, and undermining their ability to support growing enrolments or cater to diverse learners. While TEACH-SIGs did extend limited support to special schools and institutions for PwFD, these investments were fragmented and fell short of systemic coverage. Furthermore, as noted above, the overall SIG allocations declined sharply – with school coverage dropping by 85 percent since the 2019 baseline – further reducing the programme’s capacity to respond to the needs of marginalised learners. This decline contributed to a reduced target for functional school access among

marginalised children in 2024 (328,434 learners), narrowing the reach and sustainability of disability-inclusive gains (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024).

**GEDSI outcomes were stronger in relation to gender equity than for disability inclusion.**

Many respondents (including parents, SDCs and DSIs) praised SIGs' role in reducing girls' dropout through safer and cleaner facilities. Alongside general SIG upgrades for desks and learning materials, Solarisation-enhanced lighting, science labs, and ICTs were frequently linked to reduced dropout rates, particularly in conservative or remote areas (such as in Mash East, Mash Central and Mat North). Specifically, in Shamva (Masvingo) solar lighting (and perimeter fencing) were credited with helping girls feel safer and stay longer at school, after-dark. Furthermore, schools that paired infrastructure with sensitisation reported stronger impacts on girls' attendance and wellbeing. These targeted investments signalled a growing awareness of the intersection between infrastructure, safety, and gender equity. While there is broad stakeholder consensus on positive shifts for girls, by contrast, the needs of PwFD reportedly remained largely unmet. Disability-related upgrades were partial, highlighting a gap between visible access and full inclusion. Most stakeholders could not recall specific disability-focused SIG investments (interviews with SDCs, PEDs, parents, head teachers). Some stakeholders raised concerns about deep accessibility gaps - the lack of assistive learning tools, inaccessible classroom layouts, and insufficient adaptations in satellite schools. This finding is supported by the PwFD survey conducted by the evaluation team (Figure 11). The results highlight persistent barriers in learning support and participation: only 26.3 percent of respondents reported always having access to additional learning materials. Only 34.2 percent of respondents said they could always participate in school activities when they wanted to. As one DSI further noted, infrastructure support alone is insufficient without corresponding support to access the curriculum. Moreover, whilst 55.3 percent feel safe from bullying in community, a staggering 44.7 percent feel unsafe to different degrees. The persistence of community-level stigma highlights how efforts need to be complemented by real community engagement (through teachers, parents, peers) to combat stigma (beyond one-off community fairs). Figure 11 nonetheless shows that most disabled respondents feel welcomed within their schools, and that teachers are supportive.

**Figure 11: PwFDs' perceptions of safety, security and inclusion within their school and local community**



Source: Survey with PwFDs (N38).

Note: The figure summarises the percentage of children (x-axis) and absolute number of children (value embedded in each bar) who responded “Always”, “Sometimes”, “Rarely”, and “No, never” to each prompt (y-Axis)

**TEACH SIG Regular was complemented by other resources (SIG Complementary) which enabled visible gains in inclusivity and functionality for disabled populations, as well as community attitudes.** While under TEACH, SIG Regular did not make substantive infrastructure investments, it is important to note that SIG Complementary (which falls under GPE) supported physical upgrades such as ramps, gender-sensitive toilets and improved classrooms. These investments were widely viewed by respondents as crucial for inclusive learning environments, boosting attendance and safety, especially in underserved schools (reported by headteachers in Masvingo and Mash Central, and SDCs in Midlands). Moreover, where infrastructure visibly reflected care for diverse learners, respondents noted a shift in community attitudes. Headteachers and SDCs in provinces such as Mash West and Manicaland linked improved school environments to increased parental trust and learner motivation. Inclusive features – such as accessible classrooms and girl-friendly toilets – were seen as symbols of respect and safety, helping to re-engage populations like pregnant girls, children with disabilities, and learners from religious minorities. Yet, despite these positive gains, specific sustainability concerns were also regularly flagged for these investments:

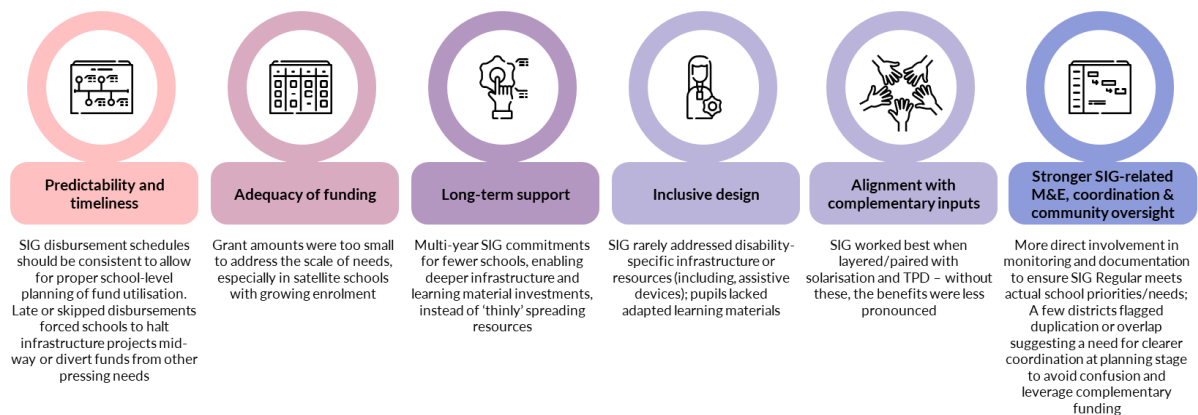
*When the ramp breaks, we don't have the money or tools to fix it. We just watch it deteriorate*

*- Head teacher, Matabeleland South*



Overall, respondents across all stakeholder categories described a range of areas needing improvement to enhance future SIG effectiveness and sustainability. These areas are summarised and visualised below:

**Figure 12: Stakeholder perceptions on improvements required in SIG Regular**



Additionally, lack of standardised and disaggregated performance metrics linked to school-level outcomes (e.g. on enrolment, retention, quality etc.) proved a constraint on assessing the effectiveness of SIGs and hence driving performance improvement. Going forward, stakeholders (e.g. ECOZI) highlighted that targeting fewer schools with deeper support (rather than thinly spreading resources) can enhance outcome-level equity and sustainability, although as per the above, this would still leave many poor schools under-resourced. This, again, highlights the importance of finding sustainable solutions to the financing of the infrastructure needs of Zimbabwe's rural schools.

**Key finding 12:** *Solarisation further extended functionality in targeted schools – including access to digital and evening learning – delivering specific access benefits for girls, enhanced teaching quality, and wider community benefits – but only where infrastructure is effectively secured and maintained.*

**Solarisation enhanced SIG effects on functionality by enabling electricity access and digital pedagogy in 150 rural P3 and satellite schools, in turn enhancing teaching quality.** Around 66,000 learners and 1,617 teachers have benefited from solar systems in 150 schools, against a target of 152 schools (SSS Evaluation 2024). The solar systems in poorest government primary schools have addressed critical energy deficits by providing reliable electricity for lighting, charging devices like projectors, powering ICT tools such as tablets (although, not all schools that were solarised have access to ICT gadgets), and to perform administrative functions (e.g., printers, copiers) – with 80 percent of schools reporting access to ICT gadgets post-solarisation (TEACH Annual Review 2021–2022; KIIs especially in Mashonaland Central and Matabeleland North). It also enabled access to EdTech including learning and teaching content on digital platforms. Stakeholders from multiple provinces interviewed for the evaluation generally perceived Solarisation positively, particularly in rural and satellite schools where it enhanced functionality by providing clean, reliable off-grid energy to support digital lesson delivery and improve the learning environment (interviews with teachers, head teachers, SDCs, PEDs, and parents; SSS Evaluation Report 2024). Specifically, teachers based in solarised schools noted smoother integration of ICT into TPD-

linked pedagogy and classroom practices (e.g. in Mashonaland Central and Manicaland), as well as stronger teacher training uptake (more details on these synergies are provided in [Section 3.4.5](#)). These outputs in turn helped to enhance teaching quality.

*I have applied some visual multimedia to teach my pupils for better understanding... [solarisation-led ICT use] changed my teaching approach from one-way lecturing to a more dialogical, learner-centred model...*

- Teacher, Mashonaland East



This can be contrasted with a subset of respondents who highlighted how access to power and connectivity gaps remained a binding constraint on digital pedagogy, even where digital facilities (e.g., tablets, laptops, printers, labs) exist (interviews with SDCs, officials and head teachers – especially reported in Tsholotsho, Matabeleland North, Gokwe South, Midlands - and the PTUZ).

*"We want electricity first then technology and computers plus Wi-Fi... absent power/connectivity leaves devices idle... our computers are kept in the storeroom*

- DSI, Gokwe South, Midlands



Conversely, some teachers and parents flagged the limitations of Solarisation, including that whilst it has helped power basic equipment, it was insufficient to run larger ICT resources like computer labs. Some SDCs and headteachers also flagged delays, incomplete delivery, or missing parts in solar equipment that had limited its operational impact (reported in three provinces).

**Solarisation improvements were particularly impactful for girls' access and safety and for enabling after-hours instruction in marginalised communities, as well as bringing ancillary community benefits.** Beyond powering classrooms and equipment, it enabled lighting for extended study hours, supported evening study sessions, improved school safety (particularly benefiting girls), increased parental participation in school meetings and reduced energy costs. Enhanced EdTech access was also useful for girl-child SAGE learners engaged in mobile-based learning. In some locations, solar systems were used for additional community purposes such as water pumping, supporting nutrition gardens, and charging stations that strengthened community-school linkages (SSS Evaluation 2024). Corroborating these reports, a few SDCs and head teachers (reported from Manicaland, Mashonaland Central and Midlands) observed that solar power improved on-campus safety and supervision (e.g., through lighting classrooms during evening hours) and supported wider community use of school facilities. Schools powered by solar systems have further supported vocational training (such as needlework projects) in districts such as Insiza, Matobo, and Nyanga, expanding girls' livelihood opportunities (SSS Project Evaluation Report 2024).

*The solar project allowed children to read in the evenings and even the community to use classrooms for meetings. It reduced fear for girls walking home late*

- Head teacher, Mt Darwin, Mashonaland Central



**Design concerns, including inadequate maintenance capacity and security issues, may adversely affect the longer-term effectiveness and sustainability of Solarisation. This provides important lessons for future FCDO climate-smart education initiatives.** The

independent evaluation of Solarisation found that limited stakeholder engagement during the planning phase led to mismatches between system capacity and school need. As training for teachers and SDCs on managing and utilising the solar equipment was minimal, many schools lacked the technical capacity to maintain or repair the systems, resulting in frequent breakdowns. This was combined with the absence of a dedicated local mechanism for troubleshooting or system replacement. These issues were further compounded by vandalism and theft of solar components, particularly in remote areas (SSS Evaluation 2024). As late as December 2024, solarisation under SIGs faced these problems, with theft of batteries and panels most frequent (e.g. in Khozi, Neshumba, Mutemera), while vandalism (Sagonda), teacher misuse (Shiri), and contractor faults (Mukono) further compromised system functionality (Cases of SIG fraud, December 2024). Validating secondary evidence, voices from some stakeholder groups (interviews with SDC and head teachers, for example in Masvingo and Midlands) also flagged sustainability concerns, particularly around theft, maintenance, and cases where complementary infrastructure was lacking, limiting the full potential of solarisation and its longevity. Sustainability concerns require more careful attention.

### 3.3.2 Effectiveness of community engagement activities

**Key finding 13:** *Early-stage evidence suggests that TEACH’s community-driven strategies—school community fairs, parental engagement and Safe to Learn — collectively contributed to improving awareness, access, and protective learning environments for marginalised learners, including girls and children with disabilities. While gains were reported in shifting attitudes (and for example increased ECD enrolment), longer term impact is unclear due to persistent challenges within schools including infrastructure gaps and teacher capacity.*

**School community fairs were effective in increasing community engagement and awareness on inclusive education for out-of-school girls and PwFD - in turn helping to boost school enrolment - although sustainability of funding and in-school factors may limit longer-term impact, particularly in satellite schools.** Held annually, school community fairs reached over 33,124 MOPSE, school, and community members (19,311 females; 13,632 males; 2,621 PwFD) across 24 districts in 2023–24, facilitating both enrolment and transition from ECD to Grade 1 through mobilising and preparing families for the new school year, and increasing community trust in school systems. Their gender-sensitive design included disability screenings, school readiness assessments, and awareness sessions on GBV and child marriage to reduce socio-cultural barriers and shift parental attitudes. This included supporting 2,621 children with disabilities in accessing education (UNICEF Annual Report 2023–24). Respondents from primary data collection (all stakeholder groups across multiple provinces where community fairs were organised) were largely positive about their role in mobilising school enrolment. They credited fairs with “*bringing the whole community to the school*” and “*convincing parents to enrol girls and PwFD*” (head teachers and SDCs in Matabeleland North and Mashonaland West). School community fairs also emerged as a consistent enabler of volunteerism and local resource mobilisation, which filled programmatic gaps, further enhancing school access. For example, SDCs and head teachers (in Manicaland, Mashonaland Central, Matabeleland North and South) described the role of fairs in mobilising bricks, sand and labour for school construction (e.g., ECD classrooms) while parents provided food for volunteer builders.

*The community molded bricks and fetched river sand to build the ECD block... the fairs brought everyone together; without the money for organising them, we can't do it ourselves*

- Parent, Beitbridge, Matabeleland South



While school community fairs are reported to have successfully boosted short-term demand for enrolment in some districts, according to an upcoming evaluation (commissioned by UNICEF) it is found that longer term impact (including on student retention) was limited due to other factors adversely affecting access to schooling, such as a lack of inclusive infrastructure, trained teachers, and assistive tools, leading to subsequent school dropout (also confirmed by interviews with SDCs, DSIs, head teachers, teachers, ECOZI and EDT). While some parents welcomed community fairs to build awareness, they also sought “assistive devices and trained aides” for effective implementation of inclusive education access (e.g. reported from Masvingo). Unsurprisingly, the evaluation found that such issues were exacerbated in satellite schools, with the most limited resources. Registered schools were more likely to report successful mobilisation from community fairs, boosting enrolment for girls and PwFD, while satellite schools saw less sustained impact due to weak infrastructure, staff shortages and poor sanitation (especially reported in Mashonaland East). SDCs and PEDs concurred that without simultaneous improvements in classrooms, materials and sanitation, fairs will not sustain enrolment. A subset of SDC and headteacher respondents from across provinces also noted sustainability challenges with the activities themselves, citing lack of funds for tents, refreshments, and transport for further school community fairs once donor support had ended. Finally, stakeholder respondents reflected secondary data cautioning that poorer or drought-prone communities often faced volunteer fatigue and limited capacity to contribute consistently to school-community engagement. Going forward, DSI officials in one province stressed the need for ongoing staff capacity-building, urging more frequent training to reduce reliance on volunteerism, particularly in resource-poor communities. Although UNICEF reports that **Parental Engagement** (implemented in 6 districts) has contributed to shifts in parental attitudes and advocacy for girls’ education and for PwFD (UNICEF Annual Report 2023–24), other independent evidence of effectiveness is very limited at this stage.

**The Safe to Learn initiative significantly contributed to mainstreaming GEDSI principles by targeting gender-based violence, bullying, and harmful social norms in school settings.** Implemented through a collaboration between MoPSE, UNICEF, and Plan International, Safe to Learn focused on creating safe and protective school environments, particularly for adolescent girls and added another layer to the safe ecosystems established through the community fairs and parent engagement initiatives. It included teacher training on child safeguarding, integration of violence prevention content into the curriculum, and school-level safety audits. In 2023–24, Safe to Learn was scaled to 234 schools, with feedback mechanisms such as child-friendly complaints boxes and learner clubs institutionalised in 70 percent of them (UNICEF Annual Report 2023–24. Efforts under Safe to Learn led to an increase (21percent in 2021 to 58 percent in 2024) in the percentage of schools with functional learner protection and reporting mechanisms” (TEACH Annual Review 2023–24) as well as an increase of 28 percent in teacher-reported confidence in managing child protection concerns. Though district level consultees for the evaluation did not explicitly mention ‘Safe to Learn’, insights from some teachers and SDCs affirmed positive perceptions of mechanisms and recent improvements related to “reducing bullying” and “giving girls a voice”.

### 3.3.3 Early results from SAGE Phase II

**Key Finding 14:** *SAGE Phase II has made positive contributions to enhancing equitable access to education for out-of-school adolescent girls – including girls with disabilities, to learner outcomes, and to the quality of their teaching. Scope for improvement lies in the take-up of TVET, training of male volunteers, and follow-through on use of assistive devices.*

**SAGE Phase II has made early progress in expanding equitable access to education (and improving literacy) for 5,652 highly marginalised adolescent girls, supported by gender sensitive pedagogy, protective ecosystems, and alignment with other TEACH components.** By 2024, SAGE II had exceeded its enrolment targets in Accelerated Teaching and Learning (ATL), engaging 5,652 out-of-school girls (aged 10-19) across 11 rural districts in 4 provinces (Manicaland, Bulawayo, Masvingo, and Matabeleland South). Many of these girls faced intersecting vulnerabilities (23 percent married, 29 percent young mothers, 8 percent with disabilities, and minority populations). The programme has, so far, supported re-enrolment into primary school up to Grade 7. Literacy and numeracy scores also improved steadily (Learners Progress Assessment 2025; SAGE Annual Report 2023-2024; TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024). Corroborating this, some parents testified that girls who had previously dropped out were “*reading again within months*” while a few teachers confirmed that “*labour-engaged girls made good progress in literacy*” in SAGE-targeted districts (reported in Chimanimani, Manicaland; and Mutoko, Mashonaland East).

**The programme's adaptive use of gender-sensitive pedagogy, satellite hubs and community engagement have boosted engagement and attendance, whilst synergies with other partner interventions have enhanced learning environments.** According to Plan International, identified success factors include **i)** embedding gender- and disability-responsive practices in both access and pedagogy, including adapted learning materials, infrastructure accessibility audits and peer-led models (Champions of Girls Education (CoGE)) which strengthened SRHR engagement and sensitivity. These interventions were complemented by tailored training content and strong female representation among volunteers, which fostered more inclusive and empowering learning environments. Furthermore, **ii)** 90 percent of community-based volunteers were retained from Phase I. **iii)** The programme's model of community-based learning hubs (in remoter areas) and safeguarding systems – integrated into both school and community structures and effectively building ‘protective ecosystems’ – is also identified as a facilitator of success and helped reduce dropout. DSIs and head teachers that participated in our study confirmed that SAGE Phase II's community-anchored approaches sustained participation and reached vulnerable learners (although some teachers noted that attendance still dipped during economic and weather shocks). Finally, **iv)** synergies with partner programmes also enhanced effectiveness. This included co-locating some SAGE learning hubs within SIG complementary (SIG sub-component under GPE) and TPD supported schools, providing non-formal learners access to improved infrastructure (e.g. gender sensitive, disability-friendly toilets and infrastructure) for example, in Chimanimani, Mutasa and Bullilima (albeit for a minority of hubs). It was also reported that SAGE gains were in some districts enhanced by school community fairs and parental engagement, reinforcing attitude shifts in communities regarding girls' education and inclusion of PwFD. Several respondents in SAGE districts (especially reported in Midlands) described cluster outreach approaches that “*sensitise the community on the importance of taking back even the girls that had... fallen pregnant*” with parent-support groups providing

stationery to sustain re-enrolment, alongside the friendlier school environments and catch-up practices introduced under TEACH, which boosted learner retention.

**SAGE Phase II has also helped to strengthen teaching quality and instructional leadership, including embedding inclusive, gender-responsive practices, although with the potential to improve peer learning mechanisms.** SAGE trained 134 community educators (volunteer teachers at community hubs) and 270 peer leaders, with a focus on inclusive pedagogy, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), and disability responsiveness. Furthermore, by 2024, safeguarding training had reached 85 percent of programme staff (34 out of 40) and 770 volunteers (530 female, 240 male) - SAGE Annual Report 2023–2024. However, implementation revealed inconsistencies, particularly among male peer leaders, who struggled with participatory techniques and SRHR content (LPA 2025, KII Plan International) – underscoring the need for ongoing mentoring and gender-sensitive facilitation support targeted at males. Plan also noted that the reduced budget for SAGE II under TEACH (when compared with the GEC) had led to scaling back their ‘communities of practice’ model for teacher and volunteer support, limiting cross-regional collaboration and the potential for peer learning (KII with Plan International).

**Transitions into formal and vocational pathways were minimal.** The programme saw limited transition outcomes, with only 542 girls enrolled in Integrated Skills Outreach Programme (ISOP) and 16 in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Structural barriers, including lack of identification documents, family and spousal resistance, and eligibility constraints constrained uptake (Learners Progress Assessment, 2025; SAGE Annual Report 2023–2024). The assumption that Phase I graduates would progress automatically did not hold, pointing to the need for stronger transition pathways and systematic outcome tracking. The transition rates of girls with functional difficulties into vocational pathways was limited, despite the accessibility audits conducted of 13 vocational centres, and the additional ramps installed, and further gaps were reported in the use and effectiveness of assistive devices (KIIs Plan International, FCDO).

**SAGE, and its approach, has yet to be embedded structurally within Zimbabwe’s education system.** Whilst SAGE has modelled what is possible in the NFE sub-sector (KII FCDO), the programme sits largely outside MoPSE’s education system. Whilst Plan International is contributing to the development of the NFE policy (see [Section 3.3.3](#)), SAGE’s lack of structural integration within national education planning and financing mechanisms limits its sustainability as well as wider influence on mainstream teaching standards and leadership. Plan International recognises this and advocates for shifting SAGE toward a system-strengthening model including greater policy alignment, going forward (KII with Pan International).

### 3.4 Effectiveness: Enhancing teaching quality and school leadership

This section synthesises findings for EQ3, ‘*To what extent has the TEACH Programme affected the quality of teaching and school leadership?*’. Relevant activities reviewed include the effectiveness of TPD in enhancing teaching capacity and quality ([Section 3.4.1](#)), and its contribution to school leadership and management capacity ([Section 3.4.2](#)). We also present early findings from the Think Equal programme on SEL ([Section 3.4.4](#)) and assess synergy effects across TEACH components ([Section 3.4.5](#)). Equity considerations and TPD’s role in

embedding GEDSI-responsive practices are covered under 3.4.3 (responding to sub-EQs 5.1 and 5.2 under EQ5, ‘To what extent has the TEACH Programme supported and promoted equitable access to Zimbabwe’s education system?’). Sustainability is covered throughout.

Strength of Evidence	Strong
<p>There is a wide range of existing good quality qualitative and quantitative evidence on the effectiveness of the TPD component, embedded within monitoring reports and datasets, which were made available to the evaluation team. Findings were further probed and explored during a half-day workshop with EDT staff, before multiple perspectives were gathered and triangulated at the national, provincial, district and school levels (including student perspectives), altogether signalling <i>strong</i> confidence in findings on TPD effectiveness.</p>	

### 3.4.1 Effectiveness of TPD in enhancing teaching capacity and quality

**Key Finding 15:** *TEACH-TPD has been effective in enhancing teacher participation in training and school-based professional development practices, supported by decentralised cluster-level delivery and blended training models. However, TPD reach has varied by province, contingent upon accessibility and school and district-level leadership, whilst further shifts towards virtual training risks marginalizing remote rural and satellite schools.*

The TEACH-TPD component has exceeded output and coverage targets for foundational literacy and numeracy training, reaching 74,558 educators by July 2024 (including teachers with a disability), and encouraging ongoing CPD within schools. By July 2024 TPD had exceeded its training target and reached 74,558 pre- and in-service teachers, covering 42 rural districts and 5,322 hard-to-reach P3 and S3 schools with less than 20 percent pass rates (TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024, EDT Bi-Annual Report; KII with EDT). This included strong female participation (34,663 to June 2024) and inclusion of teachers with disabilities (1,426 in 2023 alone), reflecting GEDSI commitments. This represented 81.5 percent teacher participation in training on foundational instruction, inclusive education and safeguarding in selected schools (with higher coverage of females), against a target of 80 percent. Decentralised cluster-level delivery helped to boost participation by making training, via workshops and school-level CPD, more locally accessible. TEACH also disseminated approved TPD materials to all Teacher Training Colleges and the Centre for Teacher Education and Material Development (CTEMD), reaching 886 students across eight provinces with in-service training by 2023. Following TPD training, teacher participation in cluster-based professional development (involving one or two staff development sessions each month) rose significantly, to 83.2 percent in 2023–24 compared with 55.2 percent at baseline, based upon monitoring of 793 schools through the school support dashboard (TEACH Annual Review 2023-24). Interviews with teachers and headteachers randomly sampled for this evaluation corroborated broad participation in TPD, describing a steady cadence of school-based sessions and cluster meetings or “reflections” normalised within staff development. Some respondents however stressed the need for more persistent school-level coaching to help sustain use of new techniques between the workshops/cluster meetings (especially in Midlands, and Mashonaland East and West).

**Despite successfully decentralising delivery, TPD’s reach has varied by province due to logistical, school leadership and accountability challenges (including the strength of**

**relationships with MoPSE).** TPD was integrated within district school cluster systems and supervision, to help reinforce sustainability and sector-wide impact (confirmed by several DSIs and SDCs). Ownership of TPD however varied by province. While provinces such as Masvingo and Mashonaland East reported stronger uptake and coverage of TPD, attributed to active support from MoPSE provincial and district leads and well-functioning cluster CPD working groups, this contrasted with Matabeleland North, where persistent barriers – including school remoteness, lack of inspection vehicles, weak connectivity, and limited institutional ownership – constrained cluster operations and reduced TPD reach (TPD implementation plan 2025, interviews with headteachers, teachers, SDCs, DSIs, PEDs and parents). Teachers in remote satellite schools (including in Matabeleland North and Mashonaland West) stressed the opportunity costs of participation in TPD (i.e. travel time, out-of-pocket expenses). Teachers and SDCs in Midlands reported that the remoteness of schools from district offices limited in-person inspection visits and, compounded by weak connectivity, hindered virtual support – thereby affecting school readiness. In Matabeleland South, low programme uptake among some school leaders was evident, with heads viewing TPD as an “*add-on*” rather than integral to school improvement. In such schools, school leadership was reported to remain predominantly administrative, with little instructional leadership exerted.

*The sessions were useful, but there is no one checking how we use the skills back in class. After a while, people go back to old ways*

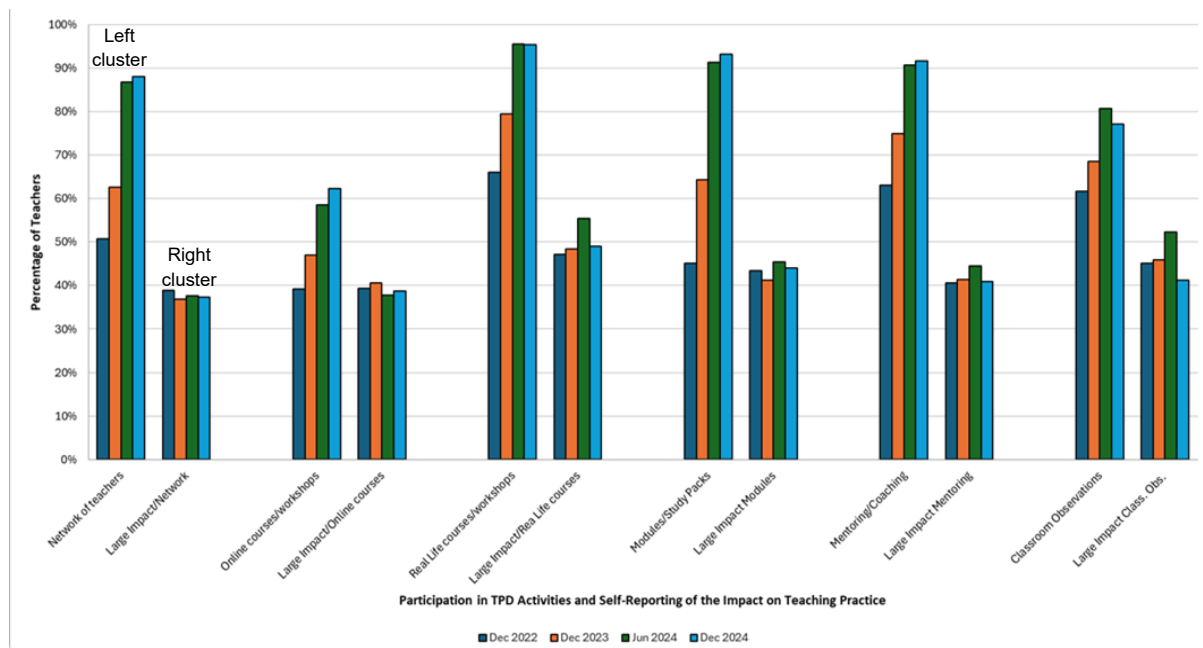
- Teacher, Mutoko, Mashonaland East



**EDT instigated important adaptations to help boost TPD coverage, including blended training models, although the shift towards virtual training risks marginalising some remote districts and satellite schools.** Through decentralised support systems, targeted engagements and closer collaboration with MoPSE, EDT reports that TPD made strides in addressing contextual barriers to uptake by the end of 2024. For example, whereas use of TPD materials was lower in secondary schools across all provinces compared with primary schools, following targeted engagements in July 2024, there was notable improvements based on sensitising teachers to the need to address foundational learning deficits among secondary learners (and the benefits for other subjects, such as history). This was facilitated through collaboration between primary and secondary trainers at the cluster level, where primary school trainers would be invited to take remedial classes to assist non-readers at the secondary school. As noted in [Section 3.1.2](#), blended training options were also introduced to help reach remote and under-resourced areas. A vast majority of stakeholders widely regarded the blended model as effective as it reached remote schools, reduced travel costs, mitigated material constraints and enabled peer learning (interviews with head teachers, teachers, parents, SDC members, PEDs, PTUZ, EDT, and UNICEF). Contrasting with these views, some teachers also pointed out that the effectiveness of the blended approach depended on stable internet connectivity and electricity, which limited its impact in practice. They cited difficulties in accessing online modules and smartphone-based training, particularly in provinces such as Midlands, which in turn constrained uniform uptake. Furthermore, programme data (Figure 13 below) shows how real-life courses/workshops and teacher networks are consistently rated as having the highest perceived impact in improving teacher competencies. Modules and mentoring also show strong perceptions of teacher upskilling, while online courses remain the least valued, further reflecting the variable relevance of

blended learning models to local context. Going forward, the shift in training modality in 2024 to fully remote delivery, designed to enhance access, conversely also brings risks not only to TPD participation but also effectiveness.

**Figure 13: TPD activities completed by teachers and their perceived level of impact on teachers' skills and knowledge**



Source: Bi-Annual Assessment Data (EDT, 2023 and 2024)

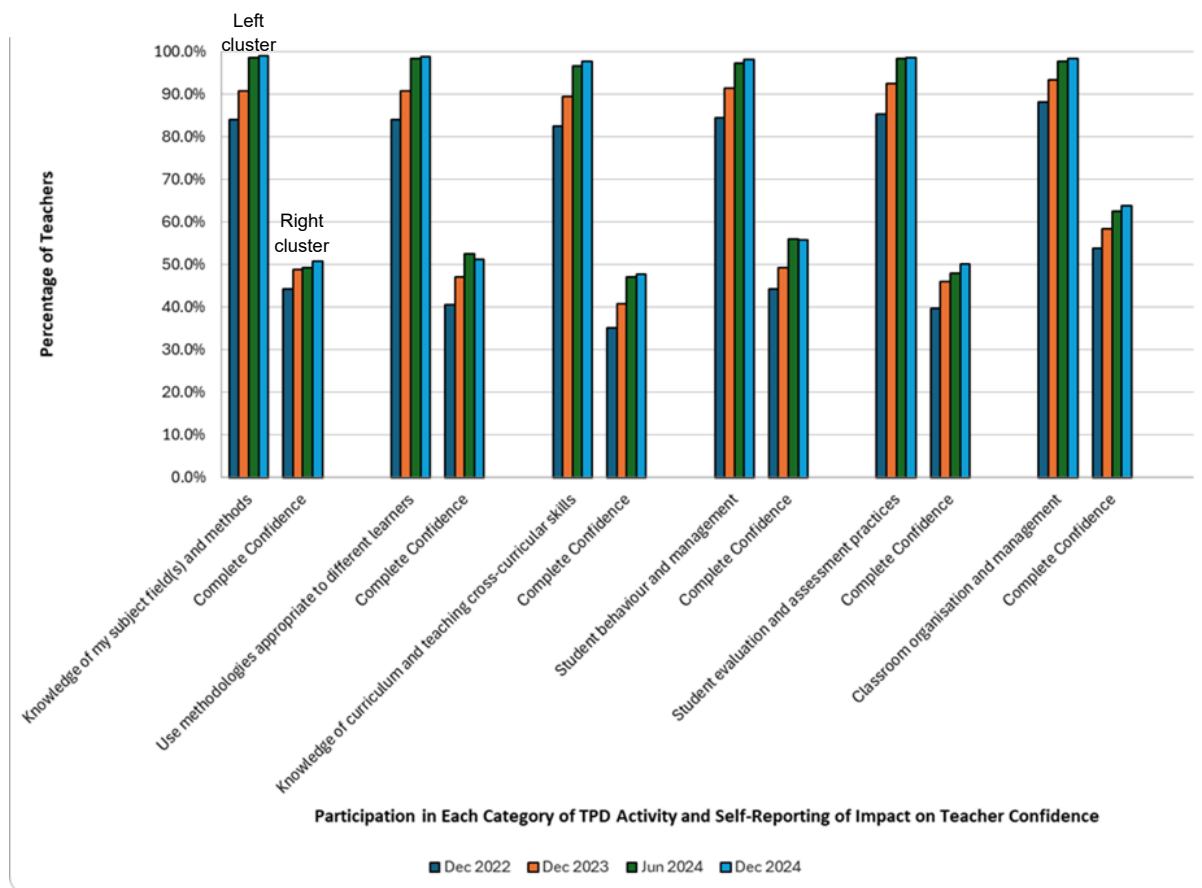
Note: X-axis: Training activities; Y-axis: percent of teachers reporting participation or large impact. Left cluster of bars indicate teacher attendance at various training activities and right cluster of bars indicate teacher self-reported impact of that training on their teaching competency

**Key finding 16:** TPD has been effective in enhancing teacher capacity and confidence in various competencies and quality delivery in the classroom. Gaps remain, especially in applying ICT skills, whilst wider structural barriers related to teacher motivation and retention – and access, ownership, and infrastructure and learning materials in remoter districts and satellite schools – continue to constrain learning improvements.

The TEACH-TPD programme has demonstrated effectiveness in strengthening teaching capacity and confidence, with measurable improvements in teacher competencies and instructional quality – reflected in both EDT monitoring data and evidence from teacher interviews – albeit with variation across districts. Teachers reported increased confidence with improved levels of knowledge and understanding resulting from continuous professional development. By June 2024, more than 90 percent of trained teachers reported confidence in applying skills related to subject methods, gender-responsive teaching, diverse learner needs, and safe learning environments, and just under 90 percent confidence in learner-centred pedagogy. Notable gains were observed in ‘complete confidence’ in gender-responsive pedagogy (40.7 percent to 53.6 percent), curriculum knowledge (38.7 percent to 49.3 percent), and creating safe learning environments (42.9 percent to 49.6 percent) 2022 to 2024 (EDT Baseline Report 2021; EDT Bi-Annual Report

2024). EDT note that increased and accurate use of diagnostic tools by teachers is itself a key achievement of the TPD programme.

**Figure 14: TPD activities completed by teachers and their confidence in implementing newly learned skills and knowledge**



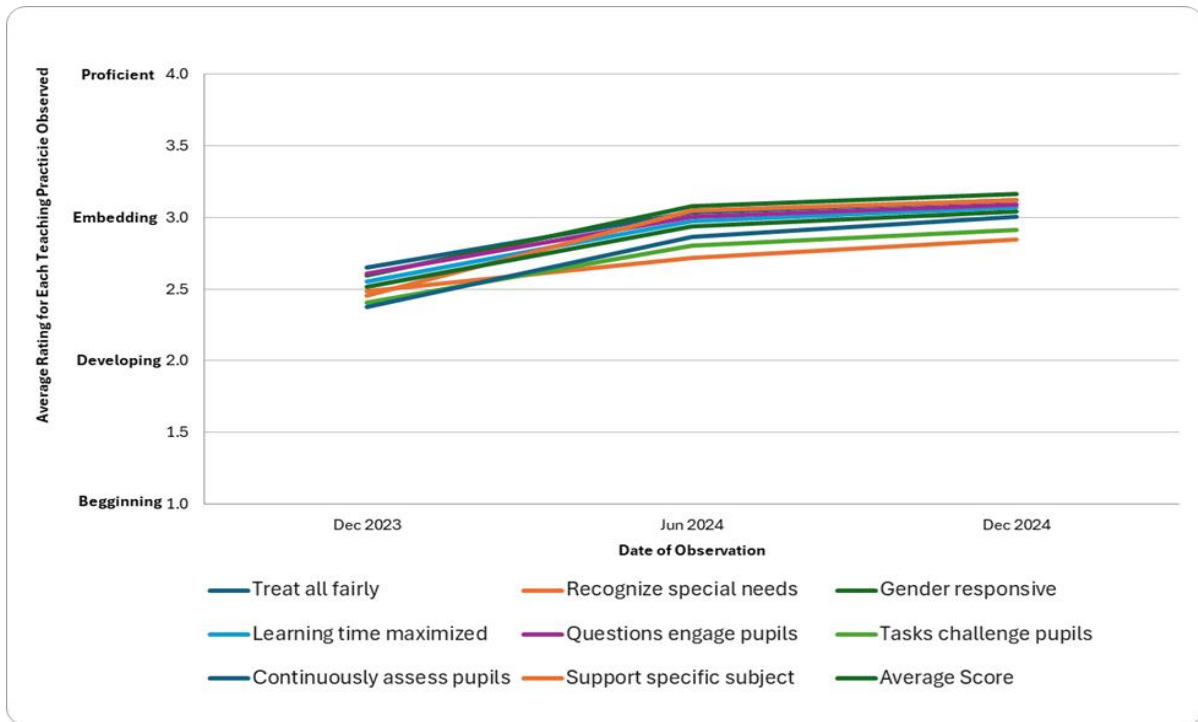
Source: Bi-Annual Assessment Data (EDT, 2023 and 2024)

Note: X-axis: Training activities; Y-axis: percent of teachers reporting confidence. Left cluster of bars shows teacher attendance at training activities, and right cluster shows self-reported confidence in applying those skills.

As a consequence –teaching quality, as measured through classroom observations, is reported by EDT to have improved between the first and third bi-annual assessment cycles with the proportion of teachers rated as ‘Embedding’ or ‘Proficient’ in various classroom practices rising from 48 percent to 80.8 percent, while those rated ‘Beginning’ fell to negligible levels (Third Bi-Annual Assessment Report, 2025) – Figure 15 (below). The percentage of teachers above the ‘Developing’ stage of the teacher competency continuum increased from 47.5 percent (2021) to 78.2 percent (June 2024), and then to 81 percent (December 2024); with average teacher competency score rising from 2.5 (out of 4.0) to 2.9 (June 2024) and to 2.96 by December 2024 (TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024; EDT Baseline Report 2021; EDT Bi-Annual Report 2024, EDT team). The data also suggests parity in competency growth between male and female teachers. Similarly, the classroom observation data shows that teachers steadily improved across all observed TPD practice areas, with average classroom

observation scores moving from 'Developing' toward 'Embedding/Proficient', showing broad, consistent gains in teaching quality.

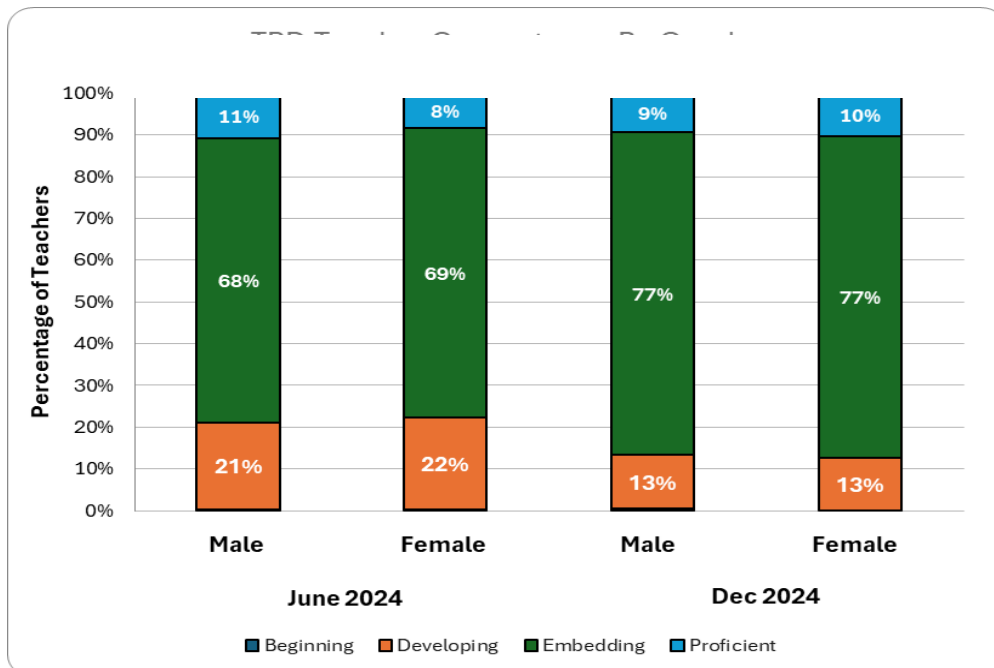
**Figure 15: Average Teacher Professional Development (TPD) classroom observations scores, by category**



Source: Bi-Annual Assessment Data (EDT, 2023 and 2024)

Note: X-axis: Teaching practices; Y-axis: Average observation scores (1 = Beginning, 2 = Developing, 3 = Embedding, 4 = Proficient)

**Figure 16: Teacher Professional Development (TPD) competency, by gender**



Source: Bi-Annual Assessment Data (EDT, 2024)

Based on the classroom observations data, by December 2024, both male and female teachers showed marked improvement, with over three-quarters at ‘Embedding’ level and gender gaps negligible, though only about 10 percent had reached Proficient. KILs with headteachers and teachers prominently corroborated concrete practice shifts in the classroom – including grouping, phonics, word-attack strategies, vernacular scaffolding, and structured group tasks. Teachers from certain districts in Midlands and Manicaland also frequently mentioned renewed enthusiasm amongst teachers, noting that TPD “*changed my way of teaching*” and “*made lessons easier*”. SDC and DSI respondents praised remedial and catch-up practices integrated into routine teaching for maintaining learning continuity.

*TPD gave us fresh ways to teach... termly trainings keep us on our toes and motivated to try new learner-centered methods*

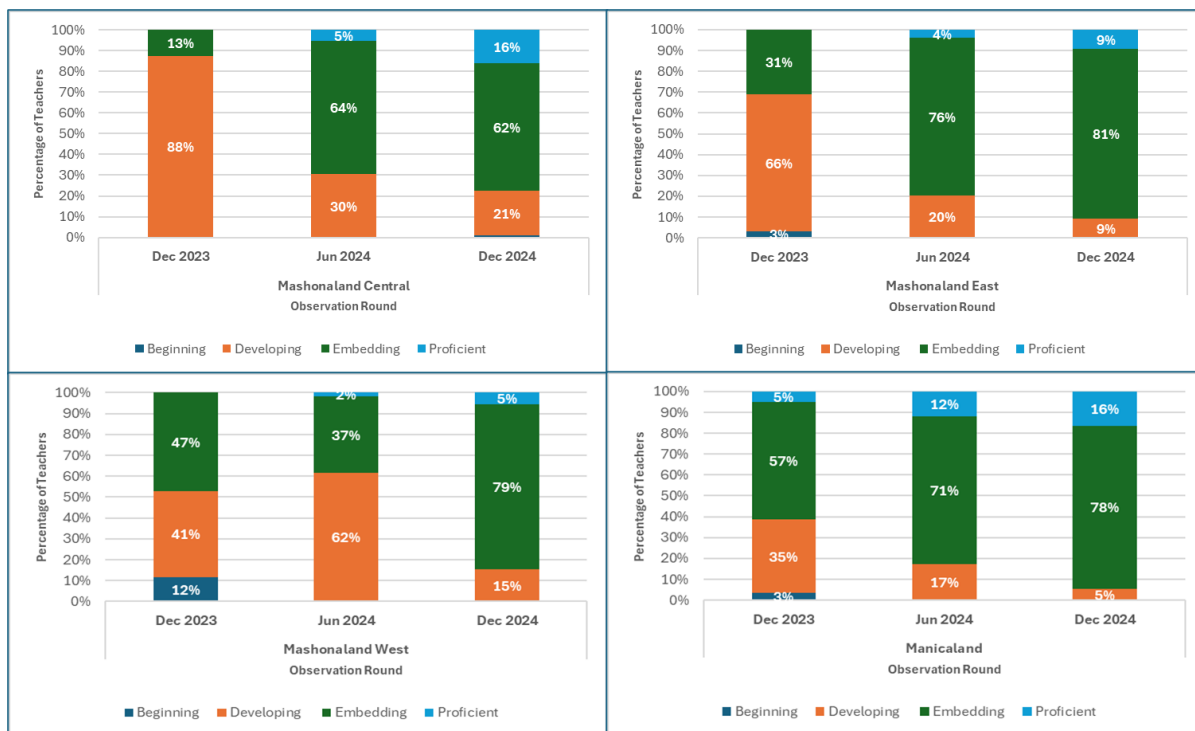
- Teacher, Chegutu, Mashonaland West



By December 2024, most provinces saw sharp declines in teachers at the ‘Developing’ stage, increase in teachers at the ‘Embedding’ stage, and modest gains in ‘Proficient’ teachers, with particular improvement in Manicaland and Mashonaland Central (Figure 17). Greater variation in teacher outcomes is evident at the district level, with areas such as Bulilima, Hurungwe, and Mangwe registering higher proportions of developing teachers and school leaders. These districts have in turn required more targeted interventions, including on-site coaching and intensified supervision. Corroborating this, some respondents (a minority of teachers, SDCs and DSIs, but across multiple provinces) highlighted a gap between teacher training and classroom practice, citing for example inadequate or delayed teaching materials, and particularly in resource-poor schools, as a barrier to transferring TPD to practice and fully supporting non-readers.

**Figure 17: TPD teacher competency, by province**

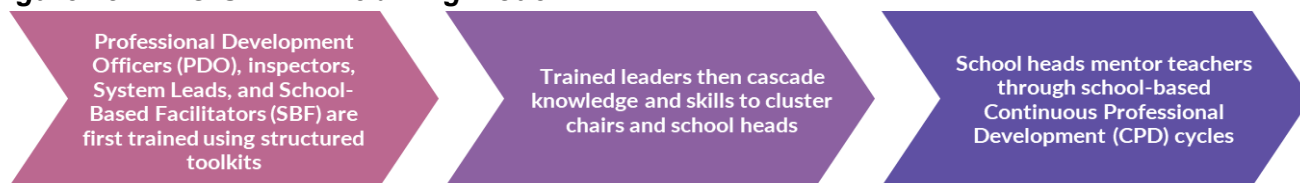




Source: Bi-Annual Assessment Data (EDT, 2023 and 2024)

**Stakeholders identified both strengths and weaknesses to the decentralised TPD model of training – which may help to account for variation in teaching outcomes across districts and schools – and with further implications for sustainability.** The broad improvements in teacher quality and capacity can be directly attributed to the structured, termly training cycles delivered through TPD’s decentralised, cluster-based training model. 21 PDOs trained 380 System Leads and 5,514 School-Based Facilitators (SBFs – focal teachers) through termly district, cluster, and school-level workshops, focused on sequenced literacy, numeracy, and general pedagogy, allowing educators to apply, reflect, and refine teaching techniques progressively (KII with EDT; EDT Implementation Plan). The model ensured that one head teacher per school was trained directly, who then extended training to deputies, Heads of Department, and senior teachers. Follow-up visits targeted lagging schools to provide coaching/mentoring.

**Figure 18 : PDO-SBF TPD training model**



Source: TPD component of TEACH delivery approach (EDT, 2022); KII with EDT

Most evaluation respondents appreciated this decentralised approach for broadening reach, promoting peer learning and resource sharing within school structures. By contrast, a considerable minority of respondents, and particularly those from poorer and satellite schools, highlighted several issues (DSCs, head teachers and teachers in Matabeleland North/West/South, Mashonaland East/West and Midlands). Head teachers across multiple provinces and PEDs in three provinces perceived the cascade element (to SBFs) to be a

barrier to more effective teacher capacity building, with the reliance on focal teachers said to have led to content dilution, inconsistent uptake, and weaker peer engagement. A subset of teachers reported slippage without adequate and persistent follow-ups (especially in Midlands and Mashonaland East). The Teachers' Union stressed the need for teachers at the grassroots level to be afforded more direct contact with trainers for effective implementation and greater results.

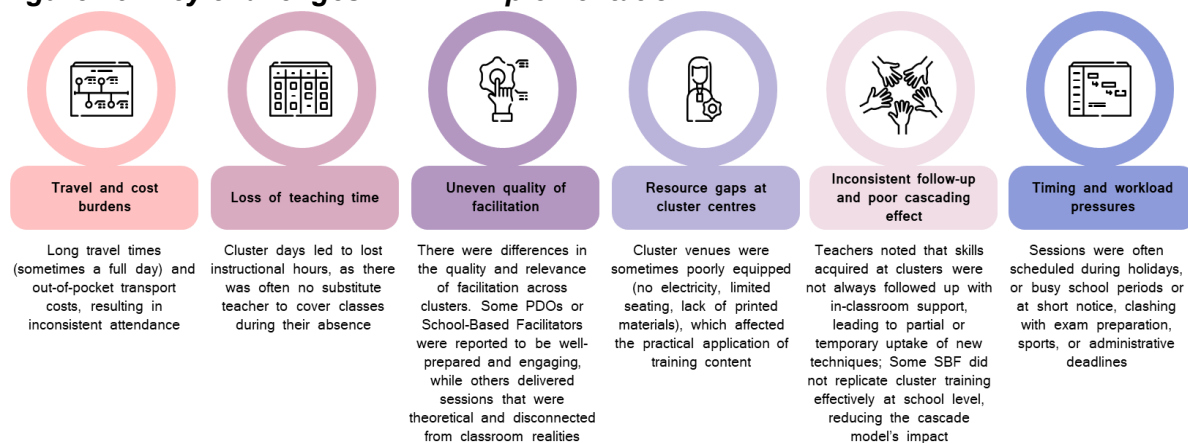
*...the cascading model is limiting. Bigger numbers of offices attend from the national level and numbers get smaller as cascading reaches schools. It should be the opposite for more effective implementation of these good programmes by partners-*

- PTUZ



Taken together, this evidence highlights the importance of retaining a blended approach to TPD delivery, with sufficient (targeted) face-to-face contact as well as engagement with professional or skilled trainers to help mitigate confidence, competency and sustainability gaps. The range of reported access, implementation and sustainability issues associated with the TPD cluster and cascade delivery model (including potential areas for improvement) are summarised in the figure below.

**Figure 19: Key challenges in TPD implementation**



**TPD encouragement of digital platforms as a delivery mechanism for professional learning has been further constrained by low teacher confidence and skills and limited digital infrastructure in remote rural areas.** Stakeholders widely acknowledged that TPD training and resources have increasingly leveraged and encouraged digital literacy among System Leads, teachers and school heads through the blended delivery approach, and linkages to e-inspection dashboards). However, these gains have not been evenly distributed. Confidence in 'ICT skills for teaching' declined slightly over the period, from 70.1 percent in 2021 to 67.7 percent in 2024 (EDT Baseline Report 2021; EDT Bi-Annual Report 2024). Based upon primary research, ICT-enabled practices were most evident in schools with electricity and printing facilities. By contrast, in satellite schools without power, internet connectivity or devices, teachers did not have the resources required to put into effect practices related to ICT and tended to revert to board-only delivery despite TPD exposure (reported in Rushinga, Mashonaland Central, and Makoni, Manicaland). Teachers in these schools specifically requested additional devices and hard-copy modules to bridge this gap.

*ICT and blended learning is only relevant with electricity... without stable power, all these digital systems remain underused*

- Teacher, Mashonaland Central



Teachers and head teachers also consistently highlighted constraints in applying ICT-rich methods in large classes (reported in Mashonaland West, Midlands and Manicaland). However, many teachers and school heads also perceive that they lacked adequate training and sustained support to integrate ICT effectively into teaching. Respondents across multiple provinces noted that in the absence of structured, hands-on professional development, confidence tends to erode, particularly in an evolving digital world (interviews with SDCs, head teachers, teachers; KII with EDT; EDT Third Bi-Annual Report 2025). More intensive and tailored ICT capacity-building support, alongside boosting resource accessibility in ICT (for example through ‘layering’ such mechanisms as SIGs and Solarisation) were signalled as a priority for future programming in tech-enabled pedagogy (interviews with teachers, head teachers, SDCs, and PEDs).

**Wider structural challenges negatively impact on teacher capacity, motivation, and retention, constraining longer-term improvements in the quality of teaching, and highlighting the importance of working at the systems level alongside targeted investments in CPD.** Whilst national MOPSE officials (TEACH Annual Review 2022-2023) recognised TEACH-TPD’s positive influence on teacher motivation and performance, it was also noted that wider factors including teacher workloads, competing leadership priorities, low pay and other weak incentives continue to weaken teacher retention, teaching quality and hence longer-term learning gains (Impact of School Leadership Training Study, 2024; TEACH-TPD Benefits Statement, 2024; EDT Annual Report 2023–2024; KIIs). EDT reports that across nearly all provinces, high levels of teacher and headteacher attrition (reaching 20 percent for example in the Bubi and Hurungwe districts) disrupted continuity in TPD implementation. In Mashonaland Central, Midlands, Manicaland, and Masvingo, there were frequent staff transfers often without proper handovers of TPD materials or induction of new staff. Some teachers requested structured teacher induction mechanisms.

*You can’t do learner-centered teaching without enough textbooks – the training alone doesn’t fix that... we already had trained staff, but they either resign or get transferred... this majorly occurs in small and very rural schools*

- Teacher, Hurungwe, Mashonaland West



More generally, school heads in most of these provinces as well as teachers in Matabeleland South noted that focal teachers were often overburdened or not taken seriously, undermining continuity in TPD provision. This ran alongside reported power issues adversely impacting on teacher motivation, as well as slow improvements in learning outcomes for students (interviews with head teachers and teachers, reported from Midlands, Mashonaland East/Central/West, and Matabeleland West). In such contexts, PEDs in both Midlands and Matabeleland South highlighted how without more tangible incentives, sustaining motivation amongst teachers “*will be difficult*”. Moreover, the placement of pre-service teachers often excludes the most remote and disadvantaged TEACH schools, due to poor road infrastructure and the long distances involved, contexts where teacher capacity gaps and high workloads are most acute. This further entrenches the inequities that TEACH is working to address (KII with EDT, PTUZ).

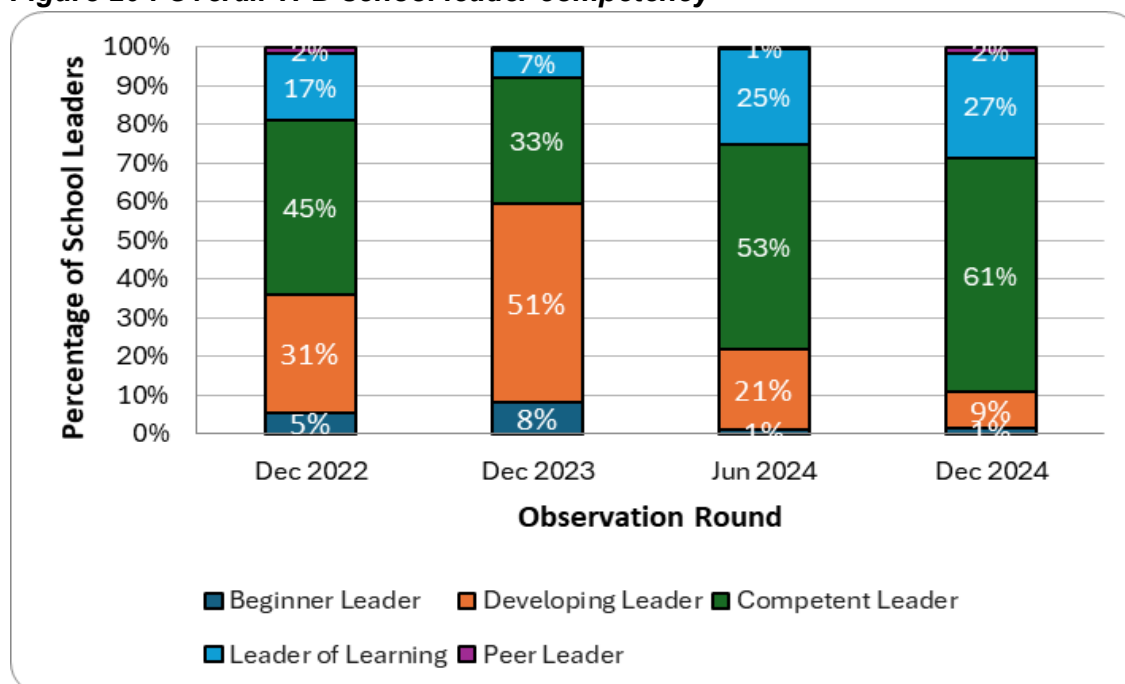
### 3.4.2 Effectiveness of TPD in school leadership and management capacity

**Key finding 17:** TEACH has been effective in enhancing the professional development and management capacity of school leaders, with training exceeding targets and leadership competency scores improving. Evidence-based leadership toolkits and peer learning helped with strengthening teacher coaching and mentoring, embedding of TPD, as well as approaches to equity. However, results varied by province, access to ICT resources and especially inspection follow-up.

As part of the School Leadership component, 5,885 school leaders (4,268 male; 1,617 female) have been trained in total, including 5,636 leaders within 42 TEACH target districts – achieving 106 percent of the original target (5,332). In response to unsolicited demand, the training programme was also expanded beyond TEACH target areas to include participants from three additional districts (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024).

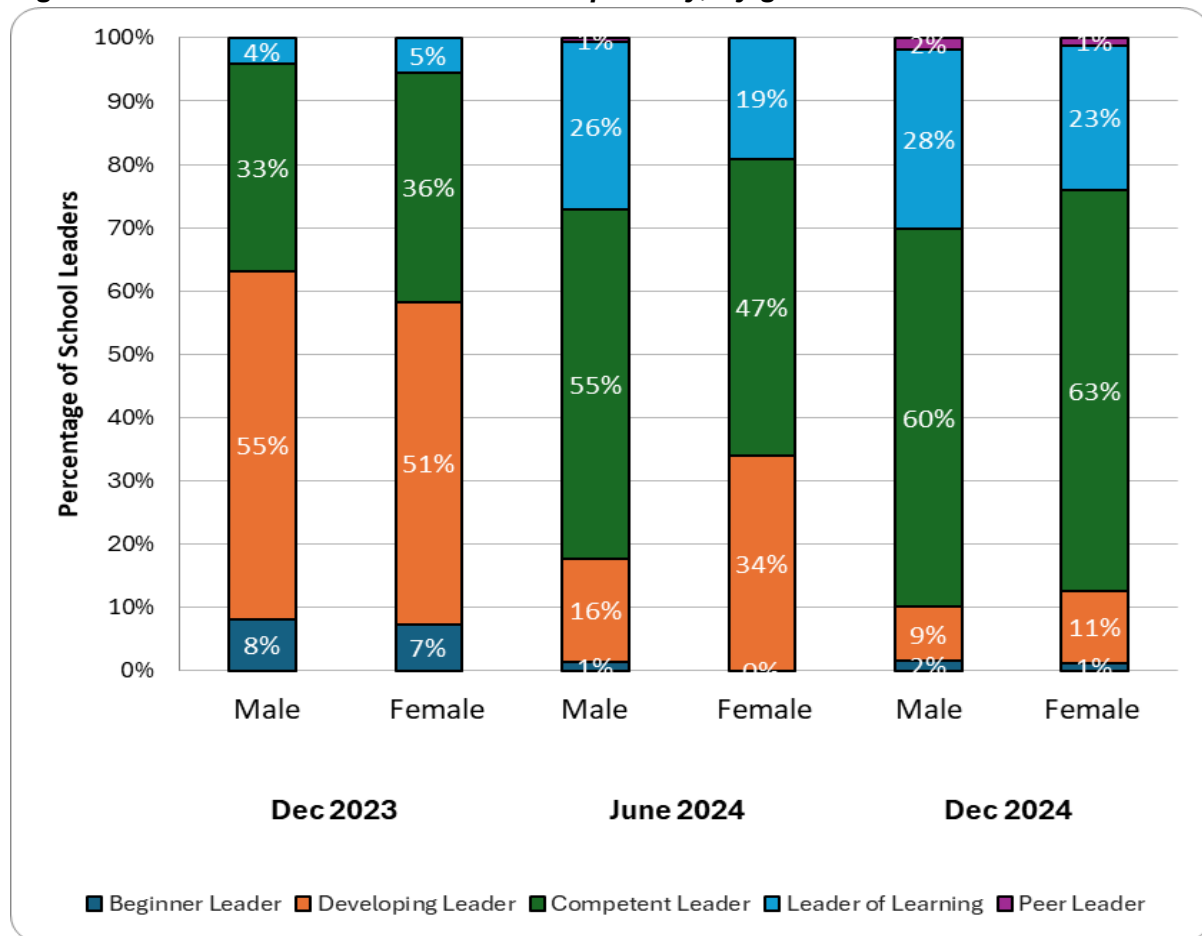
**Strengthening school leadership capacity has enabled shifting roles from predominantly administrative management towards instructional leadership, with measurable gains in competency, school management practices, and teacher support.** According to EDT monitoring data, at the 2021 baseline, only 55 percent of school leaders were assessed at or above the ‘Competent’ level, but by the end of 2024, this figure rose to 89.2 percent (almost 9 out of 10 leaders were Competent, Leader of Learning, or Peer Leader) (Figure 20), indicating substantial capacity gains in leadership skills (EDT Baseline Study 2021; EDT Third Bi-Annual Report 2025). Average competency scores based upon MoPSE’s Leadership Competency Framework rose from 55 percent in 2021 to 61.3 percent in 2023, and 89.1 percent of trained educators reported improved self-efficacy. Specifically, leaders reported moderate to large gains in understanding and application of leadership content (~97 percent). Female leaders consistently outperformed male leaders in reaching this advanced competency level (Figure 21).

**Figure 20 : Overall TPD school leader competency**



Source: Bi-Annual Assessment Data (EDT, 2023 and 2024)

**Figure 21: Overall TPD school leader competency, by gender**



Source: Bi-Annual Assessment Data (EDT, 2023 and 2024)

Specifically following the training, time on teacher development increased from 15.8 percent (2022) to 19.2 percent (2024), while administrative tasks decreased, with further marked improvements in use of professional learning communities (PLC), data for monitoring, and follow-up actions after inspections. This included playing an important role in embedding modules from the TPD curriculum addressing foundational literacy and numeracy, gender-responsive teaching, inclusive pedagogy, and use of continuous assessment learning activities (CALA)<sup>8</sup>. An overwhelming majority of respondents interviewed concurred that School Leadership under TEACH has been effective in raising school leader/head teacher competence and embedding routines (for example, termly planning, PLCs, and data-informed supervision), which can drive improved teacher practice and monitoring at scale. Several teachers, headteachers and PEDs also perceived that following leadership training, school heads have moved away from administrative supervision and ‘fault finding’ towards more instructional leadership – including providing supportive and developmental supervision,

<sup>8</sup> An assessment system introduced under Zimbabwe’s Heritage-Based Curriculum (HBC) and mainstreamed by MoPSE.

coaching and mentoring of teachers in their classroom practices and CPD integration (especially reported in Manicaland, Masvingo, Midlands, and Mashonaland Central).

**The effectiveness of School Leadership training has been underpinned by evidence-based planning and peer learning.** The Impact of School Leadership Training Study (2024)

*I spend much of my time leading and coaching rather than just checking and administrative work; I used to give the feedback, but now feedback is carried out in partnership with the teacher*

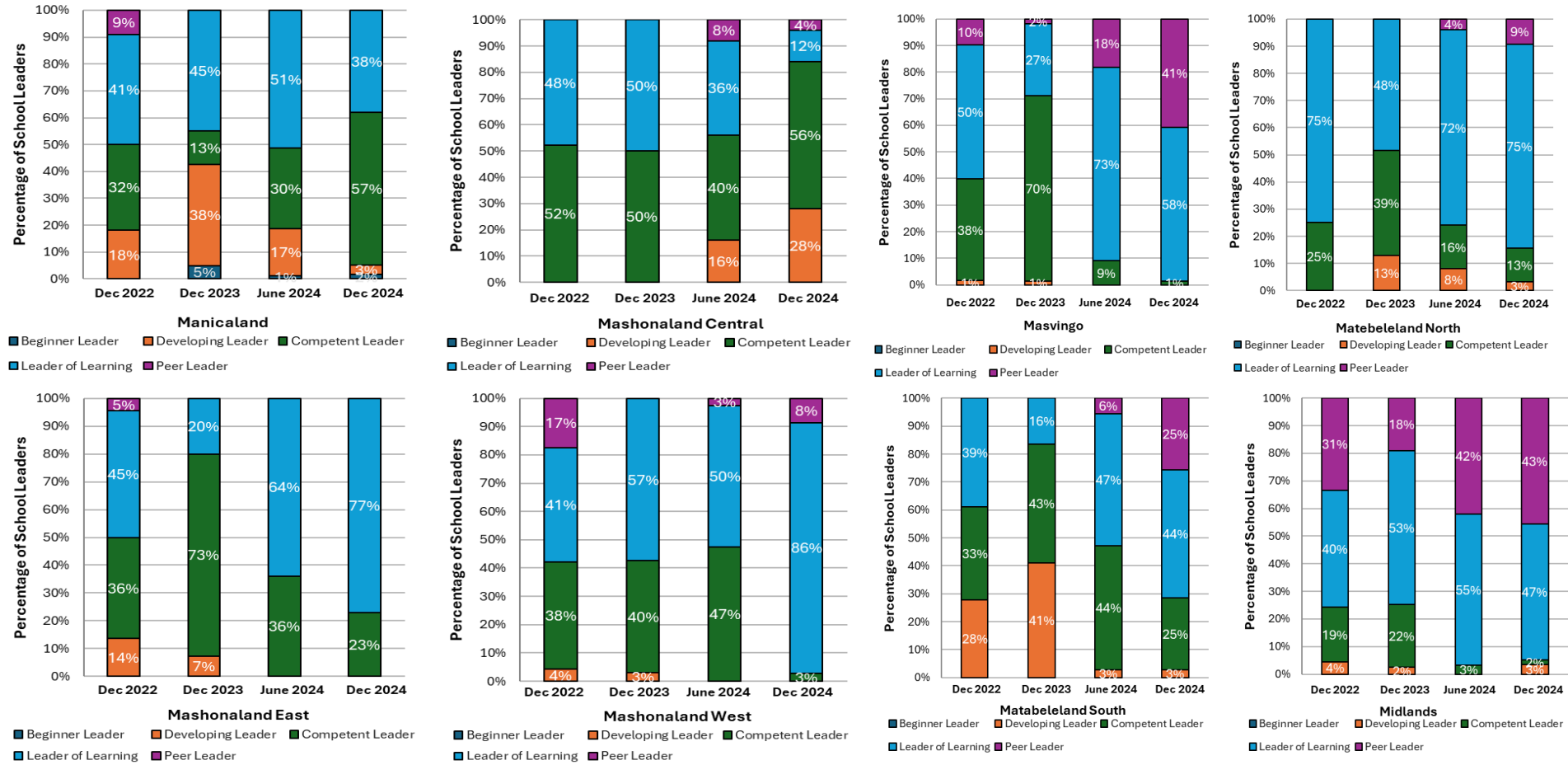
*-Head teacher, Gokwe North, Midlands; Gutu, Masvingo*



offered critical insights into time use, gender participation in leadership, and instructional supervision. Findings informed adaptations to the training content (as well as broader advocacy for gender-responsive leadership pathways to address the lower participation of female school leaders). Head teachers and officials (for example in Manicaland, Midlands and Mashonaland West) confirmed that leadership toolkits gave school heads a “*clearer direction*” for supervising lesson delivery and mentoring staff. Some heads noted that this structure “*reduced conflicts*” and improved collaboration among staff, which in turn boosted morale. Heads also reported valuing learning from other heads through cluster meetings, where they can reflect on their challenges and solutions openly.

**Leadership gains also vary by province and school type - uneven resources, ICT connectivity and monitoring has affected the depth of support, supervision and inclusive practices pursued by school leaders.** At the provincial level, the largest improvements in school leadership competency based on EDT data is observed in Mashonaland West, Masvingo, and Matabeleland South. By contrast, in Mashonaland Central, the average competency score decreased (Figure 22).

**Figure 22: TPD school leader Competency, by province**



Source: Bi-Annual Assessment Data (EDT, 2024); TPD component of TEACH Annual Report (2023-24); Bi-Annual Assessment Reports (EDT, 2024 and 2025)

Secondary data also shows that sustained impact depends on functioning inspection and follow-up and active professional learning communities (PLC), enabling schools to maintain the CPD calendar with timely support and feedback (and overcoming access barriers such as fuel, distance, and internet connectivity) (EDT Second Bi-Annual Report 2024). Findings on differential benefits were reflected in the perspectives shared by head teachers and PEDs; gains in administrative planning were felt more strongly in registered schools with stronger structures. These schools reported more consistent continuous assessment and inclusive pedagogy use, for example, enabled by better access to power, printing, ICT, and more frequent inspections. Satellite schools faced challenges like leadership overload and irregular or slower district follow-up, limiting the benefits of TEACH training (head teachers, SDCs and PEDs in multiple provinces). Like TPD, these stakeholders also noted that leadership training in digital monitoring is often underutilised due to limited equipment or skills.

### 3.4.3 Effectiveness of TPD on GEDSI components

**Key finding 18:** *The overall effectiveness of TEACH's TPD for advancing GEDSI was partial: successful in instigating early shifts in awareness of inclusive education practices, teacher mindsets and behaviours; but constrained in achieving consistent classroom transformation. Uneven depth, insufficient practical guidance and school leadership, and limited systemic reinforcement undermined full integration into teaching practices – especially in rural and under-resourced schools.*

**TPD initiated meaningful shifts in teacher mindset and behaviour around inclusion, laying a strong foundation for change.** The training succeeded in introducing foundational awareness of GEDSI principles and effectively sensitised teachers, across multiple provinces, to the importance of inclusive education, often exposing them for the first time to structured reflections on gender, disability, and learner vulnerability. Teachers were introduced to inclusive practices such as differentiated questioning, peer learning, and use of diverse materials aligned with universal design for learning. Reflecting this, teacher confidence in applying inclusive approaches rose sharply from 51 percent at baseline to 89 percent in 2024 (EDT Baseline Report 2021; EDT Bi-Annual Report 2024). Teachers across provinces described to the evaluation team becoming more empathetic and self-aware, particularly in how they engage girls and learners with disabilities. Reflective storytelling and discussion prompted many to change disciplinary approaches and classroom participation norms. One teacher reflected, *“I realised I used to only ask boys for answers in class. I didn't notice until this training”*. Another added, *“Before, I would ignore the quiet ones. Now I try to find out what's behind their silence”*. Where these inclusive strategies were applied, learners – particularly girls and shy students – benefited from increased participation and emotional safety: *“my girls now volunteer answers. Before, they were too shy or afraid”*. TEACH's TPD successfully laid the cognitive and emotional groundwork for more inclusive schooling – an essential but often underestimated first step in system reform.

**Implementation of GEDSI strategies was strongest in urban and mission schools, where infrastructure and prior exposure to inclusive practices created enabling conditions.** Exposure to inclusive pedagogy was valuable but not always sufficient to ensure sustained classroom application. In urban and better-resourced schools, teachers began experimenting with inclusive education strategies (for example in Urban Harare, Mashonaland Central). However, in rural and satellite schools (e.g. Midlands and Matabeleland South)

practical uptake was more limited due to overcrowded classrooms, lack of materials, and low confidence. “We heard about peer learning, but with 70 learners and no books, how can I do that?” asked one teacher. “We are trained, but our hands are tied” said a teacher from a satellite school. Another noted “the sessions were too quick. By the time I understood, it was already over”. This is also reflected in EDT monitoring data – confidence in teaching learners specifically with special needs increased only slightly from 70.4 percent to 71.7 percent. Because of the school environment – alongside variable school leadership support for GEDSI - GEDSI outcomes varied and registered schools advanced faster than under-resourced satellite schools. Going forward, some teachers and officials asked for “practical disability toolkits”, for example tools or training in sign language, and GBV-sensitive checklists to ensure inclusivity in classrooms (especially reported from Manicaland, Midlands and Mash Central).

**The effectiveness of TPD also varied significantly according to the levels of leadership and mentorship engagement across provinces and school types.** The absence of leadership engagement and systems support weakened GEDSI practice and sustainability. Where school leaders reinforced the training, teachers felt supported and aligned in their application of GEDSI strategies (reported from Manicaland, Midlands, and Mashonaland West). In contrast, in schools where heads and SDCs were not involved, and particularly in rural and satellite schools, teachers struggled alone (reported from Matabeleland South and Mashonaland Central).

*The head was not trained. So, when I tried new things, he thought I was wasting time*

- Teacher, Gokwe South, Midlands



Similarly, schools with strong TPD focal points or mentors saw better follow-through, while others viewed the training as a one-off event.

*You try something new, but there is no one to ask or share ideas with*

- Teacher, Mberengwa, Midlands



Without school-level buy-in, post-training mentorship and other collaborative reinforcement and structural accountability, inclusion remains an individual commitment rather than a shared practice, and TPD risks creating “awareness without application.” This gap between intent and execution weakens the potential for systemic transformation in learner outcomes.

**For students with functional disabilities and intersecting vulnerabilities, progress was further constrained by wider structural exclusion and limited systems-wide support for special needs education.** Overall, GEDSI-responsive teaching was able to shift some micro-level classroom dynamics but struggled to overcome macro-level exclusion that requires systemic investment and community-level change (Box 4 in Annex 5.10).

### 3.4.4 Early results and progress from THINK EQUAL

**Key Finding 19:** *Following initial delays SEL has accelerated rapidly, training educators and SDC members across 18 districts and reaching 65,680 ECD-B pupils (to July 2025). Embedding inclusivity and aligning with TPD and MoPSE systems, early evidence suggests positive shifts in classroom practices and child behaviour, despite logistical and infrastructure challenges to delivery.*

**After prolonged delays, implementation of SEL has accelerated, with over 5,000 teachers, headteachers and SDC members trained across 18 districts in the Think Equal methodology and achieved synergies with TPD.** Between 2021 and 2024, Think Equal's SEL faced significant delays, primarily due to the lack of formal approval from the MoPSE. As a result, milestone targets – training 1,400 teachers and reaching 1,400 classrooms – were not met (TEACH Annual Review Report 2023–2024). Efforts to explore alternative delivery channels, such as through Child Protection Committees (under the Ministry of Public Service, Labour & Social Welfare), also did not yield confirmed results within the reporting cycle. By early 2025 however, SEL had been approved, and implementation accelerated. Stakeholder feedback from MoPSE, ECOZI, and FCDO consistently described the model as promising and well-suited to strengthening pre-primary education (and the Heritage Based Curriculum) in Zimbabwe. This highlights the importance and value of gaining Government buy-in to new educational concepts and innovations, and patient stakeholder engagement in Zimbabwe. Through the partnership with EDT, the intervention was also able to leverage existing TPD delivery structures, providing an established framework for content roll out and embedding SEL within continuous teacher training (KII with Think Equal, EDT).

*EDT have been a new addition to our consortium... given that we really wanted to focus on system strengthening... We thought it would make sense for them to also be the lead implementing partner for this specific component... part of our selection criteria was looking for areas of complementarity where EDT have established that relationship and connection within the district and within the system themselves*

- Think Equal



Teacher training commenced in March 2025 across 18 TEACH districts (in Mashonaland Central, Matabeleland South, and Manicaland), supported by EDT and REPSSI. A structured cascade model was applied, with master trainers capacitating district trainers. Training combined face-to-face and virtual modalities, supplemented with WhatsApp-based support. By April 2025, 2,375 teachers (84 percent of 2,815 targeted) were trained, supported by the distribution of Think Equal learning materials, covering 2,375 ECD-B classes and reaching approximately 47,500 pupils (in registered primary, community and private ECD centres). In total, 5,353 participants, including school heads, deputy heads, Teachers-in-Charge (TIC), and 65 SDC chairpersons, were capacitated, strengthening whole-school buy-in (SEL Programme Quarterly Report, Feb-Apr 2025).

**Strong foundations for inclusivity are being built, with systemic integration of gender and disability considerations, as well as positive synergies with select TEACH components.** Inclusivity is being progressively integrated into design and delivery. The initial training reached both male and female educators across multiple roles, while programme facilitators with disabilities were engaged to model inclusive practices (SEL Programme Quarterly Report, Feb–Apr 2025). Translation into indigenous languages, Braille, and sign language is underway, reflecting a strong commitment to ensuring accessibility for learners with diverse needs. These efforts are consistent with TEACH's GEDSI objectives.

**Early qualitative evidence suggests SEL is shifting classroom practices and learner behaviour.** Although a component evaluation is pending, early qualitative evidence indicates positive results from SEL. Teachers report improved classroom inclusivity and shifts in child behaviour, particularly in emotional literacy, empathy, and willingness to express themselves, competencies which according to the baseline report (Think Equal, July 2025) are amongst

the weakest. Classroom coaching visits, observations, and WhatsApp engagements by focal persons are said to be reinforcing application of SEL pedagogy (SEL Programme Quarterly Report, Feb–Apr 2025). Validating secondary evidence, some teachers cited clear behavioural gains from SEL - children “*feel free to talk*” and engage more openly – aligning with TEACH’s intended SEL outcomes (reported from Mt Darwin, Mashonaland Central). In Manicaland, head teachers in Mutasa and in Nyanga reinforced this positive perspective, noting that heritage-based games and storytelling enriched SEL delivery and deepened community relevance. SDCs and education department officials (in Manicaland and Mashonaland Central respectively) mentioned that SEL had also “*improved student behaviour and teacher–learner relations*” and confirmed its integration within teaching practices.

**Growing system ownership through MoPSE and integration with teacher CPD can enhance long-term sustainability.** The programme is being increasingly embedded within MoPSE structures, with for example district-level trainers, inspectors, and SDCs actively engaged. Integration into professional development and alignment with CPD/TPD objectives strengthens the prospects for sustainability. Government ownership has been reinforced through MoPSE’s strategic leadership and by embedding SEL into existing curricula rather than delivering it as a standalone subject (SEL Programme Quarterly Report, Feb–April 2025).

**Implementation challenges have centred on logistics, scheduling and infrastructure constraints.** Persistent operational challenges included delays in printing and distributing materials (which were resolved through staggered delivery). Transport difficulties and high costs, exacerbated by the rainy season in rural districts like Matabeleland South, limited teacher attendance, while some training sessions overlapped with provincial athletics events in Gwanda, Insiza, and Beitbridge. Venue overcrowding, lack of electricity, and long travel distances also constrained effective delivery. Primary evidence adds that in remote Rushinga (Mashonaland Central) and Chimanimani (Manicaland), large class sizes, lack of ECD play materials, and insufficient assistants further constrained SEL delivery. In Matabeleland South, SEL benefits were most evident in solarised schools – clearly suggesting that infrastructure and capacity disparities can shape programmatic outcomes (as well as highlighting the benefits of coordinated programming).

#### 3.4.5 Synergy effects across TEACH components

**Key finding 20:** *Synergies between TPD, SIG, and solarisation, complemented by community engagement interventions, strengthened the effectiveness of individual TEACH components in enhancing quality of learning and school functionality. This was particularly the case in rural and satellite schools. However, limited geographic overlap and the phase-out of SIG Regular constrained the potential gains from these synergies across the programme.*

**SIGs and TPD were mutually supportive when implemented in the same schools, strengthening implementation of pedagogy and capacity for school planning.** SIG support for classroom furniture, learning materials, and infrastructure repairs directly supported teachers’ ability to apply TPD strategies including improved lesson preparation (EDT Annual Report, 2023–2024). In the 42 TEACH districts where there was an overlap, SIG-supported schools also showed stronger uptake of inclusive pedagogy, demonstration lessons, and peer feedback under TPD, linked to improved resourcing (EDT Annual Report, 2023–2024). Internal reports further emphasise that schools benefitting from both SIG Regular and TPD showed higher teacher presence, improved motivation and morale, and fewer reports

of classroom absenteeism, contributing to improvements in learning continuity and school retention (UNICEF Annual Report 2023-2024). This was corroborated by a broad consensus amongst stakeholders consulted that SIGs boosted teacher motivation. Furthermore, pedagogical training under TPD equipped teachers and school leaders to more effectively use SIG-funded TLM and ICT kits and translate resource inputs into improved remedial learning, delivery, and learner retention (EDT-TEACH Areas of Complementarity, 2024; TEACH EDT Benefit Statement). Head teachers and education department officials concurred (for example in Midlands and Mashonaland West); based upon their experiences of school and district workshops, in-school lesson observations, and tablet-enabled supervision, TPD was reported to have reinforced and maximised use of SIG-funded resources.

**Internal TEACH reports suggest that the integration of solar systems, alongside TPD and SIGs, also contributed to enhancing learning outcomes.** Solarisation further reinforced TPD's digital pedagogy by enabling the use of digital learning tools and extending learning into evening hours, enhancing teacher practices. In solarised schools, teachers trained under TPD could better utilise ICT kits and engage in data-driven instruction through SD cards and WhatsApp based tools and Learning Passport platforms (SIG Monitoring Report 2024, EDT Annual Report 2023–2024, p. 15; TPD Implementation Context Report, Feb 2025). EDT reported increased school functionality, teaching quality, and literacy scores in provinces such as Matabeleland North and Mashonaland Central - where solarisation, SIGs, and TPD inclusive pedagogies were jointly implemented (EDT Bi-Annual Report 2024, TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024). This was corroborated by some stakeholders at the district (see below) and school level. Teachers from multiple provinces reported that catch-up materials and TPD worked best when paired with Solarisation.

*TPD, SIG-supported ICT resources... then some schools were solarised... we had 0% pass rate in 2023, but now we have 35% in 2024*

*- DSI, Beitbridge, Matabeleland South*



**Anecdotal reports also suggest that layering community engagement in districts with TPD and SIGs enhanced both school access and learning outcomes.** This is because community and parental engagement contributed for example to safer environments for marginalised girls and menstrual hygiene management (EDT Third Bi-Annual Report 2024; SIG Monitoring Report, Aug 2024). PEDs, head teachers and SDC representatives (for example in Midlands) perceived that TEACH's bundled efforts combining SIG, TPD and community fairs were linked to stronger trust from parents, in turn leading to higher learner enrolment and improved exam pass rates at Grade 7. In Mashonaland West, synergy effects were reported from similar bundled interventions across TEACH and other education partners:

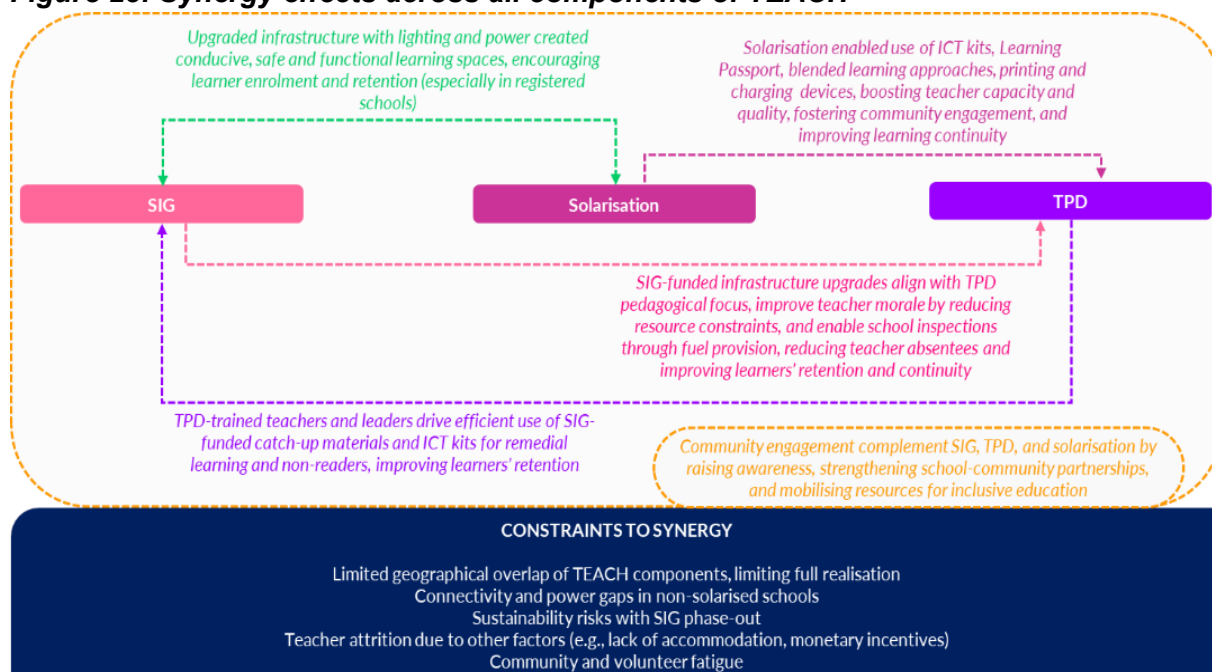
*Government chipped in for feeding programme, CAMFED provided community awareness support... radio lessons were conducted by TEACH UNICEF... TEACH TPD enabled teacher capacity... all of this improved learning outcomes*

*- DSI, Sanyati, Mashonaland West*



The figure below summarises the range of reported benefits for programme effectiveness where different TEACH components were implemented together.

**Figure 23: Synergy effects across all components of TEACH**



**Colocation of TEACH components was not always consciously planned for, limiting beneficial synergy effects for individual component effectiveness, and the potential impact of TEACH overall.** No one district benefited from all five TEACH interventions simultaneously. Education department officials, head teachers and teachers emphasised the need for deeper co-location and intensity of TEACH components. Head teachers from several provinces argued for concentration of inputs to avoid “*thin spread*” (including larger or repeated SIG grants combined with TPD and safeguarding, as well as more community fairs to improve awareness); and some officials and headteachers acknowledged system-wide gains but noted that school-level depth varied without layered packages (especially reported from Midlands). Going forward, partners emphasised the need for stronger MoPSE leadership at provincial and district levels to reduce fragmentation and drive a more self-sustaining system.

*We really need the government to lead for a strongly coordinated programming*

- UNICEF

### 3.5 Effectiveness: Systems strengthening through TEACH

This section synthesises findings primarily for EQ6, ‘*To what extent has the TEACH Programme supported and promoted a strengthened education system within Zimbabwe?*’, and for EQ4, which more narrowly asks, ‘*To what extent has the TEACH Programme supported a more accountable learning environment?*’. Relevant activities reviewed here include TEACH’s contribution to policy influence ([Section 3.5.1](#)); investments in strengthening EMIS and MoPSE’s research and data capacity ([Section 3.5.2](#)); inspection reforms and accountability mechanisms, including provision of fuel and digital tools ([Section 3.5.3](#)); and capacity building across national and sub-national levels ([Section 3.5.4](#)). The analysis considers both enabling factors, such as MoPSE leadership and resourcing, and persistent challenges, including delays in policy approval, uneven uptake at district level, and reliance

on donor support. Sustainability and equity are cross-cutting themes considered throughout, with a specific focus on school inspections and equity under *Key finding 23*.

Strength of Evidence	Strong
<p>TEACH inspection and data strengthening activities are well documented within programme and partner reports, which the evaluation team then built upon at national, provincial, district and school levels to corroborate implementation and effectiveness on the ground. Details of policy contributions from TEACH were less well articulated within existing TEACH Programme reports. However, by engaging with multiple stakeholders and partners (and sometimes with repeat interviews to clarify details or gaps in knowledge) the evaluation team was able to assemble credible stories of change around TEACH’s policy influence, as well as discounting areas of minimal contribution. Overall strength of evidence for EQ6 is rated as <i>strong</i>.</p>	

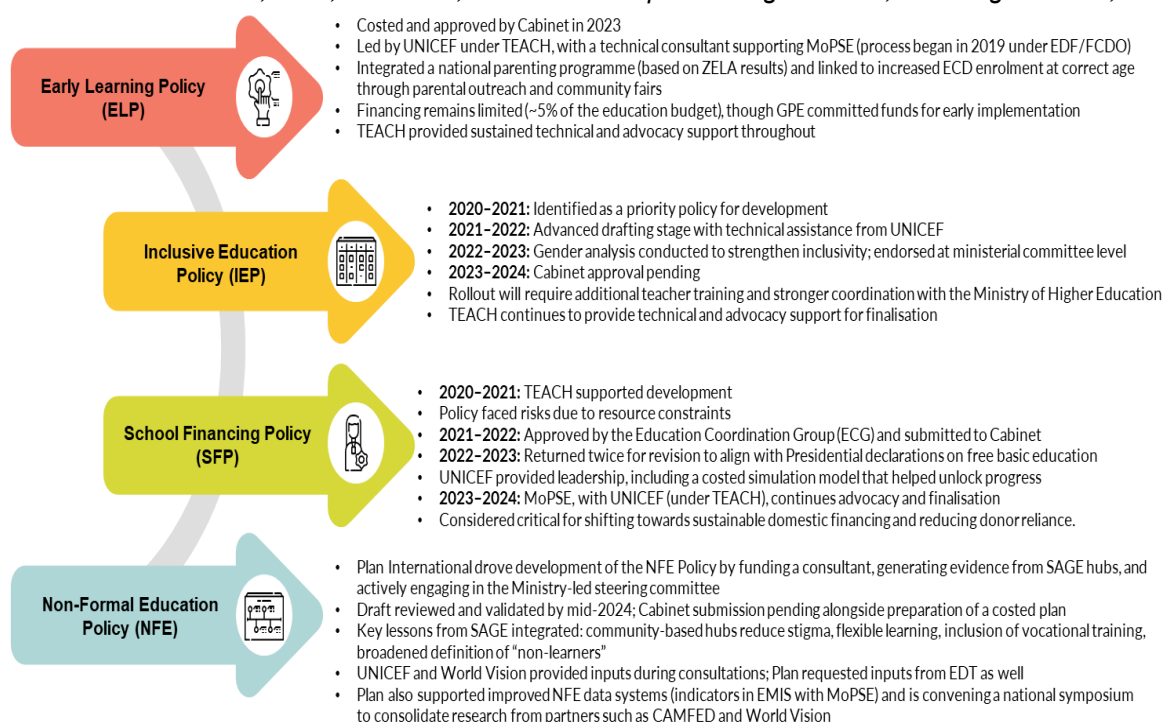
### 3.5.1 TEACH contribution to policy influence

**Key finding 21:** *TEACH has further influenced and strengthened Zimbabwe’s education system through driving policy formulation and standard setting at the national level, underpinned by improved partner engagement platforms. Specifically, TEACH has supported Cabinet approval of the Early Learning Policy and has since supported the progression of the Inclusive Education Policy, School Financing Policy, and Non-Formal Education Policy, whilst taking steps to help align in-service and pre-service teacher training (CPD). However, delayed policy approvals, outdated frameworks and ministerial silos (CPD) and ongoing reliance on donor funding for implementation have limited further institutionalisation and the sustainability of TEACH-supported reforms.*

**Between 2019 and 2024, TEACH influenced and supported the progression of various education policies – including those with a strong focus on equity and inclusion – despite the complex institutional context.** TEACH’s technical assistance and facilitation of inclusive consultation processes have helped advance several key policies (summarised at figure 24 below).

## Figure 24: Contributions of TEACH and its components in policy influence for systems strengthening

Source: KIIs with FCDO, GPE, CAMFED, and TEACH Implementing Partners, including UNICEF, EDT,



*Plan International, Think Equal (Athena Evaluation Team, 2025)*

- The most prominent early achievement from these efforts was the finalisation, costing, and Cabinet approval of the **Early Learning Policy (ELP)** in 2023, which harmonised and aimed to improve delivery of pre-primary and early grade education (ECD A-B, Grades 1–2), in alignment with the revised curriculum – a cornerstone in strengthening ECD quality for Zimbabwe. UNICEF led the development of the ELP, providing a technical consultant and steering consultations from 2019 until approval in 2023. Ongoing financing remains limited, at about 5 percent of the education budget, though GPE has committed funds for early implementation. The policy also integrated a national parenting programme, informed by ZELA findings, and has since underpinned increased ECD enrolment, with outreach campaigns further encouraging children’s enrolment at the correct age (KII with UNICEF).
- TEACH has contributed to updating the **Inclusive Education Policy (IEP)** and a new **School Financing Policy (SFP)**, both of which have reached advanced development stages but were awaiting Cabinet approval at the point of the evaluation (TEACH Annual Reviews; KII with UNICEF and EDT). UNICEF provided technical assistance for the IEP, including a gender analysis, and furthermore led the costing simulation for the SFP - which is considered critical to supporting sustainable domestic financing amidst shrinking foreign aid (KIIs with MOPSE, UNICEF and FCDO).
- TEACH has also supported the development of a new **Non-Formal Education Policy (NFE)**, through Plan International’s SAGE component. An unanticipated benefit of the TEACH Programme, Plan subsequently led the drafting of the NFE policy, through funding a consultant and providing evidence from SAGE’s community hubs, flexible delivery models (e.g., on WhatsApp lessons), and vocational skills integration. The draft was validated in June 2024 and is pending Cabinet approval, with a costed plan under

preparation. UNICEF and World Vision also contributed inputs during the consultation process (KII with Plan International; KII with UNICEF).

In addition, TEACH contributed technical assistance and evidence to the finalisation of the **Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP)** (2021–2025), which was led by MoPSE with support from GPE.

**TEACH's role in institutionalising multi-stakeholder coordination platforms supported policy influence and participatory governance processes, including further standard setting in teacher CPD.** The new steering committees and technical working groups established (see [Section 3.2](#)) provided spaces for consultation and enhanced policy ownership across government, civil society, and development partners, enabling draft policies to draw on a broader evidence base, align with constitutional and development priorities, and reflect stronger consensus than previous top-down approaches. A further example of this is the TEACH-supported TPD Working Group, which has brought together MoPSE, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, teacher training colleges and development partners to jointly review teacher training curricula and align learning outcomes (and take steps towards bridging historically fragmented pre-service and in-service teacher training). Achievements include the development of the 2021 CPD Framework, harmonisation with the Heritage-Based Curriculum - through a workshop facilitated by EDT in 2024, described as a "*watershed year for the teacher training curriculum*", co-development of the school leadership competency framework, and integration of MoPSE-approved TPD toolkits within Pre-service Teacher Education syllabi (KII with EDT). TEACH through UNICEF and EDT also continues to work to harmonise inclusive education frameworks within the Ministry. This has included embedding inclusion modules (drawn from the Practical and Inclusive Education Handbook) within school inspection reforms (see [Section 3.4.2](#)).

**Further policy progress under TEACH has been constrained by institutional challenges, including the slow pace of approvals, ministerial silos and limitations to school financing.** Systemic issues have weakened policy implementation and translation into classroom-level change. For instance, Cabinet approval for the IEP and SFP is still pending four years into the process. In response, the TEACH Programme adjusted its log frame to focus on milestones within the project's control, shifting from "policy approval" to "submission to Cabinet". Ministerial siloing – especially between MoPSE and Higher Education - continues to limit full alignment on teacher CPD, and specifically the absence of a revised CPD Framework with updated policies on ICT skills, progression pathways and other teacher incentives (KIIs UNICEF, EDT, ECOZI and TUZ; corroborated by head teachers, teachers and SDCs). While stakeholders acknowledged TEACH's strategic responsiveness, they also noted that policy implementation under for example the IEP is constrained by resource gaps – including shortages of special needs-trained teachers – and further weak cross-ministerial leadership and coordination on inclusive education (KIIs EDT, UNICEF and MoPSE). Stakeholders recognise that these challenges are, to a large extent, outside of the influence of TEACH, although some advocated for support for the adoption of a more formalised process for policy approvals to enhance the enabling environment (KII GPE). More specifically, approval and implementation of the School Financing Policy (SFP) – and predictable domestic financing – is recognised as critical to unlocking inclusive education and other policy reforms as well as deeper school-level resourcing (interviews with PTUZ, DSIs, PEDs), as well as to

the sustainability of TEACH outcomes across the board – from enhanced school access to teaching quality and improved data and inspections.

**The TEACH Programme has made substantial contributions to strengthening capacity at the national level, although there remains a need to institutionalise reforms within MoPSE rather than relying on external partner input.** From 2022, MoPSE evolved from being a recipient of technical assistance to co-leading key reforms such as school inspections, curriculum harmonisation, EMIS and TPD rollout, supported by technical working groups. Despite systems-wide training, there remains a critical need to transition partner-led initiatives and related competencies into MoPSE's permanent structures. Currently, much of the technical capacity to strengthen the education system (for example, on TPD) resides in project-supported working groups or is externally driven by Implementing Partners, potentially undermining the sustainability of reforms once project funding ends.

### 3.5.2 TEACH contribution to strengthening education data

**Key finding 22:** TEACH has demonstrated significant progress in institutionalising ZELA, partial progress in strengthening EMIS, and moderate success in strengthening the research-to-policy ecosystem. Activities have improved national capacity to generate, analyse, and utilise data and evidence for education planning and policy formulation. This includes informing policy dialogues within MoPSE and system-wide reforms on foundational learning, school inspections and equity. Weak institutional capacity for data generation and use, resulting for example in delays in finalising sector reviews, limited data disaggregation, and budgetary constraints, have otherwise limited influence on policy and practice and institutionalization of recommendations.

**TEACH has effectively supported the institutionalisation of the Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment (ZELA) as a national assessment tool.** ZELA, a sample-based national assessment focused on early grade literacy and numeracy in Grade 2 learners, was initially supported by UNICEF under TEACH (2019–2020) before transitioning to EDT (2022–2023). Building on this foundation, the 2021 ZELA round was led fully by MoPSE, with technical support from UNICEF, marking its integration into national planning and budgeting. In 2022, for the first time, ZELA results were released before year-end, enabling more timely policy planning (with costs reduced and delivery accelerated through in-house data processing). In 2023, ZELA further evolved with the inclusion of automated e-marking and a new teacher questionnaire, enhancing cost-efficiency and the quality and utility of foundational literacy and numeracy data. A ZELA Handbook and Technical Working Group were established to institutionalise the process, before ZELA support was handed over to UNICEF under the GPE System Transformation Grant from 2024. UNICEF was able to use ZELA findings on persistent rural-urban disparities and prevalence of non-readers to target the lowest performing six districts with parental engagement and ECD support initiatives. ZELA data furthermore informed TPD (KIIs EDT and UNICEF). Challenges remain however in embedding analytical skills and capacity to utilise data within MoPSE (see below).

**TEACH-supported Education Management Information System (EMIS) reform showed early promise, but later faced setbacks, with capacity and data quality issues and limited feedback loops undermining evidence uptake.** Early EMIS progress was positive with timely publication of the 2019 and 2020 reports. These datasets informed the Joint Sector Reviews and Education Sector Performance Reports (ESPR) and were made publicly

accessible via the MoPSE website for the first time (TEACH Annual Reviews 2019–2021). UNICEF confirmed that TEACH further contributed significantly to EMIS transformation by piloting the shift from paper and excel-based systems to an online template downloaded at district level. Enhancing equity, disability data collection was improved by integrating the Washington Group Questions (WGQs) into EMIS, and Plan International worked with MoPSE to identify indicators to capture participation in alternative education programmes (KII Plan International). However, from 2022 onwards, timely delivery of EMIS reports became a challenge, limiting feedback loops and constraining uptake of research findings. Delays related to technical issues such as prolonged data cleaning processes and access to population data from ZimSTAT required for enrolment calculations (KII UNICEF). The 2022 EMIS was not published until August 2023, and the 2023 EMIS remained a draft in September 2024 – delaying the 2023 ESPR and GPE disbursements (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024, KII UNICEF). Whilst some education department officials consulted confirmed that EMIS (and ZELA) data has guided school grant allocation and enabled them to “*track school performance better*” (PED, Mashonaland East) some also expressed frustration that delays in EMIS reports made district planning “*reactive rather than proactive*”. A few PEDs also highlighted that connectivity and weak ICT capacity has limited full uptake. Similar to policy reforms, while TEACH has introduced innovative digital tools like EMIS dashboards, this has also relied heavily upon external technical support. To ensure sustainability, MoPSE staff require stronger skills in data analytics, dashboard use, and feedback mechanisms to drive internal planning and performance reviews.






**TEACH has also been instrumental in reviving the Teacher Development Information System (TDIS), which serves as an important tool for tracking training coverage and participation in CPD, identifying gaps, and informing planning.** Through TPD, Inspection Data Administrators and Provincial Quality Assurers were trained in data entry, management, and analysis to use e-inspection dashboards to feed real-time data into TDIS. By December 2024, TDIS had been reactivated in 9 of Zimbabwe’s 72 districts, with MoPSE committing to its expansion (KII with EDT; EDT Bi-Annual Report). TDIS-linked monitoring effectively allowed identification of weaker domains (e.g. inclusive pedagogy for PwFD), which were prioritised in subsequent TPD cycles (KII with EDT). The reliance on donor funding for the current TDIS however raises sustainability concerns, as system expansion risks stalling if government (i.e., Treasury) resources are not mobilised. Integration into EMIS is also necessary to ensure continuity beyond TEACH, requiring longer-term monitoring of this process (KII EDT).

**Data collection tools fell short of accounting for the full spectrum of GEDSI needs and supporting reliable data disaggregation of learning outcomes, including for PwFD.** According to some education department officials and Headteachers, the reliance on visible impairments and informal assessments - rather than structured screening tools or inclusion forms - meant that many learners remained unrecorded or misidentified within EMIS. Importantly, learner voices were also often absent from these monitoring processes. Stakeholders acknowledged that feedback from vulnerable learners, especially those with disabilities, was not systematised. As a result, while the design of monitoring systems captured enrolment and attendance, it missed out on deeper dimensions of inclusion (SDCs). Moreover, beyond girls, learning outcomes of other vulnerable populations – including PwFD, children from low-income households, orphans, and minority populations – were largely scarce. While

increased use of data for vulnerable learners in general was reported, no consistent systems or practices emerged for tracking differentiated outcomes by disability, socio-economic and other inclusion criteria.

**TEACH research studies have helped to strengthen evidence-based planning within MoPSE and influenced some equity-focused policy reforms and adaptations, although full scale-up of recommendations has sometimes stalled due to funding constraints.** TEACH has collaborated closely with MoPSE’s Research and Innovation Department (RID) to generate and/or build on new evidence, aligned with MoPSE’s operational priorities, and supported evidence-uptake through national forums. The key research studies supported, and their outcomes, have included the following (details included in the Annex 5.10).

**Figure 25: Highlights of supported research and outcomes**

Women in School Leadership	Equitable Access to Early Childhood Development	Zero Percent Pass Rate	Blended Learning	Holistic Organisational Development
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools led by women = lower dropout rates + better infrastructure.</li> <li>MoPSE reforms: gender champions, leadership training, and women’s participation in decision-making.</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rural–urban disparities in teacher placement &amp; curriculum.</li> <li>MoPSE response: inclusive ECD teacher training, play-based pedagogy, and curriculum alignment.</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>156 schools studied → 12% of secondary schools &amp; 2% of primary schools had zero pass rates in 2023.</li> <li>Causes: teacher attrition, low motivation, weak literacy foundations.</li> <li>Solutions: structured pedagogy, foundational learning support, teacher mentoring.</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Urban schools: better internet and ICT-ready teachers.</li> <li>Rural schools: reliance on radio and printed modules; older teachers feared tech “replacement.”</li> <li>Outcomes: ICT integrated into curriculum and CPD strategy (but stalled due to funding)</li> </ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Catalysed system-wide reforms under ESPIG.</li> <li>Key outcomes: new education plans (ELP, IEP, SFP, CPD), solar-powered schools, community awareness campaigns.</li> </ul>

Source: TEACH Annual Reviews (2019-2023), Women in School Leadership Research Study (MoPSE, 2023); Assessing Equitable Access to Quality Early Childhood Development in Zimbabwe (MoPSE, 2024); Understanding Factors Contributing to Zero Percent Pass Rates in Schools in Zimbabwe (MoPSE, 2024); Extent of Uptake of Blended Teaching and Learning Models in Primary and Secondary Schools in Zimbabwe (MoPSE, 2025); KII with TEACH Implementing Partners, including EDT and UNICEF.

More generally, technical assistance has contributed to increased competence, ownership, and accountability within MoPSE RID. According to EDT, RID officials demonstrated stronger communication skills and confidence in presenting findings, indicating institutional growth in evidence-based planning (KII EDT). This contrasts with earlier attempts to establish a Centre for Research and Innovation in Primary and Secondary Education (CERID), which aimed to build national research capacity with UNESCO collaboration, but did not come to fruition, being undermined by political changes and ministerial rivalries (KII with UNICEF).

### 3.5.3 TEACH contribution to strengthening accountability (school inspections)

**Key finding 23:** School inspection reforms have enhanced inspection reach and quality, with early signs of improved collaboration and more mixed evidence of school-level actions and improvements. The e-inspection platform alongside fuel provision have contributed to driving increases in national coverage, although impact is uneven across provinces due to transport and capacity constraints, with fragile gains again noted in rural/satellite schools.

**TEACH has effectively supported a more accountable learning environment in Zimbabwe by facilitating system-wide scale-up of a Revised Inspection Programme (RIP) across 72 districts, enhanced by low-cost EdTech.** Historically, Zimbabwe’s inspection system was paper-based, compliance-focused, and fragmented, with long gaps (especially in remote/satellite schools), undermining its ability to influence teaching quality and foundational learning outcomes. COVID-19 further diverted inspection staff to pandemic-related duties. During COVID-19, TEACH (including through the provision of Fuel – see below) enabled 4,116 inspection visits (TEACH 2020–2021). The UNICEF SIG Rapid Assessment (2023) found that 36 percent of surveyed schools (50 sampled schools) had received no inspections in the prior year, and in Manicaland, almost 67 percent reported no visits at all. Combined with UNICEF’s supply of 34 vehicles in hard-to-reach districts, school visits then increased to 6,089 in 2021–2022 and 6,748 in 2022–2023, surpassing the 6,000-visit milestone (TEACH Annual Review 2022–2023). In collaboration with MoPSE, the Revised Inspection Programme (RIP) was introduced in February 2024, including adding Kobo Collect software on mobile devices to enable real-time data capture, storage, and dashboard visualisation at MoPSE headquarters. RIP also led to the development of the first-ever Zimbabwe Schools Inspection Manual, aligning inspection criteria with Teacher Professional Standards and global best practice (Schools Inspection Case Study 2024; EDT-TPD Case Study: At-scale innovation using technology 2023; FCDO-GED Case Study from Paper Based to E-inspection). By mid-2024, all 72 districts had inspection calendars in place, and 467 inspectors (325 males, 142 females, including 6 with disabilities) were trained on the reformed framework and e-inspection process, alongside 72 DSIs, 10 PEDs, and 10 Directors of Education Services (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024). In 2023–24, 8,495 schools were inspected by district officials (from a total of 10,587 schools reported in December 2014), including the inspection of 656 schools (exceeding the target of 532 schools) using the reformed methodology (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024). By December 2024, all 72 districts had adopted the Kobo e-inspection model (KII EDT), producing 1,640 e-inspection reports (National Consolidated Fuel Narrative Report 2024). By June 2025, inspection activity reached a peak, with 3,964 schools inspected across 72 districts in 10 provinces, yielding 144,919 lesson observations (Inspection Report Dashboard, July 2025). Supporting this data, SDCs reported that parents are now reassured seeing inspectors more frequently, believing that “*quality is being monitored more closely*” (e.g. in Masvingo).

**The provision of Fuel has been an important enabler in mobilising district, provincial, and national staff for school monitoring and inspections - although there are sustainability concerns.** The inspection system faced persistent challenges early in TEACH’s lifetime, with COVID-19 disruptions and procurement delays stalling implementation between 2019–2021. Subsequently, fuel support was instrumental; it enabled inspectors, DSIs, and PEDs from all 72 districts to travel to training venues and conduct on-site inspections, including with the new RIP methodology. UNICEF facilitated the provision of 110,170 litres of fuel to districts to support monitoring and supervision activities (TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024). By December 2024, UNICEF-fuel-enabled average cumulative inspection coverage reached up to 76 percent of 10,587 schools in 72 districts across Zimbabwe, generating 6,580 manually generated supervision reports – up significantly from 36 percent coverage in 2023 (National Consolidated Fuel Narrative Report 2024). Some local education staff (DSIs, PEDs and head teachers) described fuel as “*the backbone*” for resuming supervision calendars and also reaching long-missed sites - where roads were passable in

the rainy season - and hence also bridging equity gaps (reported in multiple TEACH provinces). While generally welcoming fuel support, education department officials and head teachers in two provinces also raised concerns that the reliance on fuel provision for school visits is not sustainable, particularly if external funding was to cease. FCDO confirmed that fuel support will end in October 2025, with risks to the smooth delivery of public examinations (in the absence of alternative funding).

**Persistent connectivity gaps (physical and virtual) have constrained the full benefits of RIP and e-inspection roll-out.** Whilst a clear majority of participants reported stronger inspection coverage in accessible districts, teachers in harder-to-reach areas still cited sporadic visits and delayed feedback. Registered schools more often reported multiple visits per year; many satellite schools commonly reported at least one missed term (interviews with head teachers, teachers, SDCs, DSIs and PEDs). This was reported to be due to digital and staffing gaps and poor road infrastructure. Registered urban districts reported quicker adoption of e-inspection dashboards while rural/satellite-dominant districts (e.g. in Midlands) reported slower uptake due to inadequate staffing and poor internet connectivity. Persistent transport constraints (notably poor vehicle condition and limited availability) suppressed fuel coverage in some provinces (KILs with DSIs and PEDs).

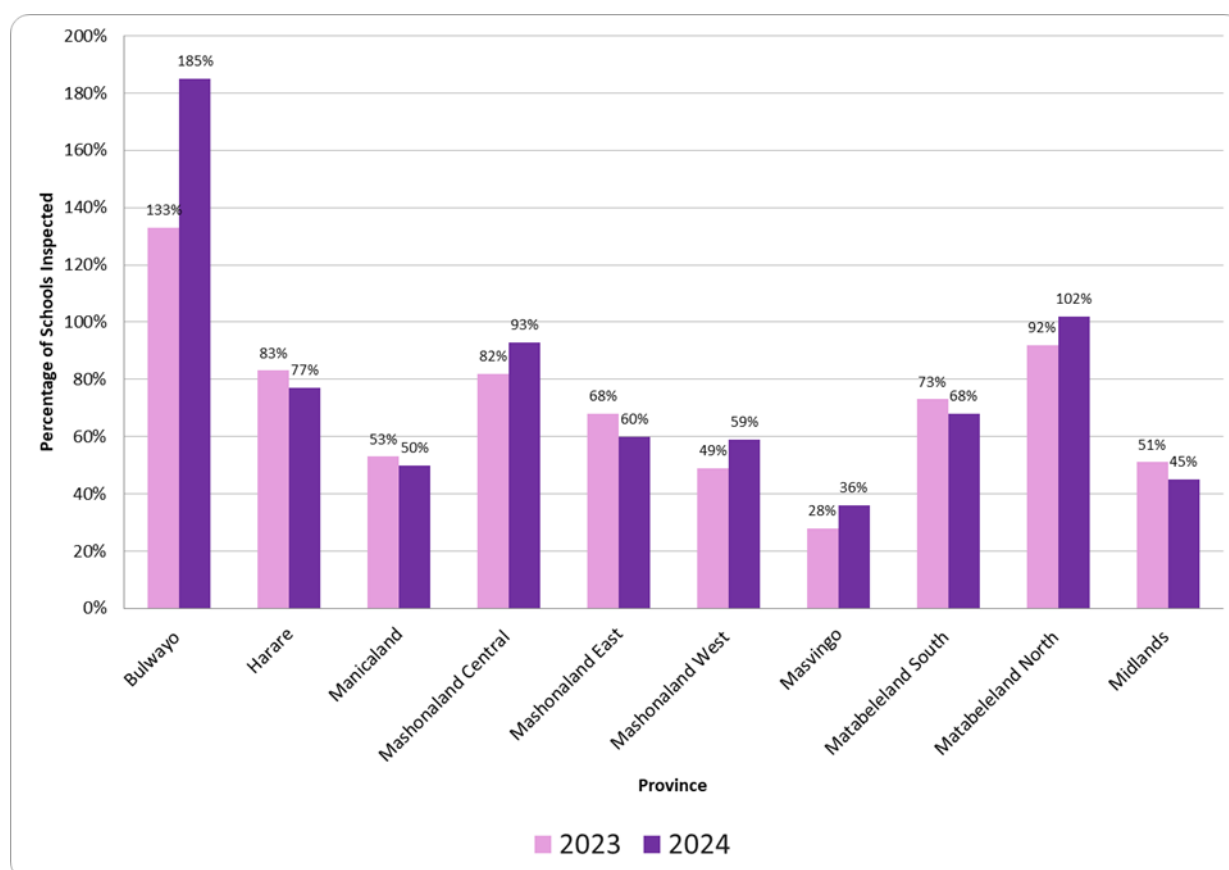
*We now see inspectors, not just paperwork... while satellite schools still report skipped inspections when vehicles breakdown during field trips...*

*- Head teachers, Kwekwe, Midlands*



Consequently, despite positive national gains, inspection and supervision coverage has varied widely between provinces (figure 26). Masvingo (36 percent) and Midlands (45 percent) had the least inspection visits to their schools in 2024.

**Figure 26: Percentage of schools with inspection and supervision coverage, by Province**



Source: National Consolidated Fuel Narrative Reports (MoPSE, December 2023 and December 2024). Note: Percentages above 100 percent indicate that all schools were inspected at least once, with some (e.g., in Bulwayo and Matabeleland North) visited more than once in the year.

**The RIP has enabled a shift from punitive to more supportive school inspections, including strengthening peer learning and mentoring, but with more limited evidence (at this stage) that this has led to improved teaching practices and school results.** The RIP encourages school self-reviews and prioritisation of improvement areas. Feedback from RIP inspections is now directly informing school-based CPD, coaching, and mentoring, with inspectors’ readiness, confidence, and understanding also scoring above 4 (out of 5). As a result, teachers report increased collaboration and peer learning, with inspection findings prompting changes in classroom practice (Schools Inspection Case Study 2024). An overwhelming majority of stakeholders corroborated that the revised inspection methodology has enhanced inspection culture. Teachers, head teachers and DSIs widely perceived a shift from “*fault-finding and penalising*” to “*mentoring*” within inspections. This cultural shift was widely attributed to TEACH tools (including lesson checklists and KoboCollect) and support for more structured feedback, further reinforced by the mobility enabled by fuel (and improved provision of vehicles from the Government). Some stakeholders perceived that by allowing DSIs and inspectors to physically reach schools, fuel has fostered a stronger head teacher–teacher peer learning and mentoring loops following school inspections.

*Earlier, inspections were about fault-finding... Now, inspectors come to mentor us, improve us... they observe lessons and guide us instead of penalising... We used to fear inspections earlier*

*- Head teacher, Gokwe South, Midlands*



As a result, some respondents (across multiple provinces) linked improved pass rates and reduced non-readers to the combination of inspections and TPD. Explaining this, teachers reported better uptake of TPD where MoPSE supervision became more regular (and further highlighting the benefits of layering TEACH interventions).

However, in general the evaluation found more limited evidence of school-level outcomes from enhanced inspection, exacerbated by a lack of outcome tracking within TEACH monitoring itself (logframe targets cover the number of quality assurance visits and percent of schools inspected, but not the quality or depth of pedagogical feedback and its use). A minority of respondents expressed opposing opinions. Some education department officials and head teachers observed that the new supportive and reflective inspection culture sometimes led to inspectors spending more time mentoring than on compliance checks, risking “*missing critical gaps*”. Similarly, an unintended negative consequence of frequent school inspections was reported to be increased workload pressure (DSIs, SDCs, head teachers, and teachers). Because of access and coverage gaps, teachers in some schools argued that inspection visits “*remain too irregular to make a difference*”. Field reports also flag some misalignment between inspection findings and the ability to address structural issues such as classroom shortages and continuous assessment delivery, due to wider resource constraints.

*We are overstretched and cannot provide in-depth mentoring*

*- Head teacher, Mutasa, Manicaland*



Moving forward, some teachers and education department officials (including in Midlands and Mashonaland Central) asked for offline Kobo packs, more devices, and refresher clinics to standardise use in low-connectivity zones. It was also suggested that simplified school-level snapshots from dashboards could help better drive staff meetings and termly planning (interviews with head teachers in Mashonaland West). Some respondents shared that where inspectors co-presented dashboard snapshots at SDC meetings, school plans were more targeted (interviews with SDCs and head teachers, especially reported from Midlands). Some head teachers and SDCs requested simplified self-review checklists and paired-school peer reviews to maintain momentum between inspector visits (suggested in Zvishavane and Gokwe South in Midlands).

**Key finding 24:** *Despite expanded reach, school inspections under TEACH fell short of meaningfully advancing GEDSI outcomes. Partial monitoring frameworks, widespread non-application of tools, superficial engagement with inclusion, and limited follow-up reveal a gap between inclusive intent and operational execution.*

**Despite inclusion reforms within the inspection methodology, capacity gaps continued to constrain improved GEDSI monitoring.** The revised inspection framework, developed by EDT, introduced gender- and disability-sensitive monitoring tools – including classroom observation checklists and the e-inspection app – and trained 467 inspectors (including 6 with disabilities). While this marked progress in embedding inclusive education principles, for

example, bringing visibility to issues such as menstrual hygiene or lack of disability infrastructure, the quality and consistency of monitoring was still limited by several factors. Inspectors reported lacking the tools and confidence to assess specialised units for learners with disabilities and provide quality feedback during visits. Inspectors were also often unsure how to assess culturally specific barriers to girls' participation. As one inspector put it, "*we reached all the schools, yes, but we need tools to know what to look for*". The inspection checklist was said to lack more detailed components related to disability inclusion, girls' safety, or religious and cultural barriers to attendance.

**School inspections did not consistently and meaningfully address the realities facing pregnant learners, children with disabilities, or religious minorities, nor provide follow-up support.** In several provinces, inspections were seen as focused on general compliance or quantitative enrolment figures rather than proactively monitoring or probing gender or disability barriers to access – even in schools where such issues were prominent (KIIIs teachers, headteachers and education department officials. As one headteacher reflected: "*It felt like a tick-box exercise – they didn't ask about the children who need the most support*". In some districts, inspectors were reported to have asked about girl-friendly facilities or disability access (e.g., visual aids), but these checks were inconsistent and did not always result in follow-up or support. For instance, a headteacher noted that "*inspectors came and asked about sanitary pads, but nothing was done after that*". In some cases, the presence of inspectors had prompted schools to visibly display girl-friendly improvements (e.g., clean toilets, hygiene supplies), yet some district staff believed that whilst this may encourage upkeep of facilities, it is not always sustained. Some DSIs provided feedback that the current tools and systems in place, focused on planning and inspection, do not include sufficient mechanisms to incentivise or enforce inclusive practices at the school level. Going forward, a notable subset of DSI officials requested specialised training tracks for inspecting inclusive settings and early childhood spaces, whilst some teachers asked for practical disability toolkits (see TPD above), low-cost aids and classroom adaptations. Suggestions were also made from DSIs for more holistic accountability systems that reward inclusive outcomes and promote consistent implementation, alongside more formal national guidance and targets to support sustainability.

### 3.5.4 Sub-national capacity building

**Key Finding 25:** *The TEACH Programme has significantly enhanced MoPSE's institutional capacity at sub-national levels through system-wide training (reaching community members and MoPSE personnel), resulting in more structured practices and templates guiding provincial and district education delivery. However provincial and district-level capacities — including among School Development Committees (SDCs) and in GEDSI planning and implementation — remain weak.*

**While national-level capacity and standard templates have improved, significant capacity gaps are reported at the provincial and district levels - particularly in-house expertise to independently manage data dashboards and analytics.** Many officials (from in Midlands, Mashonaland East and West, and Matabeleland North and South) credited TEACH with "*moving MoPSE from ad hoc to structured practice*" citing TWGs and aligned calendars as anchors. Head teachers in registered schools in the same provinces linked clearer MoPSE guidance with more concrete school planning; satellite schools valued new templates (although asked for more hands-on support to implement them).

*We now have clearer terms of reference, and trainings are coordinated instead of piecemeal*

- DSI, Shurugwi, Midlands



However, most officials consulted also emphasised that whilst there is stronger national direction there is also uneven district execution. Explaining the implementation gap, respondents shared similar perspectives that district inspectors and SDCs still lacked adequate training (and transport and ICT infrastructure) to sustain reforms. For example, in 2023, 60 MoPSE staff (20 provincial officers and 40 researchers – 30 MOPSE head office staff and 10 MOPSE staff from provinces) received comprehensive research and data skills training from EDT, including support for feeding ZELA results into district-level planning. However, PEDs and DSIs across multiple provinces stressed the need for stronger provincial-level data analysis capacity (and more timely feedback loops) to ensure that EMIS and ZELA findings can directly inform school-level interventions and help bridge the “*gap between policy formulation and school-level implementation*”. They mentioned that whilst research and analysis training has been provided it needs to be more frequent with “*more refreshers and district-level officers*” to embed skills. A clear majority of district officers requested more routine “*data surgeries*” (termly refresher clinics) – as well as offline Kobo/data packs to mitigate connectivity gaps.

*Tools exist [while speaking of KoboCollect], but district teams need deeper hands-on support to run them... which is limited as of now*

- DSI, Shurugwi, Midlands



**TEACH efforts with School Development Committees (SDCs) have been more limited, largely confined to community mobilisation rather than significant capacity building.** SDCs remain underutilised, despite their potential to strengthen decentralised governance and local planning. One key recommendation (TEACH Annual Review 2021-2022) was for UNICEF and EDT to coordinate and agree on a strategy to support MoPSE in strengthening SDCs to effectively fulfil their mandate, particularly in supporting the most marginalised learners. However, only limited capacity-building support for SDCs was reported, and full realisation of capacitation of SDCs is still pending. Head teachers (especially in satellite schools) stressed that without SDC training on procurement and eligibility, for example, the effectiveness of SIG and safeguarding actions gets interrupted.

*We need MoPSE to train our SDCs, so funds match real needs and paperwork is correct*

- Parent, Beitbridge, Matabeleland South

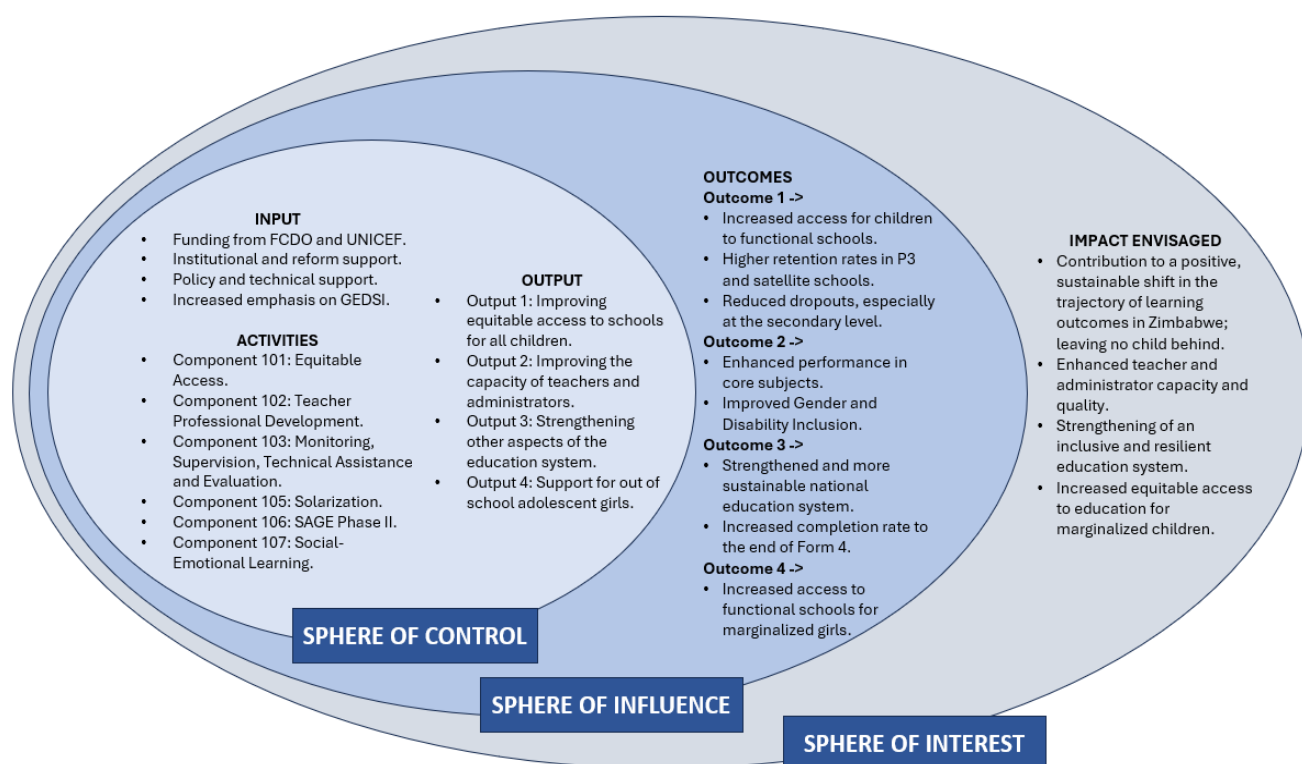


There was however mixed opinion on the depth of SDC capacity-building required. Some DSIs preferred deeper, fewer-district SDC capacity pilots, while others argued for broad, lighter-touch coverage to avoid leaving communities behind (DSIs, SDCs, head teachers and parents). Furthermore, whilst UNICEF may have successfully trained 6,500 school-based child protection committee members in psychosocial support and safeguarding, there is little evidence to indicate effectiveness in systematically mainstreaming GEDSI considerations across school planning, monitoring, and implementation cycles.

### 3.6 Impact

This section covers Impact EQs 1/2: *To what extent has the TEACH Programme contributed to changes in (1) access to education and (2) learning outcomes in Zimbabwe (leaving no one behind)?* It summarises key trends in enrolment and learning outcomes (including equity trends for girls and PwFD), relevant to the TEACH log frame (visualised at Figure 27 below) and drawn from EMIS and ZELA, before synthesizing available data on the impact of TEACH and key enablers. The latter is drawn from quantitative analysis of outcomes within TEACH districts versus non-TEACH districts, a new pupils survey (n=210) completed for the evaluation within TEACH-targeted schools (n=42), and qualitative interview data from provincial and district officials, teachers and headteachers, and parents (noting the caveats outlined below). The detailed methods employed for the impact analysis are described in Annex 5.6 and Annex 5.7.

**Figure 27: Sphere of control, influence and interest of the TEACH Programme**



Source: TEACH Theory of Change, TEACH Log frame (FCDO, 2024)

Strength of evidence	Medium
<p>The goal of the impact assessment is to draw casual links between specific components of the TEACH Programme and changes in outcomes of interest. In this regard, the quantitative evidence for impact is overall <i>weak</i>. Our ability to measure impact rested heavily on our ability to access school-level data on student performance, enrolment, dropout, and other outcomes, yet only district-level data was made available, due to confidentiality issues. The district-level analysis groups together schools that received varying levels of TEACH programming (including schools with no TEACH interventions), and the ability to capture</p>	

variability in learning outcomes and detect measurable impacts is lost. A more general challenge was lack of learning outcomes data disaggregated by PwFDs. Conversely, where the district-level, statistical analysis did yield detectable impacts, those impacts are likely to be underestimates of TEACH's impact and can be viewed as relatively *strong* evidence. The team did not rely solely on statistical analysis but also triangulated evidence from qualitative interviews and other secondary data to help answer the EQs on impact, whereby several common and consistent themes emerged. Interventions including community outreach and TPD also align well with FCDO's evidence on what works and 'best buys'. Considering the mixed quality of quantitative data and strength of qualitative data, overall strength of evidence for answering the impact EQs is rated as *medium* – albeit with significant scope for improvement in the impact assessment of learning outcomes.

### 3.6.1 Access to education

**Key finding 26:** *The TEACH Programme has impacted on improved access to education, through boosting district-level enrolment through SIGs, and reports of contributions from other components including Solarisation and community engagement. However, retention has fluctuated, especially for boys, and disability enrolment declined – areas where the evidence suggests that TEACH had limited impact and contribution. Systemic challenges of school resourcing (especially in satellite schools), economic hardship and cultural norms persist, hindering sustainable gains in access to education for boys and girls.*

**Gender parity in enrolment has been achieved in primary schools, based on Grade 7 results.** The 2024 EMIS confirmed that almost all pupils now reach Grade 2, with a survival rate<sup>9</sup> of 98.9 percent. Beyond early grades, systemic pressures remain evident. In Zimbabwe, Grade 7 enrolment has remained broadly stable between 2019 and 2024. In 2019, 451,000 pupils were enrolled at Grade 7, representing 14.5 percent of the primary school population, with girls accounting for 48.8 percent of the cohort, reflecting a small gender gap in favour of boys (EMIS 2019). By 2024, Grade 7 enrolment stood at 392,405 pupils, equivalent to 13.35 percent of primary enrolment, with girls now making up 50.85 percent (EMIS 2024). This gradual but consistent increase in female participation over the five-year period signals progress towards gender parity. Importantly, much of this progress has been recorded in rural areas, where TEACH operates through P3 schools (including through SIGs) and where girls' participation was traditionally lower.

**TEACH-SIGs in primary schools positively affect district level enrolment, especially in satellite schools.** The 2022 Independent Impact Study of SIGs reported that “*children were more likely to remain in school and complete the cycle, particularly girls and children with disabilities*” in SIG-supported schools. The evaluation tested this hypothesis for TEACH-supported SIG schools through analysis of EMIS data (2018–24). For primary schools, each additional school receiving a SIG in the prior year is associated with an increase of 43 students in enrolment at the district level. Relative to the mean district P3 enrolment of 36,786, this is a small effect (+0.12 percent of the average). Estimates for boys and girls are similar, with no

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<sup>9</sup> The survival rate measures the percentage of a pupil cohort enrolled in the first grade of a given education level (e.g., Grade 1 for primary, Form 1 for secondary) who reach a specified grade or form, regardless of repetition.

statistically significant difference between them. The effect size is double in satellite primary schools (+11 students, or +0.25 percent), consistent with satellite schools' tighter resource constraints<sup>10</sup>. Further quantitative analysis helps to explain and corroborate these impacts. When assessing the impact of SIGs (over 3 years) on available seating places there is a positive association in all types of primary and secondary schools. Estimated changes per additional \$1,000 in SIG are +3.3 seats in district registered primary schools, +1.5 seats in satellite primary schools, and +2.6 seats in P3 schools (Figure 37, 38 – Annex 5.10). Each +USD1,000<sup>11</sup> in secondary schools is associated with +3.1 seats in registered schools, +2.9 seats in satellites, and +10.7 seats in S3 schools. Whilst total gains are small relative to average district seat stocks<sup>1000</sup>, with primary and secondary satellite schools showing the smallest absolute changes, these schools demonstrate the largest proportional gains, consistent with their lower baseline capacity. Triangulating with this, teachers in these schools (and especially in Manicaland and Mashonaland East) linked enrolment stability both to “*working classrooms and chairs from SIG*” as well as “*community outreach*”. Indeed, the vast majority of head teachers, teachers and SDCs interviewed linked enrolment gains to a range of TEACH interventions - including availability of classroom furniture (SIGs), teacher training (TPD modules) and school community fairs. However further analysis shows that there is no detectable additional enrolment effect of SIGs in TPD districts compared with no TPD over the short window.

**Within secondary schools, overall Form 4 enrolment and the proportion of female students increased over time, whilst SIGs have no impact at the district level.** In 2019, Form 4 enrolment stood at around 259,000 learners, with a slight male advantage. By 2024, enrolment had increased to 284,706, with the female share increasing to 51.4 percent (EMIS 2023, 2024). For secondary schools, each additional school in the district receiving a SIG in the prior year is negatively correlated with enrolment. Most SIG funding targeted primary schools (83 percent), and short-term improvements at primary school level may have limited impact on secondary school enrolment at the district level.

**Girls were reported to be the primary beneficiaries of TEACH's access-related interventions, whilst learners with disabilities continued to experience systemic exclusion, and with no detectable impact from TEACH-SIGs.** Stakeholders reported higher enrolment, reduced absenteeism, and greater classroom participation of girls, especially in primary grades. Shifts towards empathetic teaching, improvements in infrastructure and menstrual hygiene support, and community engagement – which increased parental support and awareness of girls' rights to education – were widely credited for this trend (multiple districts in multiple provinces). For example, re-enrolment of girls after pregnancy became more socially accepted and operationalised through school-level actions, including through flexible exam conditions and psychosocial support, especially in registered schools (reported by SDCs in Mash East and Masvingo, and headteachers in Mash East and Manicaland). Conversely, it was reported in some provinces (Midlands, and Mash West) that because of a lack of direct engagement with boys and male allies within the wider community,

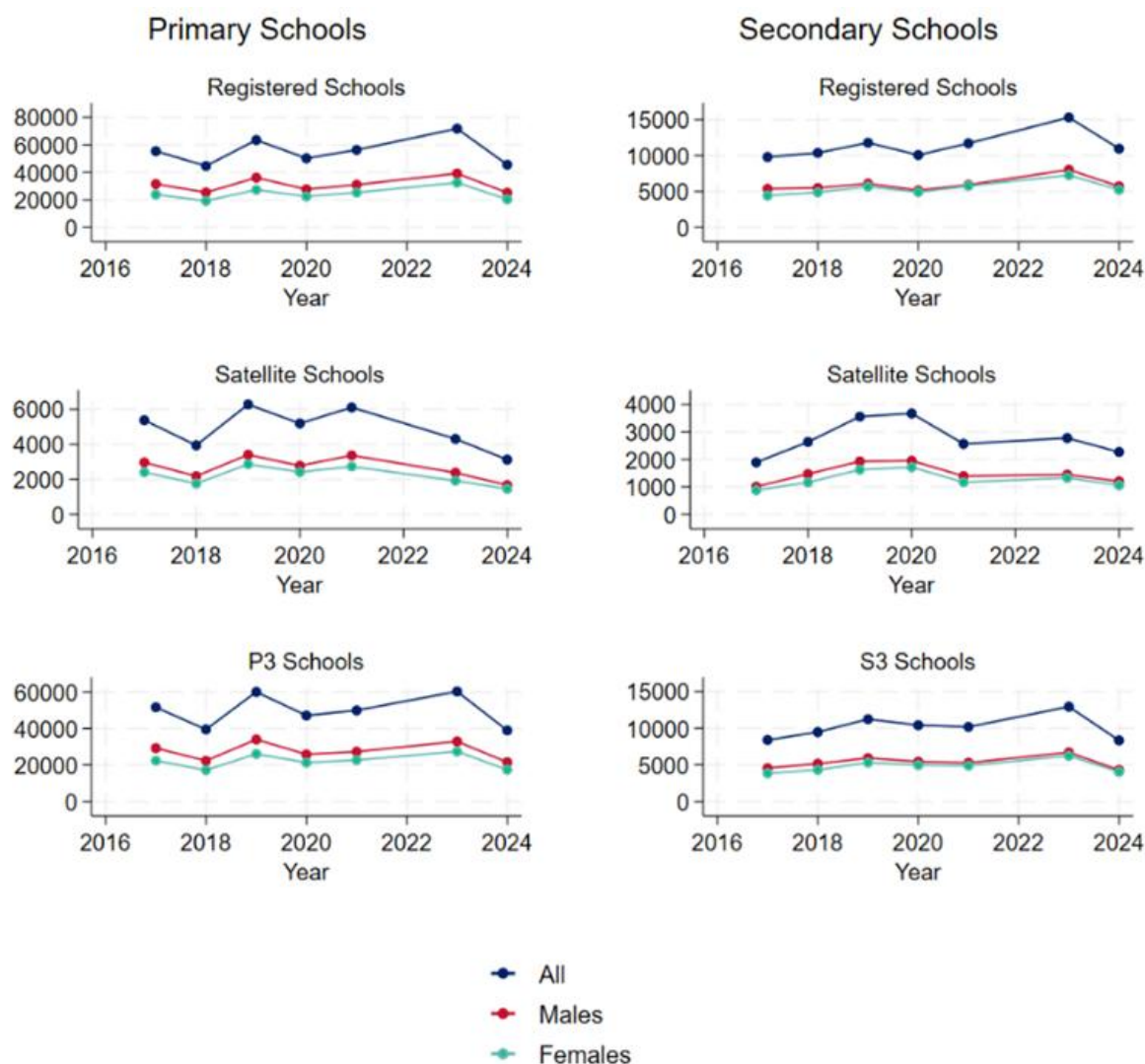
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<sup>10</sup> This correlation is likely a lower bound. Aggregation to the district level may attenuate school-level relationships towards zero as many schools in a treated district do not receive SIGs and within-district heterogeneity is likely.

<sup>11</sup> 29,087 (registered), 2,522 (satellite), 24,141 (P3).

TEACH was less adequate in shifting restrictive gendered norms suggesting a need to shift to a Gender Transformative Approach (GTA). Some stakeholders credited achieving gender parity to the cumulative gains from interventions including TEACH and the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC). Meanwhile, Figure 28 shows enrolment of PwFDs in all Zimbabwean Schools from 2016 to 2024, disaggregated by school type and gender. Across both primary and secondary levels, PwFD enrolment rises from 2016 to a peak around 2022–2023 (likely related to the introduction of the Washington Group Questions to better capture invisible disabilities), followed by a clear dip in 2024 in all school types. The reasons for this decline are unknown, although the trend correlates with consistent feedback that PwFD are underserved within the Zimbabwe education system. Teachers, SDCs and education department officials (particularly in Mat South, Mash Central and Manicaland) reported a lack of systemic support, including the absence of assistive devices, adapted materials, and trained teachers, and particularly in remote or satellite schools. This impacted on learners with severe disabilities, who often lack exam accommodations and basic classroom support.

**Figure 28: Enrolment of PwFDs (total absolute number), 2016–2024**



Source: EMIS datasets (EDT, 2016-2024)

Note: Data covers school enrolment, including enrolment of PwFDs. Y-axis represents number of schools.

Enrolment of children living with disabilities shows no detectable association with either SIG coverage (additional funded schools) or SIG amounts. This again corresponds with feedback that SIG Regular had a limited focus on disability (and that TEACH overall had more limited effectiveness for PwFD). Similarly, when comparing TPD vs non-TPD districts (with SIGs), no significant effects on PwFD enrolment are found from TPD (although TPD districts already start from a higher baseline of PwFD enrolment – around 730 versus 470 elsewhere). At the school and district levels, any improvement in enrolment and attendance from PwFD was reported to be more directly linked to infrastructure improvements (implemented through the non-TEACH SIG Complementary), such as ramps, accessible toilets, and classroom repairs.

**TEACH had limited impact on primary school retention and dropout rates, driven by wider factors such as external shocks, continued weak school functionality (including TLM), the registration status of schools, lack of teacher incentives, but also TEACH sustainability concerns.** At *primary school level*, according to TEACH Programme reports, the percentage of P3 and Satellite SIG-supported schools achieving at least 75 percent retention rate to Grade 7 improved from 52 percent in 2021 to 54.82 percent in 2022, before slightly dipping back to 52 percent in 2024 – attributed to external factors including economic hardship and a severe drought affecting food security (TEACH Annual Reviews 2022–2024). When assessing the impact of SIGs on district-level dropout, the estimated correlations are small. For primary schools, the coefficient is virtually zero and statistically insignificant at district level, indicating no detectable relationship between SIG exposure and primary-grade dropout. This is partially explained by the low baseline of dropouts – there are approximately 200 dropouts per district in both P3 and S3 schools according to EMIS data (year-on-year average 2017–2024), but partly by internal and external constraining factors. Interviews at the district level confirmed limited effects from TEACH on retention in primary schools – but also explained the apparent contradiction with positive effects on enrolment. Some head teachers stressed that “*gains unravel without consistent grants [i.e., SIGs]*”. SDCs, headteachers and teachers noted that whilst Solarisation supported evening study and charging of devices – motivating girls and parents to attend school – they also noted that attendance dipped where Solarisation (and school feeding) became erratic. Most respondents also reported stronger retention in registered schools and persistent attrition in satellite schools due to such factors (according to head teachers) as inadequate classroom facilities like textbooks and desks, and “*no incentives for teachers on their accommodation and training*”. Teachers, head teachers and SDCs from satellite schools in Mashonaland East and Midlands reported that “*enrolment spikes from fairs,*” but that “*retention slipped without teachers and TLM*”. However, whereas parents were more likely to credit CAMFED and BEAM for keeping girls enrolled when fees and/or levies spiked, headteachers acknowledged the complementarity of TEACH with other programmes such as CAMFED and BEAM in reducing dropout amongst vulnerable learners. Collectively these findings point to sustainability concerns regarding TEACH enrolment gains. Especially in the most disadvantaged schools, TEACH equitable access interventions alone were not sufficient to counteract deep structural pressures on school retention.

**Although TEACH programming is associated with a lower Form 4 dropout rate (secondary schools), the programme does not adequately prioritise boys’ drop-out, driven by economic factors.** At *secondary school level*, as per 2023 EMIS data, the Form 4 dropout rate stood at 13.15 percent, with a gender disparity among girls (14.28 percent) rather

than boys (12.17 percent). By 2024, the Form 3 to Form 4 dropout rate declined slightly to 11.92 percent, but with a reversal towards higher male attrition (males' 14.19 percent, females' 9.78 percent). In secondary schools, districts with greater SIG exposure are linked to fewer dropouts, albeit the absolute magnitude is small. At the district level, one additional SIG funded school is associated with a 1 percent decrease in drop-out in S3 schools, more consistent with reports that SIGs played an important role in keeping schools functional as well as expectations of smoother primary-to-lower-secondary transitions – although only at the margins. More strikingly the gender disparity reversed<sup>12</sup>. This was said to be linked to early entry into the labour market (especially in artisanal mining areas, mentioned by teachers and headteachers in Midlands, Mashonaland West, and Manicaland), cattle herding and cross-border migration. Across districts, stakeholders raised the alarm over increasing male learner dropout and called for a more gender-balanced access strategy that recognises the vulnerabilities of boys and specifically targets this populations.

*Our boys leave to herd cattle or work – no one talks about that*

*- Head teacher, Matabeleland North*



Registered schools also outperformed under-resourced rural satellite schools, according to EMIS data. Teachers and headteachers linked this to economic shocks (fees, drought) and external shocks (COVID-19, Cholera, etc.) which still “*pulled boys out for work*” and “*pushed girls into early marriage/care*” (reported from Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East). Reinforcing economic exclusion, community resistance — especially around disability and girls’ education beyond puberty – remained a barrier in culturally conservative areas (reported in Beitbridge, Masvingo and Matabeleland South). This highlights the continued importance of non-formal education for both girls and boys, as well as sustained community engagement and focus on norms change as mitigating measures – both pursued through TEACH but on a small scale – alongside more sustainable resourcing for schools.

### 3.6.2 Learning outcomes

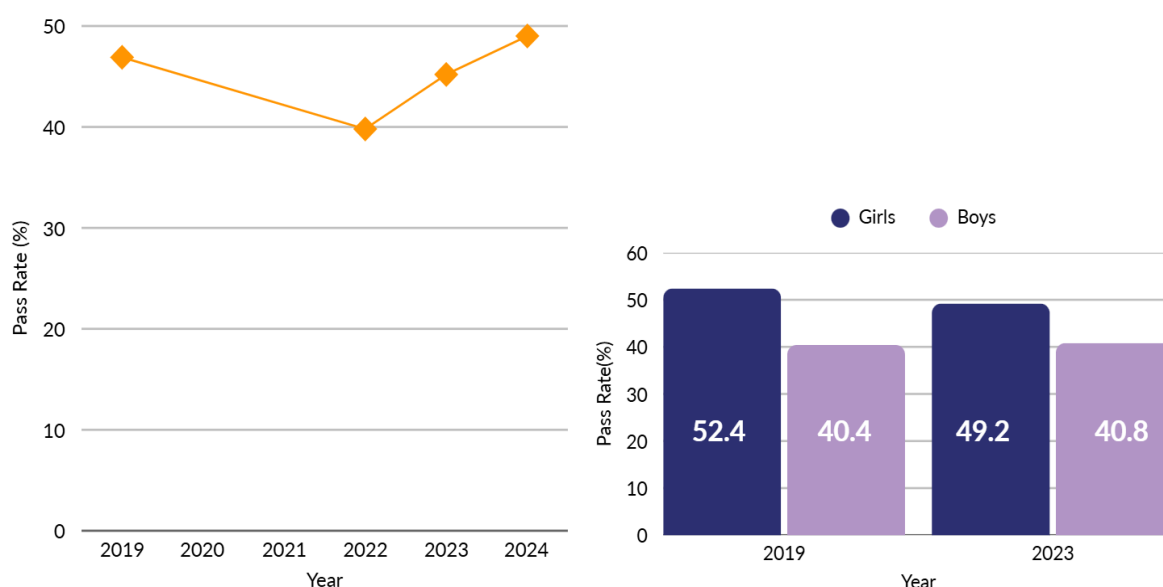
**Key Finding 17:** *National primary and secondary school examination results recovered over the period, following the shock of Covid-19, and appear on track. Early grade literacy and numeracy demonstrated gains until a slight reversal in 2024. Whilst girls consistently outperformed boys across all levels, signalling gender parity, widening gaps opened for boys – prompting the need for targeted male learning support. Significant urban-rural regional disparities persisted, and in satellite schools – associated with shortages of qualified teachers and limited teaching resources – further constraining district-level impacts from TEACH on learning outcomes (although the team faced data availability issues). Finer grained evidence suggests positive contributions from TPD to improvements in foundational learning outcomes*

<sup>12</sup> Whilst girls are now more likely than boys to reach Form 4, girls still face barriers to progression beyond this. EMIS 2019 data also shows that transition to Form 5 was extremely limited, with fewer than 1 in 5 students continuing to A-Level. Form 4 to Form 5 dropout decreased to 80.39 percent (males’ 78.30 percent, females 82.31) (EMIS 2024) but girls are still less likely to transition into Form 5, reflecting socio-economic drivers like early marriage and pregnancy, and financial hardships resulting in domestic responsibilities. According to EMIS 2024, Harare and Bulawayo recorded the highest Form 4 to Form 5 transitions (above 19 percent), while the rural provinces of Matabeleland North and Mashonaland Central recorded the lowest transitions (below 11 percent).

like reduction in non-readers, although the evidence is non-systematic. The learning progress of PwFD remained largely invisible and limited.

Over a five-year period, examination pass rates in primary schools recovered from losses during COVID-19, with girls consistently outperforming boys – but with a widening gap for boys, and persistent urban-rural inequities. According to EMIS data, the Grade 7 pass rate declined from 46.9 percent in 2019 to 39.8 percent in 2022, before rising again to 45.2 percent in 2023 (EMIS 2022–2023). In 2024, the Grade 7 pass rate recorded 49 percent<sup>13</sup>, signalling a recovery to, and exceeding, pre-C19 levels. Girls, at 49.2 percent in 2023, outperformed boys (40.8 percent), with the gender gap widening from +5.5 percentage points in 2019 to +8.5 points by 2023 – underscoring the need for a balanced gender strategy and targeted interventions for boys. Disaggregated results are not available for PwFD.

**Figure 29: Grade 7 pass rate trends and gender (2019–2024)**



Source: EMIS datasets (MoPSE, 2019-2024)

Note: Data for 2020 and 2021 is unavailable, likely due to disruptions caused by COVID-19

Provincial results also highlight stark urban-rural disparities: Harare (73.5 percent) and Bulawayo (72.7 percent) exceeded a 70 percent pass rate, while Matabeleland North (29.6 percent) fell below 30 percent (EMIS, 2023<sup>14</sup>). These gaps are particularly concerning as EMIS shows that over 70 percent of Grade 7 pupils are in rural schools (EMIS 2023), and more than half of Form 4 pupils are in rural schools (EMIS 2024). Serious challenges persist in schools with no pass rates. A Zero Percent Pass Rate study (EDT, 2024) revealed clusters of schools recording no passes at either Grade 7 or Form 4, most prevalent in Mashonaland West, followed by Matabeleland North, Midlands, Mashonaland East, and Masvingo. Confirming this, head teachers indicated that satellite schools in some districts “rarely record above 20 percent pass rates,” contrasting sharply with better-resourced registered schools

<sup>13</sup> ZIMSEC Releases 2024 Grade 7 Results With 49.01 percent National Pass Rate \* Pindula News. EMIS 2024 did not publish Grade 7 pass rates.

<sup>14</sup> Provincial disaggregation is not published in the EMIS 2024 report

(reported from Midlands, Matabeleland North and Mashonaland Central and West). Head teachers consistently noted that low Grade 7 and Form 4 pass rates are due to shortages of trained teachers, teacher attrition, overcrowding, textbook shortages, and low student motivation, validating TEACH's strong targeted approach in P3 and satellite schools – but also highlighting the importance of addressing systemic barriers to enhance impact.

*Even if children attend regularly, without enough books and teachers they cannot pass. They have to read and revise, but they do not have enough materials.*

- Teacher, Midlands



**Secondary school examination pass rates demonstrate a similar trajectory of recovery, but with an even deeper regional divide.** Form 4 examination pass rates (O-Levels) declined from 33.9 percent in 2019 to just over 30 percent in 2024, albeit recovering from a low of 25.6 percent during Covid-19. Girls maintained a small advantage, with a narrower gap than at Grade 7. However, at the provincial level, urban-rural disparities in Form 4 pass rates were even more extreme – for example Bulawayo at 58.9 percent compared with Mashonaland Central at 15.4 percent (EMIS 2023). In these rural areas, according to EMIS reports (2024) girls still face a compounded disadvantage compared with their urban peers. Parents in Masvingo and Mashonaland West echoed this, linking Form 4 failure to early marriage, child labour, and exam costs.

*Even when children reach Form 4, many fail and drop out because we cannot afford exam fees*

- Parent, Mashonaland West



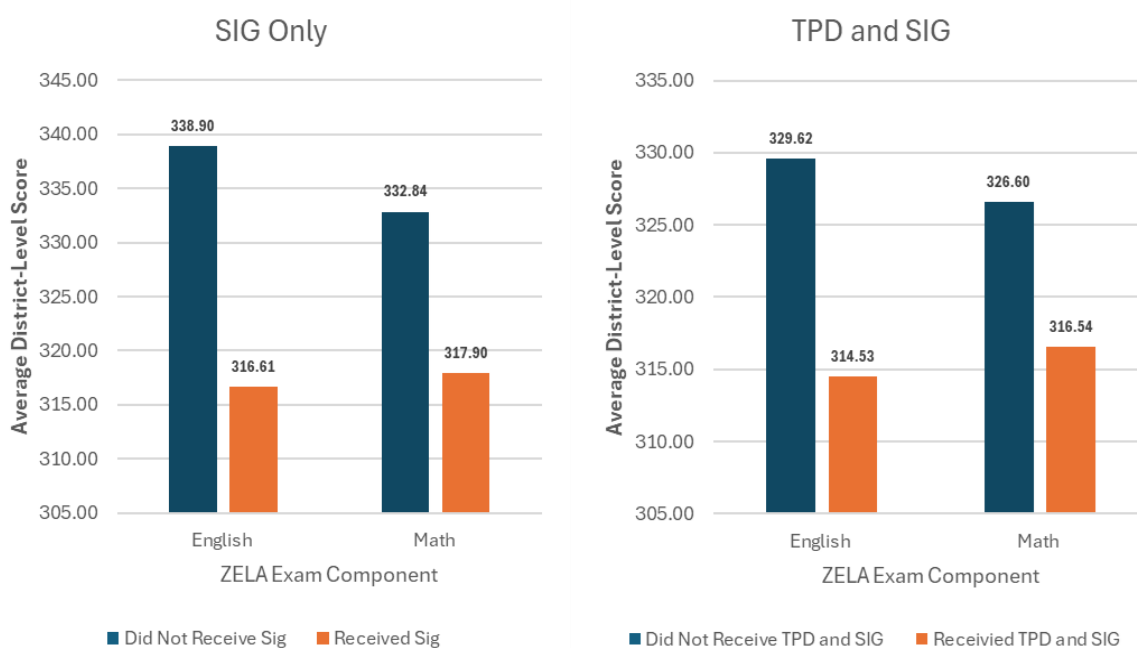
This also underscores the continued relevance of TEACH's focus on strengthening learning outcomes in rural S3 and satellite schools, including through its gender sensitive approach - but also highlights the importance of addressing the economic drivers of failure. Disaggregated results are not provided for PwFD.

**Progress on foundational literacy and numeracy is mixed according to ZELA data. Strong gains in Grade 2 literacy, with more modest improvements in numeracy, experienced a recent reversal.** In 2019, EMIS reported that fewer than half of Grade 2 learners met grade-level expectations. By 2022, 77.1 percent of learners were at or above expectations in English and 75.95 percent in Mathematics, with girls outperforming boys (English: 81.2 percent vs 74.8 percent; Mathematics: 72.7 percent vs 67.3 percent). After further improvement in 2023, 2024 ZELA data suggest stagnation (English 74.9 percent and maths 72 percent) – with girls still ahead in English (77.2 percent vs 72.6 percent), but behind in Mathematics (71.3 percent vs 72.8 percent). Significant urban-rural disparities are again evident. In 2024, 60 percent of urban learners were above grade level in English compared to just 13 percent of rural learners, and 63 percent versus 18 percent in mathematics, consistent with gaps recorded in 2022. Matabeleland North and Mashonaland Central remained the weakest performers (ZELA 2022; EMIS 2023). In particular, stakeholders highlighted the growing issue of “non-readers” across both primary and secondary levels (KII with UNICEF, EDT).

**Analysis of district-level performance for primary school learners in English and Math suggests no impact from TEACH – however with significant limitations to the analysis.** In 2023 and 2024, districts not receiving SIG or TPD, the largest TEACH investments, scored

higher overall than those where these components were implemented (Figure 30). However, this likely reflects TEACH’s targeting strategy – directing resources toward the lowest-performing districts – rather than lack of any programme effect – alongside the extremely short timeframe for TPD delivery, the anchor foundational learning intervention of TEACH. Among recipient districts, performance levels were broadly similar regardless of whether they received SIG or SIG and TPD - likely reflecting the lag time before pedagogical reforms such as TPD would show any effect.

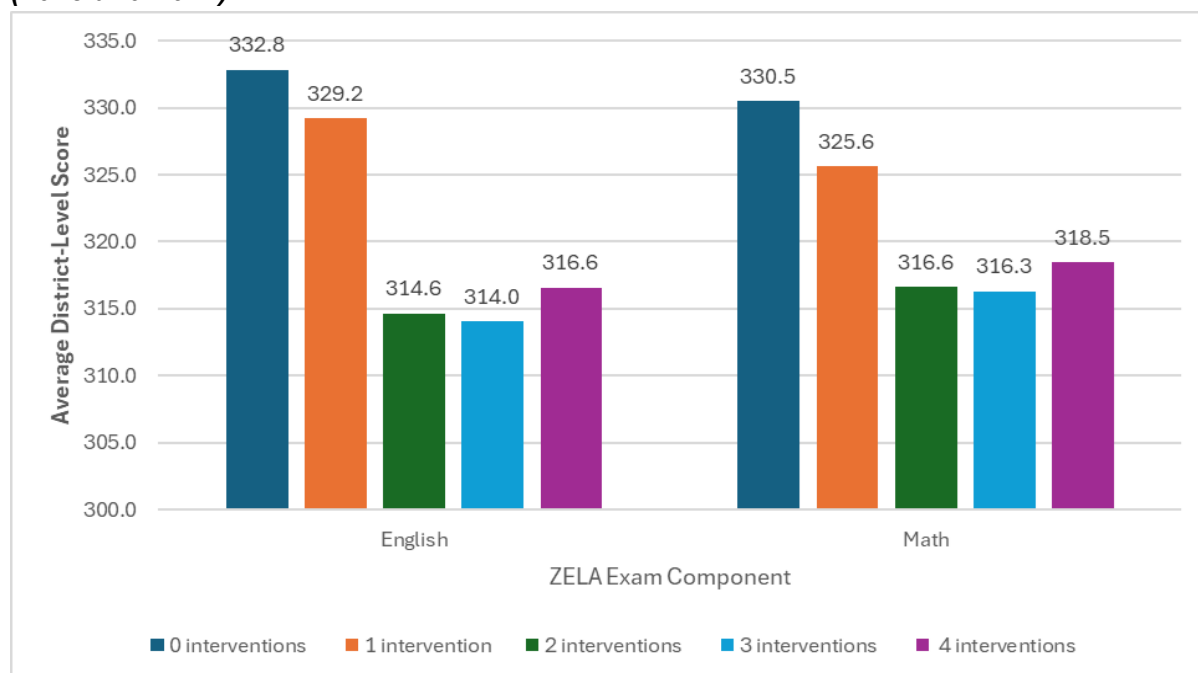
**Figure 30: Average ZELA scores by districts receiving SIG only or both SIG and TPD (2023 and 2024)**



Source: District-level aggregated ZELA scores (MoPSE, 2023 and 2024)

Similarly, Figure 30 shows no positive relationship between having more TEACH interventions (i.e., synergies) in a district and average English and Math scores, although again this likely reflects TEACH’s successful targeting strategy, broader district level characteristics, and potential lagged effects from TPD. Patterns are almost identical when analysing the proportions of students above and below grade level by number of TEACH interventions.

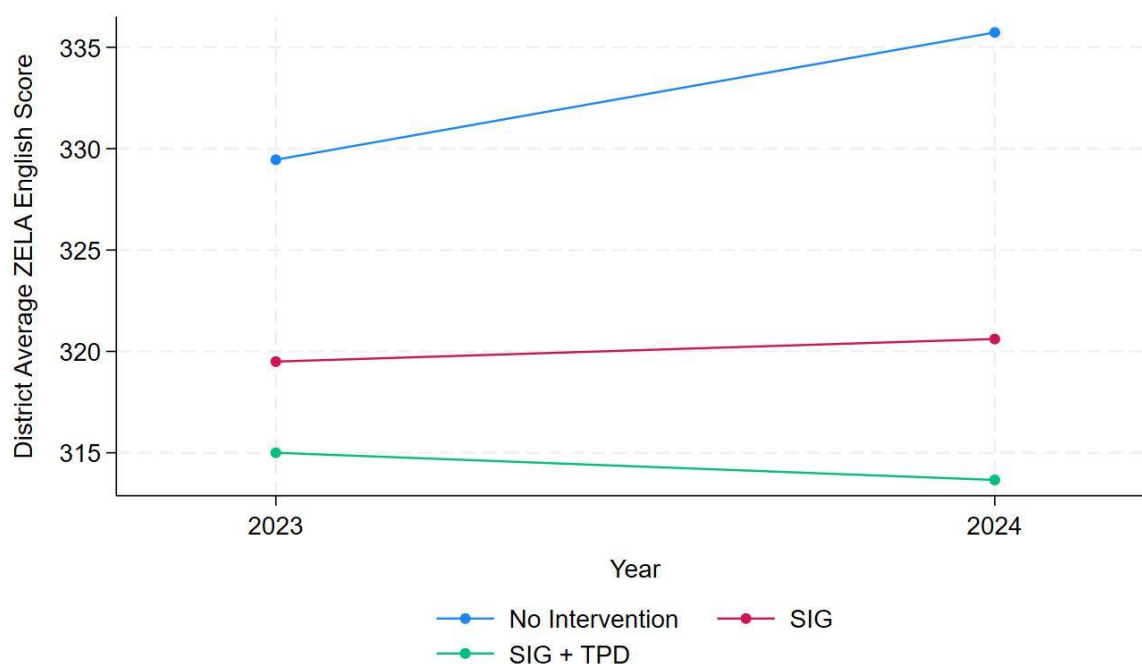
**Figure 31: Average ZELA English and Math scores by number of TEACH interventions (2023 and 2024)**



Source: District-level aggregated ZELA scores (MoPSE, 2023 and 2024); FCDO-TEACH Programme implementation by district – SIGs, Solarisation, TPD, SAGE II, and SEL

Figure 31 reinforces these findings but also highlights a worrying trend (albeit only over a 12-month period); that the downturn in ZELA literacy scores between 2023 and 2024 was felt most acutely in the most disadvantaged districts, targeted by TEACH SIGs and especially TPD, whereas other districts in Zimbabwe improved.

**Figure 32: Average ZELA literacy scores by districts receiving SIG/TPD (2023–2024)**



Source: ZELA (MoPSE, 2023-2024)

Ultimately, because of no EMIS nor ZELA school-level data, where TEACH is likely to register most impact (see below) as well as limited trend data (there is an expected lag between intervention and grade-level achievement, and TEACH interventions such as TPD and SEL were delayed), the datasets made available to the evaluation team were insufficient to make any meaningful comparisons – much less measure the impact – of TEACH on student learning outcomes. It is recommended to repeat the impact assessment if school level data becomes accessible, and once more contemporary ZELA and EMIS data is released.

**Other triangulated evidence suggests that TPD has contributed to improved foundational learning outcomes at the school level, and particularly in literacy (including for girls).** Programme reports suggest that the TPD programme has contributed to reducing the number of non-readers in Zimbabwe through learner-centred practices (EDT Third Bi-Annual Report 2025). Nyahombe Primary School for example reduced its number of non-readers from over 1,000 to 704 after school leadership training was provided (Impact of School Leadership Training 2024, EDT). EDT also reports that the share of pupils at the highest literacy level rose from 26.6 percent (January 2024) to 37.6 percent (December 2024) and that numeracy proficiency increased from 5.8 percent to 17.8 percent, with a sharp drop in non-numerate pupils – patterns associated with participation in TEACH activities (EDT Third Bi-Annual Report 2025). EDT explained how techniques such as multiple strategies for addition/subtraction, oral communication modules, and collaborative lesson planning have improved classroom engagement and pupil performance, especially in primary grades (KII with EDT).

During KIIs with MoPSE, the Permanent Secretary pointed toward a considerable reduction in non-readers within one to two terms and attributed this to the TPD programme. A few PEDs (reported from Mashonaland East and Masvingo) echoed similar sentiments stating that fewer

TEACH-supported districts recorded 0 percent Grade 7 pass rates in 2024 (although progress was incremental and not yet on par with stronger-performing districts). At the school level, most teachers, head teachers, and SDCs praised TPD for introducing phonics, new methods and better lesson planning, reporting fewer “*non-readers*” (Midlands), improved motivation and “*reduced numbers of struggling readers*” (Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland East) and that “*children can now read better than before*” (Manicaland). Particular gains were noted in girls’ literacy, participation, and classroom confidence, attributed to remedial support and reading corners, while improved engagement was linked to gender-sensitive pedagogy and girl-friendly school environments (Mash Central, Mash East and Masvingo). In some areas, girls were reported to be outperforming boys in foundational literacy, due to menstrual hygiene support and inclusive teaching practices (Bulilima in Manicaland). However divergent perspectives were also noted, including within the same provinces. Teachers, SDCs and education department officials (Midlands, Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West and Matabeleland North), working within the poorest districts, stressed that TPD’s impact on reducing non-readers is limited in the absence of accompanying resources (e.g. the type of TLMs supported by SIGs, but which was not always fully coordinated with TPD. A subset of parents, teachers, head teachers, SDCs and DSIs also noted persistent numeracy challenges in their schools, even where literacy had improved (“*most children still cannot do maths confidently*”).

*The training helps us prepare lessons, but some children still reach upper grades without reading – because we have no books and too many learners per class*

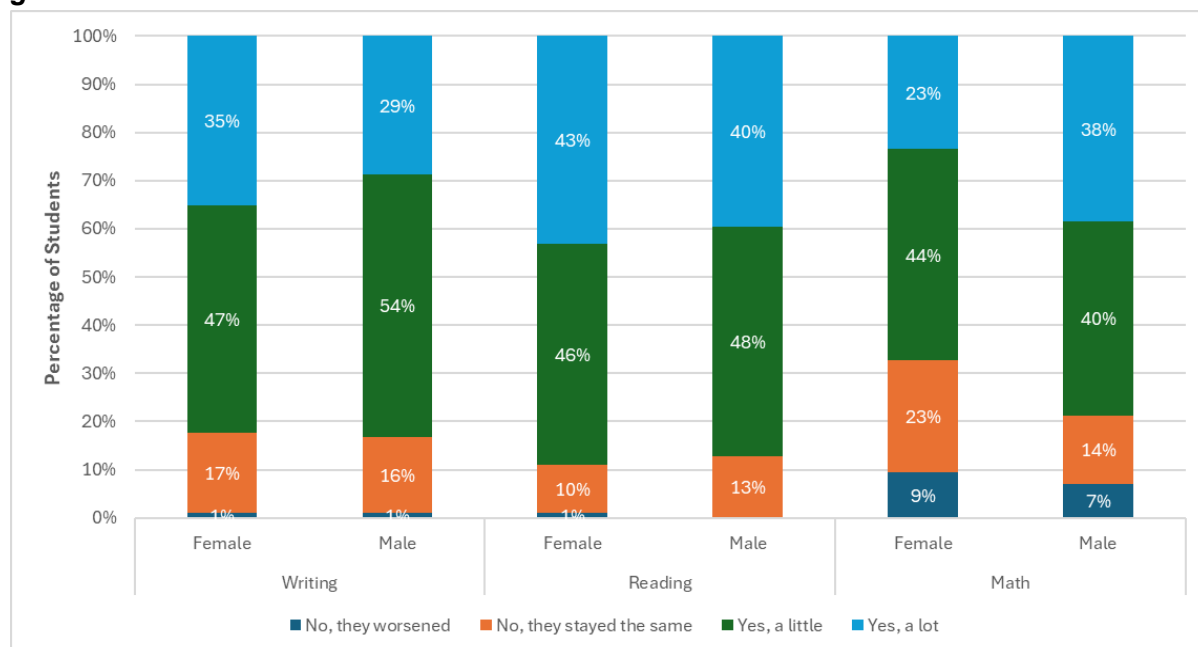
- Teacher, Midlands



**More students surveyed in TEACH schools with TPD perceived improvements in writing and reading (less so in maths), compared with TEACH schools without TPD, with attribution to improved teaching quality.** The evaluation team sought to validate claims of school-level impacts in two ways – firstly through the interrogation of data on TPD training for any quantitative relationship with students struggling in each subject. Results for literacy-pedagogy modules show a favourable but small correlation: each additional module (EDT, 2023–2024) is associated with an approximate 1.0 percentage point and 0.8 percentage point decline respectively in primary and secondary-school students struggling with reading (EMIS, 2023–2024). Analysis also shows an approximate 0.6 pp decline in the percentage of students struggling with writing for both primary and secondary students. Results show no relationship between numeracy-pedagogy modules and the share struggling in mathematics in either primary or secondary schools. However, the evidence need not be over-interpreted. The short window (two years), district aggregation (mixing trained and untrained schools), and likely variation in the measurement of “struggling” each contribute to reducing statistical power. Equally, deeper impacts may lag beyond 2024 since changes in classroom practice, correct use of diagnostic tools etc. take time to translate into measurable learning improvements. Taken together, the correlation suggests that literacy-oriented training from TPD may be associated with fewer students below the relevant grade level. Secondly, as part of the evaluation’s student survey, learners in TEACH schools across eight rural provinces were asked to rate improvements in their English reading, English writing, and maths abilities over the past year. Reading (87 – 89 percent), writing (82 – 83 percent) and mathematics (66 – 77 percent) are perceived to have improved ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ by most students. Girls generally perceived that they were doing better in reading and writing, boys much better in maths.

Interestingly, 40 percent of boys and 43 percent of girls perceived ‘a lot’ of improvement in reading, whilst 37 percent of boys and 23 percent of girls reported this in maths. A higher share of girls (23 percent) also reported making no progress in maths (Figure 33).

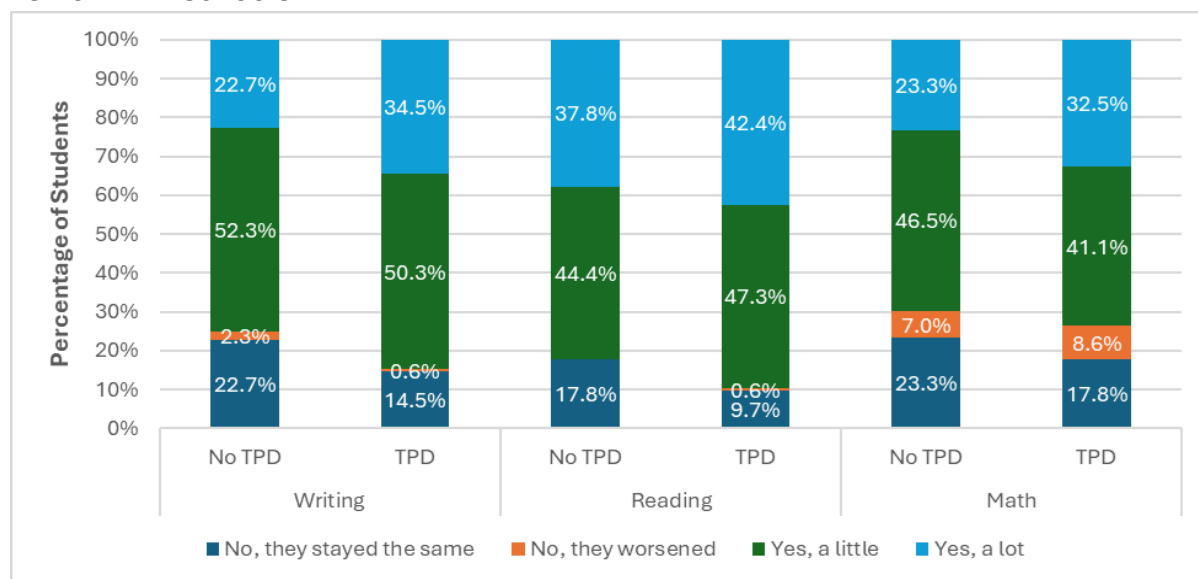
**Figure 33 : Learner perceived improvements in reading, writing, and mathematics, by gender**



Source: Survey with Learners (Athena Evaluation Team, 2025)

When conducting similar analysis across TPD vs non-TPD TEACH-targeted schools’ 42 percent of students reported ‘a lot’ of reading improvement in TPD schools versus 38 percent in non-TPD schools (and 90 percent versus 82 percent either ‘a little’ or ‘a lot’ of improvement). For writing the gap is larger: 35 percent in TPD schools vs 22 percent in non-TPD schools (and 85 percent vs 73 percent at least some improvement). For mathematics, the data is more mixed – 32 percent vs 22 percent reported large improvements in mathematics, but just 73 percent vs 67 percent some or a lot of improvement. As cross-sectional, self-reported results some findings could reflect the selection of schools or respondents’ confidence, rather than causal TPD effects, although these findings triangulate with other evidence on the effectiveness of TPD. Findings are maintained across school types.

**Figure 34: Learner perceived improvements in reading, writing, and mathematics, TPD vs non-TPD schools**



Source: Survey with Learners (Athena Evaluation Team, 2025)

To explore driving factors, students in TPD and non-TPD schools were asked whether they believed that teaching quality was the reason for any perceived improvement. The data further strengthens plausible attribution: where teachers participated in TPD, students more often credited teaching quality for their progress – in reading 70 percent of respondents (vs 46 percent), in writing 75 percent (vs 64 percent), and in maths 80 percent vs 60 percent (only statistically significant for perceived improvements in reading). This aligns with the TPD mechanism which strengthened diagnostic teaching, differentiation, and feedback, which students experienced as improved support. To probe this mechanism further, the evaluation team analysed the link between TPD training content and student perceptions. At the school level, every +10 literacy-pedagogy modules completed by teachers in the school is associated with a +2 percentage-point increase in the share of students reporting that they “improved a lot” in writing (compared with no clear relation for reading). Likewise, every +10 numeracy-pedagogy modules correspond to a +1 percentage-point rise in students reporting they “improved a lot” in maths. Although these correlations are modest, they are consistent with other TEACH reports, TPD’s change pathway, and FCDO evidence on ‘Best Buys’ (see Insight Box 1) that stronger teaching practices lead to enhanced learning.

*Insights Box 1: Alignment of TEACH Interventions with Cost-Effectiveness Evidence*

The evaluation team reviewed the World Bank and FCDO’s *Cost-Effectiveness Approaches to Improve Global Learning* report<sup>15</sup> to further corroborate and validate the

<sup>15</sup>Cost-Effective Approaches to Improve Global Learning: What Does Recent Evidence Tell Us Are “Smart Buys” for Improving Learning in Low- and Middle-Income Countries? (English). Washington, D.C. World Bank. 2020 Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/719211603835247448>

effectiveness of interventions implemented under the TEACH Programme (and given the gaps in quantitative data).

TEACH’s emphasis on community fairs and parental engagement closely reflects the report’s recommended “great buys” – information-sharing interventions that are highly cost-effective and supported by strong evidence. Anecdotal evidence from key informant interviews suggests that community fairs have contributed to increased school attendance, an approach shown to be effective in several countries including Chile, Mexico, and Pakistan.

Through TEACH’s TPD component, teachers received regular training, observation, and assessment - aligning with the report’s “good buys” category, which identifies structured lesson plans and continuous professional support as interventions with good cost-effectiveness evidence. In Kenya and the Gambia, such approaches have been linked to improved learning outcomes, including in English.

TEACH also promoted community participation in school improvement grant (SIG) planning, aligning with the “promising but low evidence” category, which recognised the potential of community involvement in school management.

However, the report also identifies “bad buys” – stand-alone interventions that provide additional inputs (e.g. textbooks, buildings, or school grants) without complementary activities. This limitation is occasionally reflected within TEACH, where some schools received only SIGs without accompanying TPD support - an approach deemed less cost-effective.

**While TEACH contributed to enrolment and visibility of learners with disabilities, learning outcomes for this population remain underreported, and anecdotally said to be largely stagnant.** Key barriers included the absence of adapted learning materials, assistive devices, and trained personnel. These structural gaps meant that even when learners were present in classrooms, they struggled to participate meaningfully or make academic progress. Furthermore, monitoring of disability-specific learning outcomes was absent in most provinces, leaving this population educationally invisible in planning and assessment processes. As a result, many learners with disabilities were excluded from exams or received no targeted instructional support.

### 3.7 Value for Money

This section presents findings for EQ8, ‘*To what extent have TEACH Programme resources been used to promote Value for Money?*’. The analysis is structured around 4Es framework – Economy, Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Equity – and draws on evidence from all major TEACH components. Sub-sections review key trends in VfM across the programme ([Section 3.7.1](#)), cost-effectiveness of SIG delivery and areas for improvement ([Section 3.7.2](#)), and the efficiency of oversight and stewardship provided by FCDO ([Section 3.7.3](#)).

<b>Strength of evidence</b>	<b>Medium</b>
Most VfM evidence is drawn from TEACH Annual Reviews (2019-2024) and insights from FCDO and implementing partners. These sources provided credible detail on how FCDO	

maintained fiduciary oversight, reallocated resources to priority areas such as TPD and solarisation, and pursued cost-efficiencies during implementation. However, there was less consideration of cost-effectiveness, comparison with external programmes and benchmarking, or independent evaluations, to help substantiate or challenge claims. Overall, the evidence provides credible insights into efficiency and adaptive oversight, but with less systematic consideration of the '4Es', and hence the strength of evidence for EQ8 is rated as *medium*.

### 3.7.1 Key trends across the '4Es'

**Key Finding 28:** Overall, TEACH's VfM strategy was characterised by cost containment, adaptive procurement, and strategic budgeting. Performance improved steadily across all 'four E's'. COVID-19 and currency instability encouraged more streamlined, economical implementation from 2021, with implementing partners demonstrating increased efficiency through decentralised models (e.g. cluster-based TPD, local facilitators), digital integration (rollout of platforms like the Learning Passport) and internal coordination (e.g. with MoPSE on EMIS and inspections). The VfM indicator on cost per learning gain is yet to be finalised, but early results demonstrated promising early gains in equity and learning for out-of-school girls. While structural challenges persist, combined with the effective institutionalisation of delivery reforms and a clear equity focus the evidence suggests that the TEACH Programme delivered good VfM.

**Overall, the management of TEACH components became progressively more efficient after initial COVID-19, procurement and currency-related constraints.** From 2019 to 2025, the TEACH Programme in Zimbabwe evolved significantly in its approach to delivering VfM, as assessed through the '4Es' framework. From 2021–22, decentralisation and institutionalisation gains were evident, exemplified by TPD's shift to cost-effective cluster-based models and digital platforms. Participation rose from 55.2 percent (2022) to 83.2 percent (2024), while costs dropped from \$21 to USD14.96 per teacher (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024). MoPSE assumed greater ownership of inspections and EMIS, and new components (SAGE, SEL, Solarisation) were effectively integrated. Yet, delays in EMIS publication, procurement contracts, and data coordination with ZIMSTAT continued to limit timely decision-making (TEACH Annual Reviews 2022–2024). The remaining findings in this section are organised by the '4Es'.

#### **Economy**

**SIG demonstrated strong cost control, but inflationary pressures and high transaction costs diluted value at the school level.** Between July 2023–June 2024, 8,661 schools were visited – well above the 7,000 target – while the average cost per visit was contained at USD 21, below the VfM benchmark of USD 24.23. Bulk procurement and reprinting under UNICEF supplier agreements further reduced material costs. Yet, persistent inflation (57 percent), fuel prices consistently above global averages (USD 1.57–1.79/litre vs. USD 1.28), and banking charges averaging USD 41.47 per transaction in 29 percent of schools eroded real purchasing power (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024). 35 percent of schools reported fuel costs as a major barrier, with education department officials and head teachers (reported from Manicaland and Mashonaland East) highlighting that SIG funds were often consumed by transport rather than materials. SDCs (reported from Matabeleland South) also noted that grants were diverted toward banking charges and fuel. While USD-denominated accounts

helped protect against inflationary losses, respondents stressed the need for safeguards such as multiple quotations, one-time procurement, and closer monitoring of payment modalities to preserve school-level value (KII with UNICEF).

**Solarisation delivered on budget commitments, but its realised value was weakened by delays, quality concerns, and theft.** Of the GBP 1.8 million allocated to solarise 150 schools, 148 were completed by 2024 with no reported cost overruns (TEACH Annual Review 2023–24). However, the benefits of this capital-intensive investment were undermined by delays, premature equipment breakdowns, and recurrent theft, with individual losses ranging from USD 1,500–4,600 per case in 2024 (SIG Fraud Cases, December 2024). Head teachers in Matabeleland North and Mashonaland Central reported that panels often failed within a year, while a head teacher in Hurungwe (Mashonaland West) cited long waits for maintenance support. A parent in Chimanimani (Manicaland) cautioned that without proper training, benefits would fade quickly. These concerns highlight that although budget control was maintained, weak maintenance systems and inadequate protection measures risk undermining sustained value (TEACH Annual Review 2022-2023).

**TPD consistently achieved a strong economy by decentralising delivery and reducing unit costs.** By 2023–24, the average cost per teacher trained had fallen from USD 21 to USD 14.96, while cluster training costs dropped to USD 62.19 – far below the VfM target of USD 250 (TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024). Procurement efficiencies and vehicle reallocations during COVID-19 generated additional savings of GBP67,585 (TEACH Annual Reviews 2020–2021, 2021–2022). More importantly, the shift to blended learning, digital materials, and cluster-based delivery not only reduced direct financial costs but also cut hidden costs by minimising teacher travel and classroom disruption. Teachers and SDCs in Mashonaland Central and Manicaland affirmed that the cluster model reduced unnecessary expenses and time away from classrooms. DSIs in multiple provinces reinforced this view, emphasising that decentralised training preserved instructional time while expanding reach, making TPD one of TEACH's most cost-effective components.

**SAGE Phase II introduced deliberate cost-minimisation strategies, though economy outcomes remain unverified until VfM metrics are finalised.** While the key VfM indicator – cost per percentage point improvement in literacy and numeracy – remains pending, the programme embedded strong economic measures from the outset. These included one-time printing of training modules for all cohorts, negotiated reductions in TVET tuition fees, and reliance on community hubs and volunteers to reduce recurrent delivery costs (KII with Plan International). Plan International's complementary funding for items outside FCDO's remit, such as medical aid and NFE policy consultancy, further safeguarded resources. Teachers and head teachers in Manicaland and Mashonaland Central confirmed that community-driven delivery kept costs lean and affordable, though the eventual measure of economy will depend on the cost-effectiveness of improvements in learning outcomes.

### ***Efficiency***

**SIG efficiency improved markedly after initial delays, though high transaction costs and supplier premiums continued to constrain value at the school level.** By 2020–21, 98.7 percent of targeted schools were receiving grants on time (TEACH Annual Review 2020-2021), and by mid-2024, 84 percent of school heads had been trained in grant management,

promoting more accountable and proportionate use of funds (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024). Efficiency was reinforced through ceilings on expenditure categories, participatory allocation criteria, and independent audit follow-up, with UNICEF advocating institutionalisation of financial literacy within MoPSE (KII with UNICEF). SIG inspectors further ensured oversight, and longitudinal evidence showed improved textbook-pupil ratios and access to furniture and teaching materials in long-term SIG schools. However, inefficiencies persisted: 16 percent of school heads remained untrained (mainly new appointees), and suppliers frequently charged premiums for local-currency payments (SIG Verification 2023). SDCs in Mashonaland Central and Midlands noted that delayed disbursements and hidden supplier charges weakened efficiency, while teachers in Matabeleland South felt training had strengthened accountability but could not offset persistent transaction costs.

**Solarisation gained efficiency in scaling delivery after initial bottlenecks, though vandalism and theft undermined momentum.** By June 2024, 148 schools had been completed and certified, reaching 65,250 learners (31,843 males; 31,407 females) against a target of 65,322 (TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024). Although phase one fell short (only 5 of 30 schools solarised, serving 2,609 learners against a target of 13,660), implementation accelerated by mid-2023, with 70 schools (46 percent) completed and more than 31,000 learners reached against an 18,111 target (TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024). Solarisation also supported SAGE hubs, enabling after-hours study, powering KoboCollect for inspectors, and improving EMIS data collection (TEACH Annual Review 2022-2023). Yet efficiency was reduced by vandalism, damage, and maintenance delays. Teachers in Mberengwa (Midlands) stressed that solar lights significantly improved exam preparation but also cautioned that “repeated vandalism and theft slowed progress.”

**TPD efficiency increased as delivery shifted to decentralised and blended modalities, achieving wider coverage at lower cost.** Following early COVID-19 disruptions, CPD systems stabilised, with cost per teacher systematically monitored and lowered through cluster leads, online platforms, and focal teachers (KII with EDT). Participation grew from 55.2 percent in 2022 to 83.2 percent by mid-2024, embedding CPD firmly within MoPSE’s operational calendar (TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024). By relying on school-based facilitators instead of external trainers, TEACH achieved both scale and efficiency while sustaining training quality. Teachers noted some preference for physical materials, but overall, the blended approach maximised reach and learning continuity without driving costs upward.

**SAGE Phase II embedded adaptive systems and lean delivery structures, enabling efficiency gains despite still-pending unit cost calculations.** Leaner training modules and streamlined procurement systems reduced expected per-learner expenditure compared to Phase I (KII with Plan International). Adaptive budgeting allowed resources to be repurposed for unanticipated needs – such as protective clothing and tools for TVET learners – ensuring no inputs were wasted (KII with Plan International). Structured community-hub delivery and facilitator-led teaching also improved use of learning time and strengthened monitoring through quarterly FCDO reporting (TEACH Annual Review 2023-2024). While baseline literacy (30.5) and numeracy (26.6) indicators frame current measurement, respondents observed greater efficiency in Phase II’s monitoring compared to Phase I. education department officials in Manicaland specifically highlighted that facilitators and hubs simplified supervision and accountability. Some head teachers, however, confused Phase I with Phase II, suggesting a need for clearer communication on programme phases.

**SEL is still at an early stage, but its efficiency has been enhanced by leveraging existing TPD delivery structures for swift integration and scalability.** Since the intervention only commenced in 2025, outputs are not yet available for full analysis. However, Implementing Partners highlighted that efficiency was strengthened by embedding SEL into EDT's existing TPD systems, thereby minimising start-up time and costs. This partnership provided a ready-made platform for rapid integration of SEL into teacher professional support, while laying the groundwork for future scale-up. Early indications suggest that this approach has ensured both institutional alignment and a cost-efficient pathway to sustainability (KII with Think Equal, EDT).

### ***Effectiveness***

**SIGs contributed measurably to improved learning outcomes, retention, and resource provision, particularly in disadvantaged schools.** Grade 7 pass rates increased from 40.1 percent in 2022 to 45.1 percent in 2023, while Form 4 pass rates rose modestly from 28.98 percent to 29.41 percent, with stronger gains among female learners (TEACH Annual Review 2023-24). Retention benchmarks were achieved in 52 percent of P3 and satellite schools receiving SIGs, meeting the 75 percent retention rate up to Grade 7 and demonstrating positive effects on learner progression in disadvantaged contexts. Effectiveness was reinforced by EMIS-guided targeting refined at district inspector level, as well as by inspections of SIG utilisation and peer-to-peer learning between schools (KII with UNICEF). Longitudinal evidence since 2013 further indicated sustained improvements in pupil-textbook ratios and provision of teaching materials and furniture in SIG schools compared to non-SIG schools (KII with UNICEF; interviews with PEDs, DSIs, head teachers, and SDCs). Focusing on the cumulative SIG amount received by schools in a district over the previous two years, analysis shows that each additional \$1,000 received through SIG by all targeted schools in a district is associated with three more students enrolled at the district level.

**Solarisation expanded digital learning opportunities and after-hours study, but effectiveness was uneven due to gaps in adaptive provision for PwFD.** By powering digital platforms and SAGE Phase II hubs, solarisation broadened access for girls, PwFD, and students in remote or satellite schools, narrowing equity gaps (TEACH Annual Review 2023-24). Head teachers in Mutoko and Nyanga highlighted that solarisation “improved exam performance because children can now revise at night,” while parents noted that “girls now feel safer staying after school with lighting” (Interviews with head teachers, parents). Teachers in Matabeleland South emphasised that solar power gave equal opportunities to satellite schools previously excluded. However, stakeholders in Manicaland and Mashonaland Central flagged a persistent shortfall, stressing that “PwFD did not always receive adaptive devices alongside Solarisation, so digital equity is not yet complete”. While outcomes reflected significant equity gains, sustained effectiveness depends on resolving these inclusion gaps and ensuring long-term maintenance.

**TPD proved effective in raising teacher and leadership competencies and embedding professional training within MoPSE systems.** Effectiveness was evident in the sharp increase in teachers performing above the “Developing” stage – from 48 percent in 2023 to 78 percent by June 2024 (TEACH Annual Review 2023–24). The system's effectiveness was further monitored through biannual assessments and participant feedback, with nearly all teachers (97 percent) rating the training content as relevant and useful (evaluation, July–

December 2023). The use of blended learning, cluster leads, and school-based facilitators contributed to sustained improvements in classroom practice and leadership quality, particularly after early COVID-19 delays (KII with EDT). However, many head teachers and teachers (reported from Mashonaland Central, Manicaland) stated that the implementation of TPD was constrained by systemic barriers such as travel costs, loss of teaching time, timing and workload pressures, and uneven facilitation under the cascade model – where training quality diluted as it moved through layers of delivery; particularly in satellite schools lacking power, internet, or devices.

**SAGE Phase II delivered highly effective outcomes, particularly for the most marginalised subpopulations, through adaptive management and inclusive planning.**

Disability inclusion was strengthened by providing assistive devices, health support, and by engaging the ministry to institutionalise inclusive approaches (KII with Plan International). Learning outcomes demonstrated significant gains across subpopulations: married girls (+23.9 percent literacy), girls engaged in labour (+23.3 percent literacy; +23.7 percent numeracy), girls who had never been to school (+21.1 percent literacy; +22.7 percent numeracy), and girls with disabilities (+20.0 percent literacy; +20.3 percent numeracy) (TEACH Annual Review 2023–24). Trainers were also matched to learner numbers to maintain quality. These outcomes underscore that SAGE Phase II effectively reached and improved learning for cohorts often excluded from mainstream education.

### ***Equity***

**SIG reinforced equity by prioritising the most disadvantaged schools and expanding support to girls and learners with disabilities, though resource constraints limited the depth of inclusion.** EMIS data guided allocations, with district inspectors refining selection to ensure marginalised schools were prioritised (KII with UNICEF). By 2023–24, SIGs supported 1.52 million learners (763,098 boys; 758,143 girls), surpassing the logframe milestone of 968,514 (TEACH Annual Review 2023–24). Equity was strengthened through additional support to special schools and resource centres for PwFD, complemented by SAGE Phase II and solarisation in isolated areas (TEACH Annual Review 2023–24). The Gender Parity Index for Forms 1–4 reached 1.04, indicating more girls than boys enrolled (Draft EMIS 2023). Yet reduced funding from 2023 onward constrained accommodations for PwFDs, limiting provision of specialised materials. Parents in Matabeleland South noted that SIGs “have allowed girls to continue even where parents had no fees,” while education department officials in Mashonaland East cautioned that “PwFD are still left out due to lack of tailored materials”.

**TPD embedded equity into training content and participation, though capacity gaps remain in addressing disability-specific needs.**

Inclusive pedagogy was integrated into all modules, with training targeted to disadvantaged schools and an emphasis on gender-responsive teaching (KII with EDT). By 2023–24, 60,773 educators were trained in inclusive pedagogy, surpassing the target of 50,699 by 20 percent, with female teachers representing 52 percent of participants and 1,426 educators with disabilities also included (TEACH Annual Review 2023–24). Modules were adapted for pre-service training, ensuring system-wide continuity. However, gaps persisted: teachers often preferred physical over digital materials, and many lacked disability-specific competencies. SDC members, parents, and teachers in several provinces observed that “teachers still lacked disability-specific skills,” highlighting the need for additional CPD modules tailored to learners with visual and hearing impairments.

**SAGE Phase II achieved some of the strongest equity outcomes under TEACH, reaching highly marginalised subpopulations and recording substantial learning gains.**

Literacy gains were highest among married girls (+23.9 percent) and girls engaged in labour (+23.3 percent), while girls who had never been to school (+21.1 percent) and girls with disabilities (+20.0 percent) also showed notable progress. In numeracy, girls engaged in labour recorded the strongest gains (+23.7 percent), followed by never-schooled girls (+22.7 percent), with girls with disabilities (+20.3 percent) and those from ethnic minorities (+20.6 percent) also advancing (Learner Progress Assessment 2025). Equity was reinforced by tailored support such as healthcare, adaptive devices, and appropriate trainer–learner ratios (KII with Plan International). Engagement with ministries to mainstream disability inclusion further enhances sustainability. Head teachers in Nyanga and Mazowe noted that “SAGE reached those never in school before, especially girls with disabilities and married girls,” while parents in Midlands praised the health-related support that enabled girls’ return to learning.

### **3.7.2 Efficiency of SIG delivery (and areas for improvement)**

**SIGs became more efficiently managed over time.** In 2020, 86 percent of schools received SIGs in the first quarter, which improved to 98.7 percent in 2021 (AR 2020–2021). SIG fund transfers were protected in USD accounts, preserving purchasing power amid 57 percent local inflation in 2023–24 (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024). Indicating robust financial governance, audits and verifications confirm high accountability and appropriate use of funds. In 2021, US\$1.3 million of US\$1.47 million disbursement was accounted for, showcasing strong financial stewardship during COVID-19 recovery. However, some schools struggled with record-keeping, purchase of SIG-ineligible items and discrepancies in accounting (SIG Verification Reports; SIG Rapid Assessment Reports). Moreover, SIG delivery efficiency was affected by high bank transaction fees (\$41.47 per transaction on average), fuel price volatility, and inefficiencies in the procurement process at school level. Also, 16 percent of newly appointed school heads had not been trained in SIG management, pointing to a capacity gap (SIG Verification Report 2023, TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024). Additionally, some schools reported delays due to overlapping financial audits and weak documentation of expenditures at the district level. Mitigation efforts and adaptations to these challenges included more independent SIG verification exercises, trainings for school heads, and UNICEF-MoPSE collaboration to strengthen local financial management and accountability systems (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024; SIG Verification Report 2023).

**Several critical areas for improvement are identified.** A notable gap was the financial and operational capacity of school-level actors. As of 2023–2024, 16 percent of newly appointed school heads had not received training in SIG management, impacting their ability to effectively plan, procure, and account for resources (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024, SIG Verification Report). This points to the need for the expansion and institutionalisation of induction training for new headteachers and introduce refresher trainings on financial compliance and procurement. Moreover, although the annual verification and rapid assessment reports were shared with FCDO and MoPSE, dissemination and uptake of recommendations varied across districts (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024). Hence, enhanced communication of verification findings and actionable follow-through will also be critical for improving future programme efficiency and sustainability (TEACH Annual Review 2022–2023, 2023–2024).

### 3.7.3 Efficiency of FCDO oversight

**Key finding 29:** *FCDO maintained strong fiduciary and strategic oversight, participated actively in ECGs and sector reviews to guide adaptive changes, and facilitated reallocations (e.g. Solarisation, TPD) in line with changing contextual priorities.*

**FCDO's oversight was generally strong in maintaining fiduciary compliance and facilitating adaptive programming.** Overall, between 2019 and 2024, TEACH improved its output scores from a "B" to consistent "A" ratings, reflecting enhanced and efficient programme management and delivery. Participation in the Education Coordination Group (ECG), active engagement with MoPSE and UNICEF, and annual reviews enabled evidence-based course corrections, including reallocations towards Solarisation and TPD in response to contextual needs (TEACH Annual Reviews 2021–2024). Quarterly reviews and joint sector reviews helped maintain alignment with national priorities (TEACH Annual Review 2021–2022). FCDO also played a pivotal role in coordinating new partnerships under the cost extension phase, ensuring alignment with sector priorities. The donor harmonisation risks were consistently rated low. However, some challenges emerged, particularly delays in internal approval and reallocation processes (notably during COVID-19), and bottlenecks in SIG budget confirmations that temporarily affected disbursements. Stakeholders recommended greater agility in financial approvals and clearer communication across implementing partners. Additionally, efforts to mainstream learning from pilot initiatives—such as solarisation—into wider sector programming demonstrated an intent to scale value for money gains through evidence-informed adaptations (TEACH Annual Review 2023–2024). Still, some stakeholders felt that quarterly reporting, though useful, was becoming repetitive and suggested that a consolidated annual VfM picture would improve efficiency of oversight (KII with UNICEF, Plan International).

**Stakeholders, however, flagged important gaps in how VfM monitoring itself was conceptualised and tracked across TEACH.** FCDO respondents noted that they were "never quite sure if economy indicators were comparing like with like"; for example, whether workshop-based training costs were comparable to classroom-based ones. UNICEF stakeholders highlighted that while quarterly VfM reporting acted as a good reminder to ensure efficiency, it risked becoming repetitive, and they suggested an annual consolidated review may be more meaningful. For MoPSE, VfM monitoring was considered useful for reinforcing efficiency and tracking how economic efficiency was being achieved globally, though they echoed concerns on defining economic indicators more clearly. Plan International indicated that benchmarking and exploring alternatives to achieve similar or better results with fewer resources was a consistent practice, and they confirmed that quarterly reports were submitted to FCDO as a matter of compliance.

## Section 4: Conclusions and recommendations

This section presents the overall conclusions from the TEACH evaluation (4.1) and forward-looking recommendations (4.2). The conclusions respond to the intended aims and objectives of TEACH, as articulated within the log frame and theory of change, include lessons learnt, as well as bringing together key findings on equity from across the report. We also include links to the relevant recommendations which follow.

### 4.1 Conclusions

**TEACH was launched by FCDO and MoPSE in July 2019, to contribute to improving learning outcomes in Zimbabwe and leaving no one behind.** It was to achieve this through enhancing teacher capacity and quality, increasing equitable access to education for marginalised children, and system-wide reforms. The evaluation sought to assess the impact of TEACH against these objectives, as well as its effectiveness, relevance and equity contribution, amongst other criteria.

**Considering the limitations of available data, the evaluation finds evidence of positive but mixed impacts from TEACH.** Within TEACH districts, there is evidence of positive impact on improving **access to education** through increased student enrolment. This includes widespread positive effects from the SIG intervention. However, impact on student retention is limited, raising concerns about sustainability. Boys' dropout at primary and secondary levels accelerated over the period, especially in rural/economically stressed areas. These findings indicate that access interventions must be complemented by measures to enhance teacher motivation and retention, alongside adequate and sustained resourcing to maintain school functionality, as well as addressing cultural and economic barriers to access. Evidence of impact on **learning outcomes** is inconclusive, due to limited school-level data and the late rollout of the TPD literacy intervention, although the TPD component aligns well with evidence on what works. A key lesson is to ensure that future evaluations take account of such delays or adaptability in delivery, as well as securing early buy-in from stakeholders to access relevant data. Similarly, evidence on the **combined contribution** of the various TEACH components remains inconclusive. While anecdotal reports suggest additional results from geographical co-location (TPD, SIG, solarisation, and school community fairs) this was not purposefully designed within TEACH, limiting measurable impact from its overall holistic approach. This also aligns with FCDO's evidence on best buys, which advises against investing in school facilities and grants alone. Strengthening colocation of school-level interventions and its coordination is the focus of *Recommendation #1*.

**At an outcome level, there is strong evidence that TEACH has been effective.** Overall, this reflects the **relevant and coherent** design of TEACH, well-aligned with Zimbabwe's education priorities, responsive to external shocks (including COVID-19) and adaptable to digital learning. **SIGs** supported measurable increases in basic functionality in almost 3,000 rural and under-resourced satellite schools, by supporting critical teaching and learning materials and improved school environments for girls. Effectiveness was further strengthened when combined with **Solarisation**, which enabled evening learning, as well as **School Community Fairs**. However, the subsequent reduction in SIG coverage and expenditure compounded sustainability challenges, most acutely affecting poorer rural P3 and satellite schools. Maintenance and security gaps for solar assets also weakened sustainability and

value for money (providing lessons for future climate-smart investments). More blended and longer-term solutions are needed for the resourcing of access and functionality gaps in Zimbabwe's schools (the focus of *Recommendation #2*). Similarly, **TPD** increased teacher participation in CPD, peer collaboration, and capacity and confidence in key pedagogical competencies, and improved classroom delivery. TPD was also effective in strengthening school leadership and management capacity, underpinned by leadership toolkits. Efficiency gains through a cluster-based delivery model and the introduction of digital platforms helped reach over 74,500 teachers and leaders. Rebalancing cascade training, strengthening follow-up through inspections, tackling uneven ICT access (in support of blended learning) and institutionalisation through policy reform emerged as important lessons for enhancing effectiveness of CPD (covered under *Recommendations #3, #4 and #5*). Finally, the **SAGE Phase II** and **Think Equal** components made positive contributions to girls' access to education, classroom practices and social-emotional learning, though their reach remains limited. This highlights the importance of accompanying pilot projects with advocacy and influence work to help integrate successful principles and practices into the wider education system – work is ongoing in this area.

**At the systems level, there is strong evidence of positive outcomes from TEACH.** This includes influencing **national policies**, notably the Early Learning Policy, and an unintended contribution to developing a new Non-Formal Education Policy. FCDO's support for improved governance and coordination mechanisms in Zimbabwe was pivotal in this respect, fostering collaboration among stakeholders and strengthening government ownership – a positive legacy for future education planning from TEACH. Challenges remain in the coordination of CPD reforms, the lengthy policy approval process, and institutionalising Government of Zimbabwe ownership – the latest School Financing Policy (SFP) highlighting a critical case in point – as well as a general need for strengthening public financial management (PFM) within education. Other aspects of system reform also show positive results. These include the partial institutionalisation of ZELA and EMIS **education data**, improved monitoring through more frequent, e-enabled **school inspections**, as well as the generation of new **research** around marginalised learners that informed policy and practice. However, resourcing and capacity limitations (including data analysis and uptake skills), particularly at subnational levels, pose ongoing challenges to scaling and sustaining these reforms (informing related *Recommendations #6 and #7*).

**Finally, on equity, TEACH has made a credible contribution to Zimbabwe's GEDSI agenda, expanding access to functional schools and informal education, shifting mindsets on inclusive teaching, and strengthening GEDSI-related evidence and system monitoring.** These actions shifted practices towards more inclusive pedagogy and extended the reach of TEACH, in particular, benefitting **marginalised girls'** access to education, confidence and literacy. However, equity gains were uneven. Progress on **disability inclusion** was limited – with enrolment declining over the period. TEACH's contribution to improving learning environments was hindered by structural barriers including inadequate school infrastructure and lack of assistive teaching devices, specialised trained personnel and disaggregated learning outcomes – challenges which need more concerted attention at the systems level. As an interim measure, deeper practical guidance ('how-to' tools) was requested by teachers to help sustain TPD implementation. Strengthening disability inclusive education is the focus of *Recommendation #8*. With the reversal of gender disparities across

some key indicators, the need to better address **vulnerable boys'** education – including economic pressures on school drop-out – emerged as a new and neglected challenge. This underscored the need for more context-responsive and data-driven strategies to reach underserved learner segments (*Recommendations #9 and #10*). While new coordination mechanisms for inclusive education were also established under TEACH, progress remains to be made on institutionalising inclusive education commitments across government and partners.

**Moreover, significant urban-rural regional disparities persisted.** This was associated with shortages of qualified teachers, limited teaching and learning materials, poor ICT connectivity and 'zero pass rates' – further limiting the impact of TEACH. Inspection quality was also uneven across provinces due to transport and capacity constraints. Compounding disadvantage, satellite schools struggled in particular to implement GEDSI reforms. To address structural barriers to improved learning outcomes in Zimbabwe, stakeholders widely argued for greater ownership and consistency of funding from MoPSE, as well as the coordination and institutionalisation of layered support for schools, especially in the hardest-to-reach communities (see *Recommendation #1*). Overall adequate education financing policy and planning is covered under *Recommendation #11*.

## 4.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations from the TEACH evaluation build directly upon the study findings and conclusions above. They are prioritised to guide FCDO, MoPSE, and other TEACH partners in consolidating programme gains, addressing systemic gaps, and shaping future education programming in Zimbabwe.

**Recommendation #1: To strengthen retention and learning as well as enrolment, co-locate interventions in targeted schools, and develop context-responsive approaches which focus on both girls and boys.** Approaches should combine effective layering of support within the most disadvantaged P3, S3 and satellite schools, including school infrastructure and TLM improvements, (sustainable) community outreach (including through SDCs), enhanced teaching capacity, and economic incentives such as BEAM payments. This should be underpinned by improved (EMIS-enabled) targeting and coordination of support across partners, and national and local leadership and accountability measures from MoPSE. The retention of boys (and both boys and girls at later stages of education) should be equally prioritised.

**Component addressed:** *Equitable access* | **Responsible stakeholder(s):** *FCDO; MoPSE; Education Partnerships Steering Committee (EPSC); TEACH IPs; SDCs*

**Recommendation #2: To help sustain school access, prioritise financial solutions for regular SIG (or similar grant) payments to the most disadvantaged rural and satellite schools, and enhance SIG governance.** Future SIGs should prioritise teaching and learning materials, and draw on a combination of increased domestic financing, partner resources such as GPE, and local sources of revenue, as part of a sustainable funding package. Adopting elements of Results Based Financing, alongside capacity building, peer learning and guidelines for DSIs, SDCs and school leadership, can help tie SIG payments to improved

school outcomes. This programme should be institutionalised as a key equity commitment within the School Financing Policy (also see *Recommendation #8*).

**Component addressed:** SIGs | **Responsible stakeholder(s):** MoPSE; Ministry of Finance; FCDO; GPE; SDCs

**Recommendation #3: To enhance effectiveness and sustainability of TPD (and related teacher CPD), capacity-build district level systems for training delivery and oversight.**

This includes strengthening decentralised support (including in-person trainings alongside virtual support), formalising onboarding and mentorship systems, and enhanced inspection and follow-up. This should be linked with national system strengthening measures around teacher motivation/retention, and capacitating Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) for more effective and equitable deployment of teachers.

**Component addressed:** TPD | **Responsible stakeholder(s):** FCDO; EDT; MoPSE; MoHTEISTD

**Recommendation #4: To scale up blended training and learning models, strengthen systems support for ICT integration and connectivity.** MoPSE and partners should embed ICT within the teacher CPD framework, teacher capacity building programmes (such as TPD), and pedagogy (aligned with findings from the blended learning study). This can be paired with initiatives to boost ICT-enabled infrastructure and uptake in low-connectivity regions, including online/offline tools, and roll-out of Solarisation, paired with robust security arrangements and maintenance planning.

**Components addressed:** TPD; Solarisation | **Responsible stakeholder(s):** MoPSE; MoICT; MoHTEISTD; FCDO; EDT

**Recommendation #5: To incentivise consistent participation in CPD, prioritise national systems support for an updated CPD Framework, and a functional Teacher Professional Council.** This should align with the HBC and draw on the lessons learnt from TPD, to accelerate the formalisation of CPD standards and strengthen excellence in teaching practice.

**Component addressed:** TPD | **Responsible stakeholder(s):** MoPSE; MoHTEISTD; FCDO

**Recommendation #6: To support impactful and sustainable data systems, strengthen sub-national capacity for EMIS and ZELA data analysis, verification and policy uptake.**

Following handover to GPE. This should include formalised training for all levels (school, district, national), development of data quality assurance protocols, and support for use of dashboards and the proposed Integrated Education Data Management System (DMS) for evidence-based planning and resource allocation. Institutional support for better coordination between MoPSE and ZimSTAT is also required.

**Component addressed:** Education data systems | **Responsible stakeholder(s):** GPE; MoPSE; ZimSTAT; FCDO

**Recommendation #7: To strengthen frequency and accountability of school inspections, institutionalise improvements including school self-evaluation and planning tools, and enhanced outcome monitoring.** It is recommended to pair the e-

inspection system and tools with offline (Kobo) resources, school-level snapshots and refresher trainings, to boost uptake and usability, alongside institutionalising self-review methodologies through adapting the inspection tools for use by head teachers and school leadership teams and for peer review. Enhanced monitoring of the school inspection system should be institutionalised through adding criteria related to effective feedback to teachers and school improvement outcomes, to help align incentives with inspection reform goals.

**Component addressed:** *School inspections* | **Responsible stakeholder(s):** *MoPSE; EDT; FCDO*

**Recommendation #8: To more systematically enhance equity, deepen GEDSI capacities at teacher, school leader, inspector and PED levels.** Institutionalise investment in inclusive education skills and building teacher confidence (especially in SEN and disability) through stronger partnerships across national education ministries and TTCs, to embed GEDSI modules and inclusive pedagogy (such as. training in sign language), the rollout of practical inclusive education tools within CPD, and specialised training tracks and structured monitoring tools for inspecting inclusive education settings. This should be complemented with investments in assistive/accessible devices, materials and infrastructure, with a focus on under-resourced schools, as part of resource support for school functionality (also see *Recommendation #2*).

**Components addressed:** *Equitable Access; TPD; School Data & Inspections* | **Responsible stakeholder(s):** *MoPSE; MoHTEISTD; TTCs; FCDO; EDT; GPE*

**Recommendation #9: Adopt a Gender Transformative Approach (GTA) in community engagement, targeting both girls' and boys' education.** Shift beyond gender-responsive approaches to enable deeper engagement with the intersecting dynamics underpinning gender-based exclusion (such as in Apostolic communities). Tailored outreach strategies should be devised for contexts with entrenched socio-economic resistance, focusing on directly engaging boys, men, and community leaders to challenge exclusionary norms and directly address early marriage, pregnancy-related dropouts, and the marginalisation of girls with disabilities. Adopting a GTA approach would also account for the inclusion of other marginalised learner populations such as out-of-school boys.

**Components addressed:** *Equitable Access* | **Responsible stakeholder(s):** *MoPSE; FCDO; TEACH IPs*

**Recommendation #10: To better track equity outcomes, systematise monitoring of marginalised learner populations (including PwFD).** Refine GEDSI monitoring systems to move beyond enrolment metrics and embed tools that capture learner experiences, identify non-visible disabilities, and amplify student voices. Combine this with clear feedback loops and accountability mechanisms to support use of disaggregated data and rights-based planning and implementation at district and school levels.

**Components addressed:** *Equitable Access; Education data systems* | **Responsible stakeholder(s):** *MoPSE; FCDO; TEACH IPs*

**Recommendation #11: To address structural constraints on Zimbabwe's education reforms, outcomes and equity, prioritise support for stronger domestic financing and**

**MoPSE leadership of the reform agenda.** This can include supporting the School Financing Task Force (Ministry of Finance and UNICEF) to finalise approval of the School Financing Policy, developing targeted technical assistance for PFM reforms for education, incorporating elements of RBF to help unlock additional funding (such as from GPE or World Bank), and establishing a clear work plan and appropriate oversight mechanisms, to support large scale roll-out of education reforms. To ensure longer-term impact, MoPSE's units (particularly those responsible for teacher training, inclusive education, and data and monitoring systems) should assume full leadership of reform implementation, institutionalised through regular review mechanisms with education partners.

**Component addressed:** *Policy influence* | **Responsible stakeholder(s):** *MoPSE; Ministry of Finance; TEACH IPs; GPE*