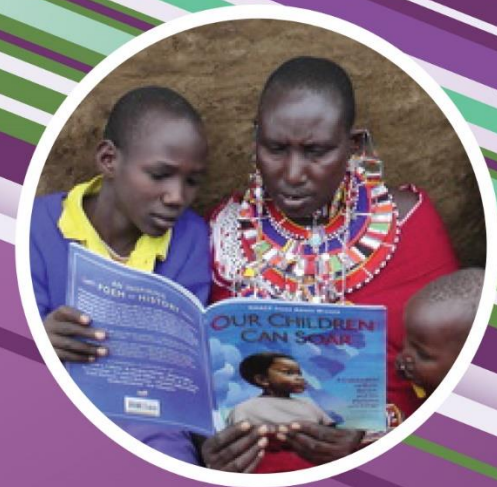




Zizi Afrique
Foundation

Zizi Afrique Foundation 2021-2025 Strategy Midline Review 2023 – Brief

October 2023



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Zizi Afrique Foundation (Zizi)

Zizi Afrique Foundation (Zizi), registered in 2018, is a social impact company committed to improving learning outcomes for children and youth furthest behind. Zizi contributes to the nurturing of a generation of children and youth who are well equipped with the skills for learning, skills for living and skills for working. Zizi consolidates and shares evidence with an aim of informing policy change and improving practice to accelerate the outcomes of learning and training.

Zizi's vision is to create a world where all children and youth learn and thrive. As part of its 2025 strategy, it aims at reaching five million children and youth, with a particular focus on one million who are furthest left behind (those living in extreme poverty, conflict situations, marginalized and those living with disabilities).

Zizi's programming is grounded on three pillars: research and evidence generation, innovations for improved practice, and advocacy for policy change and implementation.

The Foundation's Mission is to consolidate evidence and innovate solutions to shape policy and practice, to equip all children and youth with competences for learning, living, and working. This is achieved through commitment to the core values of Ubuntu, Curiosity, Respect, Safety and Accountability.

1.2 The focus of the midline review of Zizi's 2021-2025 strategy

In 2021, Zizi launched the 2021-2025 strategy, which lays out a clear roadmap to its vision. This strategy informs alignment of Zizi's resources and actions, enabling the organization to anticipate and respond to a rapidly changing world while making informed decisions that support impact, growth, and sustainability.

June-July 2023 is the mid-point to 2025. The board initiated a mid-line review process. The focus of the review was to pose, take stock, learn, and adapt. The review was carried out between July and September 2023. This brief summarizes the process, findings, and recommendations of the mid-line evaluation.

2.0 Methodology

The review adopted a two-pronged approach which comprised a desk review and primary data collection using a qualitative approach that comprised of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).

The review sought to answer the following overarching strategic questions.

1. What changes have occurred within Zizi's operational context that may influence the achievement of the strategic objectives.
2. What progress has Zizi made in achieving its 2021-2025 strategic objectives at mid-point?
3. How relevant is the Zizi 2021-2025 for the remaining period?
4. How can Zizi improve implementation of the strategy for the remaining period?

The desk review of relevant Zizi corporate documents was conducted by the midline review consultant to inform the design of the data collection instruments, and provide contextual understanding of Zizi's working environment, structures, and policies.

A total of 48 Zizi stakeholders were reached through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Internal stakeholders included Zizi donors and implementing partners, Staff and Board Members. Key informant interviews were carried out with key stakeholders comprised of representatives from Ministry of Education officials, County Government Officials (CEC Education), head teachers, teachers, and volunteers, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) partners, and Teacher Service Commission (TSC).

3.0 Highlights of the review findings

3.1 Key changes in Zizi's operational context

The first question the review sought to answer was whether and how Zizi's operational context had evolved since the launch of the strategy and what developments had emerged on the education sector which could have implications on the organization, its remit and work. Eight key developments are most significant to Zizi Afrique's operation.

The Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC): First is the roll out of the new education system and curriculum. The implementation of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) has gone full circle in early years and reached Junior Secondary in 2023. This has shifted the focus of government, as experiences and challenges shape government investments, and as curriculum and assessment evolve.

Technology in Education: Accelerated by the COVID-19 learning disruptions, technology has gained prominence as a tool to facilitate access to learning, and for improving teaching and learning outcomes. The landscape has many more actors now focusing on Edtech than it was the case in 2021.

The Kenya Kwanza Government: The new (Kenya Kwanza) government elected in the 2022 general elections brought in new twists to the landscape. Alongside new leaders in the education sector, the Presidential Working Party on Education Reforms (PWPER) established in September 2022 presented a report to the President proposing priorities for education over the 2022-2027 period, and largely adopting the manifesto of the ruling party. This agenda has implication on Zizi's advocacy.

Teacher education: The CBC curriculum has yielded changes to the teacher education curriculum, whose implementation kicked off in 2022, in earnest. Together with the teacher education policy now under development, the changes have opened new opportunities in teacher education, with the Ministry opening doors for innovation to produce a new generation of teachers through pre-service teacher training.

Education financing: Financing public education in Kenya has gained prominence as an area of interest, driven by the financial crisis that has faced and almost collapsed University education. The President has flagged off a New Funding Model (NFM) for the different levels of education, opening new doors for evidence generation and advocacy on equity and accountability in education financing.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET): TVET has emerged as an area of focus for the new government, with few institutional changes that have included the reinstallation of the TVET Curriculum Development and Accreditation Council (CDACC) and establishment of the Kenya School of TVET, among other key reforms. This validates Zizi's focus on this sub-sector, but also opens new challenges for evidence supply and advocacy.

The changing global funding model: Global education funding continues to shift to African organizations, through the so-called localization movement. This raises the quality bar for Zizi Afrique, to demonstrate authority, credibility, and capacity as an indigenous organization, with greater prospects for unrestricted funding.

Organizational growth: As an organization, Zizi has grown significantly since 2021, with major expansions in funding sizes, programmatic and operational scope, as well as leadership and staffing capacities.

3.2 Implications of the changes to Zizi's mission, vision, and work.

The review has concluded that Zizi's mission remains relevant to both the achievement of the vision and the social-political context. The organization is well positioned to ride on the increased attention in the education and youth sectors in the East Africa region to equip children and youth with competences.

However, three implications emerge from the changes in context.

There is a need to align work with current realities: There is a need to align areas of work to the contextual realities, especially regarding the new government and changes in the political economy. This might include (and not limit to) exploring new spaces for policy influence with this government and reviewing strategies in the wake of the new education structure and CBC curriculum (Junior and Senior secondary). The imminent restructuring of the Ministry of Education may offer a reconnection challenge for advocacy.

Re-examine Zizi's policy engagement approach: Related to above, the new government's approach to education may require re-examination of Zizi's engagement approach, while facing it straight with an ever-closing civic space and working with schools. Clearer focus on fewer policy areas (move deeper) may be an option for the advocacy approach, while being more strategic and intensifying engagement through enhanced advocacy capacities.

Strengthen capacity to deliver: Internally, with the growth and expansion to the region, the focus should now be on constantly reviewing and improving talent and staff capacity to deliver strategy, while expanding the organizational capacity for sub-awarding smaller organizations to pursue collective impact. As the operation swells up, so must the capacity for raising funds, while investing also in sustainability.



3.3 Zizi's overall progress in the implementation of the 2021-2025 strategy.

The review has concluded that the organization is generally on track to achieving the strategic targets for 2025, across all three strategic pillars.

Overall, Zizi successfully navigated a challenging inception phase during and post COVID-19 that radically altered education in the country amidst curriculum reforms and change of Government in 2022.

The organization has skilled and committed staff, has increased its funding base, and expanded its sphere of partnerships and leading cutting-edge innovative work across the region.

The evidence and learning pillar that has recorded the highest number of outputs, while the innovations pillar has recorded the least (see table below). The three pillars are not entirely well coordinated to leverage the strength and benefit from each other. Zizi continues to excel in policy and knowledge-building efforts and has attained sector wide recognition. The collaborative approach of the organization has yielded immense benefits and is the leading factor to growth in impact and influence.



However, four areas emerge as the most crucial to focus on in the second half of strategy implementation.

First is the needed shape-up of the advocacy efforts, and mainstreaming advocacy as bloodstream for all programs. Zizi ought to leverage strategic advocacy that leverages evidence from the other two pillars, with increased staff capacity to engage government and coordinate the partnerships. The Zizi story has potential power that needs to be exploited, and riding on the current wave to optimize impact.

Similarly, the “Innovations for Practice” pillar requires rethinking and repositioning across the organization. There is an opportunity to also capacitate this portfolio to adopt design thinking and the application of evidence for more aggressive programming, while tightening implementation and measurement to capture and share results from the innovations. There are program development and prospecting opportunities in the areas of teacher education, as well as the areas in CBC where heavy lifting is needed to deliver competences, like interventions for life skills and values.

The organization also needs to build better clarity, take position, and intensify focus on gender, equity, and inclusion, both within the organization and in its mission. Alongside this is improving the way the Zizi story is captured and told, to align to these basic principles.

Lastly, it is seen as important that Zizi re-clarifies and articulates its niche, considering the many promising areas of expertise, and have a unified proper way of telling the Zizi story and what the organization is about. Rather than widen its programmatic scope, it seems more strategic to now deepen.

3.4 Zizi’s main achievements and milestones as of July 2023

The review also checked and documented the main progress achieved across the three pillars and noted as follows. The following table provides highlights of the key achievements and milestones that emerged.

Target	Cumulative reach	Overall outcomes	What could be done better
Evidence and learning			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target – Directly reach 150,000 children and youths through research. Demonstrate evidence of studies and assessments of learning to generate evidence on the development of competences in the context of East Africa and use findings to address the crisis of learning. 	Zizi’s cumulative reach is approximately 47,264 children and youth, through ALiVE, PLUS and FLN programs out of 75,000 targets.	Zizi contributed to change in Foundational Learning and Numeracy skills assessments, research, packaging and sharing the evidence.	Zizi has not disaggregated their reach data. Need for better data capture and presentation, and stronger MEL capacities to achieve the targets.
Advocacy for policy change and implementation.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish networks of more than 100 member institutions reaching at least 2 million children and youth. Demonstrate evidence of active collaboration and participation with at least 10 national, regional, or global initiatives. At least 3 policies influenced reaching 5 million children/youth. 	<p>Animated networks of a total 225 member institutions.</p> <p>2 policies directly influenced TVETs.</p> <p>2 Frameworks influenced through ALiVE and FLN.</p> <p>7 initiatives (national, regional, and global).</p>	Zizi has provided leadership to regional initiatives such as the RELI and to scale up its participation in collaborative conversations around education and SDGs, emerging themes and positioning itself as a reputable Global South based, led, and influenced organization that is grounded on sound data and evidence in program delivery.	<p>Harness collaborations and networks in amplifying work, contribution to the education space and exploring new spaces of influence.</p> <p>Leverage the Advocacy, Program and Research directors to enhance value from collaborations, initiatives, and appearances.</p> <p>Sharpen the advocacy approach from documenting evidence of gains from collaborations.</p>
Innovations for improved practice.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test innovations on WYD competences including at least 100 TVETs and 1,000 schools. 	Engaged a total of 47 TVET institutions to test innovation on WYD.	Innovations successfully tested and lessons documented to inform practice.	Sharpen the innovations pillar from a nuanced understanding of systems thinking.

	Engaged 493 schools to test innovation for FLN.		Use unrestricted funding towards innovating program delivery, new ways of working across program/partnerships/collaborations/alliances.
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3.5 Areas that require attention to enable the achievement of the Zizi’s 2021-2025 strategy.

The review also collected feedback on the areas that require attention or course-correction to enable better implementation, sharpening of focus and strengthening impact. The table below summarizes what emerges as gaps and what needs to happen to address them.

Identified gaps	Strategic Options
Evidence & Learning	
Inadequate and lack of real-time documentation of reach	Come up with a system to strengthen tracking of reach and disaggregate the data along categories as defined and prioritized in strategy.
Gaps in tracking change and influence on policy and practice.	Consider the use of outcome harvesting approach to better track impact from disaggregated engagements.
Advocacy	
Lack of clarity in Zizi’s advocacy and influencing model	Re-clarify, sharpen, deepen Zizi’s advocacy strategy, and focus on fewer policies (deeper, better, than be all-over)
No structured “media engagement strategy.	Map out Zizi’s positive interventions and storify these for news priming, digital conversations, and external visibility.
Zizi’s advocacy ambition seems not be matched with the right staff capacity levels, to sustain engagement and deliver meaningful impact	Fully operationalize the Advocacy Directorate, with right level capacities (manager-level) fully assigned to collaborations and partnerships tracking and the reporting of results, and leveraging partnerships to author and push out stories of impact
Innovations for Practice	
No clear definition and evidence of innovation within the learning sector that addresses directly the 3 foundational problems in the strategic plan.	Re-think and reposition “innovations for practice” and invest in capacities for program development and measurement.
There is opportunity to perhaps sharpen the innovations pillar from a nuanced understanding of systems thinking- Linking interventions end to end	Sharpen the program development strategy, to also include learning and adapting innovations from other countries in the global south, where these can be found, not always having to build from scratch.
	Moving beyond just reporting reach by gender, into mainstreaming GEI into the project planning, implementation, and reporting.

4.0 Reflections on the midline review.

Based on the findings of this midline review and subsequent reflections around the findings by the Senior Management Team (SMT) and the Zizi Board, the Zizi board has considered ten key insights that will define the organization's existence and interventions over the remaining strategic 2023-2025. The insights are grouped into five categories namely, **Strategy and Mission, Organizational structure and approach, Brand management, programming, and growth and sustainability.**

4.1 Strategy and mission.

4.1.1 Retain Zizi's Vision and Mission but sharpen.

Retain vision and mission until end of strategic period. However, sharpen the focus on **Foundational Skills** (literacy, numeracy, and life skills), and use this framing to articulate Zizi's vision. Develop clarity on skills and competencies of focus to include literacy, numeracy, life skills and values, and across the levels of education.

Sharpen the focus on Foundational Skills and the core sphere of influence - use of evidence to inform policy and practice. Use the 3 verbs to express Zizi's mission while communicating – **Consolidate-Innovate-Engage**. The engagement approach of Zizi embraces co-creation with government and partners, more than confrontation and placard-lifting.

Zizi's leadership to craft and adopt a tagline that articulates and sells the mission.

4.1.2 Breathe life into organizational values.

Values are a core component of Zizi's work, and the process (how) is as important as the impact (what). Zizi to restructure the values; Diversity to replace respect as value, and subsume respect in describing diversity, breathing life into Zizi's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policy. Zizi to draw the program wisdom (from ALIVE) to clarify and assess the organizational values and mainstream values into organizational reporting.

4.1.3 Manage succession and flatten the power structure.

Zizi will continue with efforts to de-personalize the brand of from the Executive Director, to achieve greater devolution and more horizontal power structure. This will be pursued through greater capacities and visibility of the next layer (Directors) and having them occupy and own their space in leadership. An intergenerational approach to staff mentorship will ensure growth at all levels.

Zizi will also fully operationalize the directorates and enhance cross-directorate learning, collaboration and sharing to reduce the effect of silos in the organization.

4.2 Organizational structure and approach.

4.2.1 Within the strategic pillars, deepen work around strategic levers of Zizi's mission.

Zizi to clarify its niche (foundational skills) and sphere of influence (use of evidence to inform policy and practice). Then deepen the aspects around Zizi's mission, including better and deeper evidence consolidation, and work on illuminating sustainable and scalable innovations, as well as better-purposed engagement. The impact then encompasses the prioritized skills/competences across all levels of education (pipeline).

Zizi will focus on documenting and telling the impact story. This will be supported by improving the communication capacities of the organization, including partnership with strategic communications experts and organizations to sharpen Zizi's communications.

Zizi will review and prioritize the networks that best support its mission. The geographic focus of the organization is now defined as Sub-Saharan Africa, with primary focus on East Africa. Rather than opening country branches and offices, the core posture and delivery mechanism through collaboration will be strengthened and scaled up.

The innovations pillar will be strengthened, with investment in strategic capacities for program design and impact measurement. The pillar will leverage available resources to innovate solutions to address the core barriers to competency development at various levels.

4.2.1 Be more strategic in advocacy, intensify engagement.

Zizi's advocacy approach will be refocused to serve the **Consolidate-Innovate-Engage** continuum that embraces co-creation with all stakeholders and not activist level confrontation/placard-lifting advocacy. The use of evidence remains Zizi's signature contribution to the space, as well as convening and driving targeted engagement. Rather than the simple embrace of government reports (like the Presidential Working Party), Zizi will adopt a historical and longer-term approach to assessing new policies, to determine the response (between co-creation or advocacy).

In addition, Zizi will develop landscape documents for the major areas of work, that document historical developments and update these regularly, and shared as public goods and as contribution to the field. This will include a documentation of the Zizi Afrique approach.

4.3 Brand management

4.3.1 Retain the Zizi brand, and leverage partnerships for visibility.

Zizi will develop one overarching story, which becomes what Zizi is known for, then let other stories always come under this, to achieve consistency. Effort will be made to have a human touch to every story, to connect with people's emotions, delivered through a variety of formats. Zizi will learn from and engage other people and organizations, to improve our messaging.

Zizi will leverage existing and prospective collaborations and partnerships to tell the impact story more aptly, distinctly, and consistently.

No rebranding is necessary, in terms of name, logo, or colors. The Zizi brand remains until 2025.

4.3.2 Scale the posture and positioning of Zizi as an African organization.

Zizi will sustain the Afrocentric/Pan African posture over the period. Zizi will deliberately seek out and broker partnerships that embolden African organizations and move to create larger alliances and collaborations across Africa, through peer-to-peer reviews/learnings/ exchanges.

4.4 Programming

4.4.1 Embrace and embed Gender, Equity, and Inclusion (GEI).

Zizi will embrace a holistic gendered approach to programming. Beyond just data disaggregation, the organization will embed GEI principles right from the office to the priorities that are set, the way implementation is organized and up to reporting. GEI experts will be sought to advise this movement.



4.4.2 Upgrade the MEL Plan and Capacity.

Zizi will review and upgrade the MEL framework to ensure that reporting is fully aligned to the strategy. This will be supported by expanded capacities to capture data, and platforms that enable real-time reporting data generation and sharing.

4.5 Growth and sustainability.

4.5.1 Manage succession and flatten the power structure.

Zizi will continue with efforts to de-personalize the brand of from the Executive Director, to achieve greater devolution and more horizontal power structure. This will be pursued through greater capacities and visibility of the next layer (Directors) and having them occupy and own their space in leadership. An intergenerational approach to staff mentorship will ensure growth at all levels.

Zizi will also fully operationalize the directorates and enhance cross-directorate learning, collaboration and sharing to reduce the effect of silos in the organization.

4.5.2 Embrace a growth ambition and face fundraising with greater courage.

Zizi will achieve full documentation of its approaches/innovations and use these to review the fundraising document and stories of impact. Zizi will approach growth with increased courage, not hold back where opportunities are available, and revise upwards the fundraising and growth ambitions.

The organization will unlock the potential of senior members of staff to establish and leverage their own networks and relationships for resource mobilization.

Zizi's posture of strategic engagement with funders (rather than just money-and-reports) will be made better and deeper, to leverage current funders as lead champions of Zizi's work. Regular, crispier updates will help keep the partners updated, to strengthen their accuracy in speaking out there.

Lastly, Zizi will invest in persuading local philanthropy towards a shift from funding just inputs to education, to supporting learning outcomes, and device a way of monitoring and documenting the progress made on this. Agency of staff members will be encouraged, to make bring their hearts into their work, and make and document even the small personal (financial) contributions they make towards the achievement of the Zizi mission.



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www.ziziafrique.org | info@ziziafrique.org

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