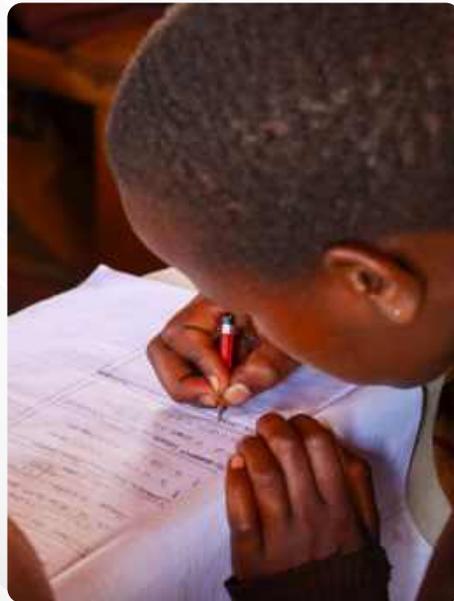




Zizi Afrique
Foundation



What Many Hands Can Do in Advancing Children's Learning

Annual Report 2025



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Photo: A learner solving a mathematics problem during a classroom observation session in Kajiado County.

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“...the ‘power of many’ has become more than a slogan. We see greater responsiveness, mutual responsibility, shared learning, and increased trust.”

- Dr. Kahaki Kimani

Message From the Board Chairperson

In 2017, Zizi Afrique began as a bold idea: that every child in Africa deserves strong foundations, and that communities already hold the relationships, values, and wisdom needed to build them. In 2025, that idea felt more achievable than ever.

Across our region, families are navigating rising living costs, shifting education policies, and the lingering effects of learning loss. Governments are under pressure to do more with less. Young people are leaving school into a labour market that is changing faster than many systems can adapt. In this context, it is easy for hope to feel distant. Yet, as a Board, what we have witnessed this year through Zizi’s work is the opposite of despair. We have seen what becomes possible when children are surrounded by adults, institutions, and systems that move in the same direction.

We have seen it in schools like Ngei Comprehensive in Nairobi, where values that once lived in policy documents now shape how children move, speak, and learn. We have seen it in villages, where teacher trainees give up their holidays to help struggling readers catch up. We have seen it in parents’ forums, where caregivers rediscover their role as co-educators. And we have seen it in national spaces, where quality assurance officers, curriculum experts, and researchers sit at the same table to rethink what it means for a child to truly “do well” in school.

From where we sit as a Board, three things stand out about 2025. First, children’s learning gains are becoming visible through nurturing approaches that are shifting learning environments, making them safer, more relational, and more supportive of confidence, agency, and mastery. Second, systems are beginning to move together. Across the region, government institutions are strengthening key levers for curriculum, assessment, teacher preparation, quality assurance,

and parental engagement so that foundational learning is not an isolated project outcome but a system responsibility. Third, the “power of many” has become more than a slogan. We see greater responsiveness, mutual responsibility, shared learning, and increased trust.

These experiences have emboldened us to re-imagine foundational learning and dream bigger on what we can achieve together. In January 2026, we have commenced the implementation of a new 15-year strategy (2026–2040). We believe that system change requires patience, consistency, and a horizon that stretches beyond project cycles and funding windows. As we look forward to unveiling this new strategy, and a new brand, we commit to showing up steadily and courageously until strong foundations are achieved for all children in Africa.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my deepest appreciation to our government partners, funders, civil society and research collaborators, and to the Zizi team. Your trust, candour, and commitment have made it possible to test new ideas, correct course where needed, and stay anchored in what matters most: learning gains for children, especially those furthest behind.

This Annual Report is therefore more than a record of activities. It is a story of people and systems in motion: children discovering their potential; teachers, parents, and youth pulling in the same direction; governments strengthening the levers that matter most; researchers building an Africa-led knowledge base; and partners sharing power, resources, and responsibility. I hope you enjoy reading it, as we commit to children.

Dr. Kahaki Kimani

**Board Chairperson,
Zizi Afrique Foundation**



Photo: Learners take part in interactive play sessions during the Values Campaign at the Regional Music and Drama Festival at Moi Forces Academy, Nairobi, led by ALiVE in collaboration with KICD.



“For years, we dreamt of government-led transformation that generates and uses evidence, and I have been fortunate to see this come to pass.”

- Dr. John Mugo

Message From the Executive Director

My highest moment in 2025 was walking into a school where values were embraced and lived by everyone. For years, we dreamt of government-led transformation that generates and uses evidence, and I have been fortunate to see this come to pass. For me, the year 2025 has shown that even the wildest dreams come true. Despite the global funding cuts and the rising economic shocks, I see hope and possibility in what we can together achieve for our children in Africa.

While we focused on good finishing for our Strategy 2021–25, 2025 was a year of transition. Following the mid-term evaluation of the strategy in 2023, we stepped onto a journey to becoming a systems-strengthening organisation, while working with and through other organisations. Still, we got onto a journey to becoming a gender-transformative organisation, moving beyond data disaggregation to addressing the root causes of gender inequality.

My team and I are now happy to present you with this report. This Annual Report presents three main stories: celebrating the agency of Africa-led organisations, committing to walking with each other in order to reach far, and ceding power to government agencies to implement interventions at the scale of the problem. I am deeply grateful to the Zizi Afrique Board for their stewardship and courage, to our partners and funders for trusting us to lead the way we know best, to government institutions for welcoming us to the table as co-workers, and to the Zizi team for committing our loyalty to children. I hope that these stories inspire you to do more in 2026, instill in you better courage to do hard things, and help us all to unite our efforts and accelerate progress.

Dr. John Mugo
Executive Director,
Zizi Afrique Foundation

Advancing Equity Through Foundational Learning

Zizi Afrique Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation working to ensure that all children and youth, especially those furthest behind, learn and thrive. We exist because across Sub-Saharan Africa, schooling has expanded, but learning has not kept pace. Too many children complete primary school without mastering basic literacy and numeracy, and without the life skills and values needed to navigate life, work, and citizenship.

Since 2021, we have been addressing three problems:

- 1. Too much schooling, too little learning:** Across the region, learning outcomes remain low, particularly for children affected by poverty, disability, language barriers, displacement, and geography. An overemphasis on examinations and content coverage has produced generations of learners who struggle with confidence, problem-solving, communication, and values—competencies essential for life and work.
- 2. Crowded interventions, limited progress:** While thousands of organisations work to improve education in Africa, efforts are often fragmented, small-scale, and insufficiently coordinated. Evidence from multiple countries shows that isolated interventions rarely translate into sustained, system-wide improvement. Lasting change requires alignment across actors and stronger government leadership.
- 3. Youth unemployment and an uncertain future of work:** Africa's youthful population is growing rapidly, yet education and training systems are not equipping young people with the competencies needed to create, access, and sustain dignified work. Without intentional investment in life skills, values, and adaptability, the continent risks producing a generation locked into precarious labour, with limited agency and low economic gain.

Our Vision

All children and youth in Africa have the foundation to learn, relate, and thrive.

Our Mission

We consolidate evidence and innovate solutions to shape policy and practice, to equip all children and youth with competences for learning, living and working.

Our Values

- **Ubuntu** – We believe progress is collective and relational
- **Curiosity** – We learn continuously and adapt boldly
- **Accountability** – We steward resources and trust with integrity
- **Diversity** – We centre inclusion, equity, and lived experience
- **Safety** – We create environments where people can learn, lead, and belong

What We Do

Zizi Afrique closes the foundational learning gap by working with and through education systems, not around them. Our work focuses on strengthening the environments around children, schools, homes, communities, and government systems so that learning gains are sustained and scalable. We have committed to achieving three strategic goals from 2026 onwards:

1. Stronger foundations for all: Literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values as catalysts for inclusive learning and lifelong opportunity, to reach at least 10 million girls and boys (half-half) by 2030.
2. Stronger education systems: Co-creating sustainable solutions with governments and partners, aligning policies, curricula, teacher preparation, and quality assurance to support long-term change.
3. Stronger ecosystem for change: Convening, enabling, and elevating key actors (educators, youth, families, civil society, and government) to share tools, evidence, and leadership for education ecosystem-wide transformation.

Five outcomes will be prioritised by 2030

1. Structures (Policies, resources, and roles align to prioritise foundational skills and reach the often-excluded learners);
2. Power (Decision-making is distributed, inclusive, and accountable, with African educators, researchers, youth, and communities shaping policy and practice);
3. Mindsets (Success is understood broadly, emphasising wellbeing, agency, and equity alongside academic attainment);
4. Relationships (Trust, collaboration, and co-creation is deepened across governments, schools, families, civil society, and the private sector); and
5. Practices (Inclusive, relational, and reflective behaviours become routine, ensuring policies translate into real classroom impact).

Who We Work With

- Primary beneficiaries: Children in early and middle childhood who are furthest behind (4–17 years)
- Boundary partners: Teachers, school leaders, parents, and civil society organisations; youth as assets for driving foundational learning
- System stewards: Government ministries, curriculum bodies, quality assurance agencies, research institutions, and policymakers
- Voices at the centre: Young people, women, and persons with disabilities

What Sets Us Apart

Zizi Afrique's distinct value lies not in delivering programmes at scale but in supporting education systems to drive change.

- **We work from inside the system:** Partnering with government institutions as co-creators, strengthening their functions rather than substituting them. Curriculum reform, assessment redesign, quality assurance strengthening, and teacher preparation are led by governments, with Zizi providing evidence, facilitation, and technical support.
- **We build the ecosystem for collective impact:** Through networks such as ALiVE, HERI Africa, RELI Africa, and the Numeracy Action Team, we pursue collective impact with diverse actors, including government, CSOs, researchers, funders, and youth, to align efforts and share ownership of outcomes.
- **We share power and resources:** In 2025, 32 percent of Zizi's budget was regranted to partners across five countries. This trust-based approach strengthens Africa-led organisations, challenges traditional power dynamics, and unlocks sustainable impact.
- **We elevate African-led evidence:** Zizi is committed to shifting whose knowledge counts. From open-access tools to Africa-led research agendas, we ensure evidence generated in Africa informs policy, practice, and global discourse.
- **We centre values, relationships, and agency:** We recognise that learning is relational. Our work integrates life skills and values into classrooms, teacher training, parenting, and youth leadership.



“I wish to express our sincere appreciation to the Zizi Afrique Foundation for the continued support you have provided in strengthening delivery within the Basic Education sector. Your investments in evidence generation and systems strengthening have contributed significantly to improved learning outcomes, enhanced school-level practices, and more informed policy decisions. The Ministry values this partnership and remains committed to deepening collaboration with Zizi Afrique in the advancement of education reforms.”

Fred Mujumba, Director, Kenya Education Management Information System (KEMIS), Ministry of Education, Kenya

1

Value-Based Education Is Becoming a Reality in Kenyan Schools

79 Schools • 19 Counties

The Problem We Set Out to Solve

Across East Africa, values and life skills are written into policy and curriculum but rarely translated into daily classroom practice or school culture. Unlike skills and competences, values are complex in that the way to learn them is to live them. Thus, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff, and even older children have to model them for younger children to live and learn them. In Kenya, eight values were prioritised in the competency-based curriculum that has been under implementation since 2016. However, no approach was provided for values-based education.

What We Did and the Role We Played

Zizi Afrique partnered with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), county governments, and school leadership teams to develop and pilot the Whole-School Approach to Values-based Education.

Zizi's role: Technical lead, system convener, evidence generator



79 Schools



19 Counties

Reaching Heads of Institutions, teachers, Curriculum Support Officers, parents, and learners.



Photo: Signage outside Ngei Comprehensive School highlighting core values and reinforcing the Value-based Education approach being implemented at the school.

Partnerships That Made This Possible

KICD • Ministry of Education (County Education Offices) • Teachers Service Commission • Schools and Boards of Management • Teachers • Parents • Kenyatta University • 5 Funders • County-Based Civil Society Organisations

Evidence of Results



88%

Teachers effectively integrated values into classroom instruction



95%

Co-curricular activities embedded values intentionally



Schools institutionalised values through action plans and committees



Reduced learner conflict and improved school climate reported across pilot schools

Why This Matters

When values are lived, not preached, schools become safer, more relational, and more conducive to learning. This creates conditions where literacy, numeracy, and learner agency can thrive.

What We Learnt

Whole-school change happens fastest when leadership, teachers, learners, and parents move together. Values stick when they are reinforced everywhere, not just in lessons. It takes one committed school leader to light the whole school.

Implications for What Comes Next

When the Porticus Investment Committee visited Ngei in October 2025, they found classrooms buzzing with creativity and a school environment where values were visible, practised, and lived by teachers and learners alike. The endline evidence is now shaping preparations for a national rollout of Values-based Education in Kenya from 2026.



“Our school has witnessed tremendous transformation since the Values-based Education (VbE) journey started. We have seen more accountability from the learners, teachers, support staff, and even parents. The learners are taking charge of their tasks and enjoying the processes. The staff is more harmonious. The entire school has been transformed! Ethical citizens will be a reality in the next decade because we have got it right at the foundational level. The constant fights among slum children which had turned my office into the courtroom have now gone silent. Children resolve conflicts by themselves and cite the values of peace, love, and respect. I feel fortunate to have witnessed this transformation.”

*Mrs. Mary Macharia, Head of Institution (HoI),
Ngei Comprehensive School, Nairobi*

2

Youth Are Driving Foundational Learning in Their Communities

115 Youth Reached • 71 Villages Supported • 1,463 (728M; 735F) Learners Improved in Reading

The Problem We Set Out to Solve

Thousands of children fall behind in literacy, yet education is the leading career choice among Kenya's young people. More than 200,000 students are training to be teachers in universities and teacher training colleges. The motivation of these teacher trainees remains untapped.

What We Did and the Role We Played

Through iteration of the My Village initiative (by PAL Network members), 115 teacher trainees from Machakos and Eregi Teacher Training Colleges volunteered their time to support literacy across 71 villages. Equipped with training, tools, and community backing, these young volunteers assessed and facilitated reading camps for 1,463 (728M; 735F) learners who had fallen behind, contributing over 2,300 hours of learning support. For learners, this meant focused attention and encouragement. For the youth, it meant learning by doing. Evidence from previous cycles shows that within 10–15 days, up to 30 percent of struggling readers can read a simple paragraph, and the proportion of non-readers reduces by more than half.

Zizi's role: Model designer, coordinator, capacity builder



Photo: Group working session with youth volunteers during a training session for the 'My Village' project, after which they facilitated community learning camps during school holidays

1,463
(728M; 735F)
Learners



71
Villages

Partnerships That Made This Possible

Machakos & Eregi TTCs • Local Communities • Parents • Local Administration • County Education Offices

Evidence of Results



1,463

(434 F, 522 M)

learners supported during school holidays



2,300+

volunteer hours contributed



Prior evidence shows up to 30% of struggling readers improve within 10–15 days



Non-readers reduced by more than half in comparable camps

Why This Matters

Youth are not a future resource. They are a present force, and when trusted, they expand learning support where teachers cannot reach alone.

What We Learnt

Youth-led learning works best when communities, parents, and local leadership co-own the camps and protect learning time. Kenya’s young people are ready to drive solutions. All we need is to trust and facilitate them.

What Comes Next

The model will scale tenfold in 2026, to include more teacher trainees from more teacher training institutions. Zizi’s work will evolve into enabling youth-led organisations to drive this change, with government, and retain just facilitation and measurement.



“As a teacher trainee, I now have first-hand information on how learners learn in a real classroom setup. I have experienced the challenges the learners are going through, especially in reading and writing. This is an eye-opener to me. When I go back to college, I will share with my fellow teacher trainees and lecturers to be able find more solutions to help learners know how to read. I am also getting the opportunity to see in action the values and competencies we were taught in college. Learners are collaboratively working in small groups as well as sharing what they have learnt with others.”

Eunice, Miwani Village, Machakos County

3

Parents Are Reclaiming Their Role as Co-Educators

5,300 (1,758 M; 3,542 F) Parents Reached in Person • 10 Million+ Parents Reached Through Media • 3 Countries

The Problem We Set Out to Solve

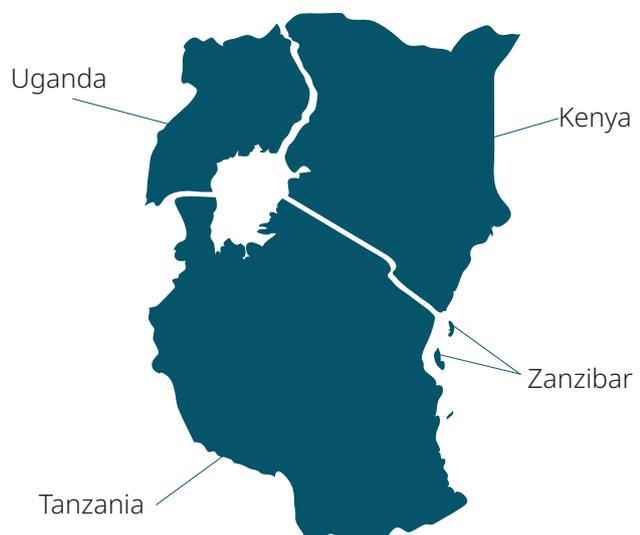
Parents are often excluded from meaningful engagement in children's learning—especially around life skills, values, and the wellbeing of their children. At the same time, parents have not sufficiently honoured the invitation from school to participate as co-educators of their children and feel empowered to bring their contribution to school during meetings and workshops.

What We Did and the Role We Played

Children's learning did not improve in schools alone. It improved because parents and caregivers increasingly saw themselves as partners in nurturing learning and wellbeing. In 2025, 5,300 (1,758 M; 3,542 F) parents and community members across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania (Mainland and Zanzibar) actively participated in parental engagement initiatives focused on values, life skills, literacy, and numeracy. This included a 10-week parent education campaign that reached 1,300 parents (870 F; 430 M) (in-person), and community conversations in Bungoma County that engaged 4,000 (2,672 F; 1,328 M) parents across 110 schools and communities. More than 10 million parents were also reached through sessions on radio and TV. Parents reported greater confidence, awareness, and involvement in their children's learning, with documented parenting shifts from command and control to dialogue, problem-solving, and encouragement.

Zizi's role: Convener, evidence translator, capacity builder

5,300 (1,758 M; 3,542 F) parents/ community members across Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania (Mainland & Zanzibar); more than **10 million parents** through media.



Partnerships That Made This Possible

Government Partners • Civil Society Partners • Community Leaders • Parents' Structures and Coalitions • National Parents Association in Kenya

Evidence of Results



1,300 Parents

A 10-week campaign engaged 1,300 parents in-person (**870 F; 430 M**) across four jurisdictions



4,000 Parents

Community conversations on numeracy in Bungoma reached 4,000 (**2,672 F; 1,328 M**) parents



Parental empowerment integrated into the **National Quality and Standards Framework and Guidelines**



A **National Parental Engagement Module** on nurturing values was launched in Kenya

Why This Matters

Children learn better when learning is reinforced at home and when parents are empowered, not blamed. Foundational learning will succeed when parents and teachers, schools and communities work in synchrony.

What We Learnt

Parents and caregivers shift fastest when engagement is practical, relational, and locally facilitated, not lecture-based. Engaging parents in-person has value, and this can be scaled through schools and local administration.

What Comes Next

A formal partnership with the National Parents Association in Kenya will embed parental engagement into national frameworks, positioning parents as sustained co-educators within the education system. The national rollout of Values-based Education will build in practical engagement of parents across all schools in Kenya.



“I am no longer the dictator mother that I used to be. I have learned to talk through issues and solve problems together with my children... They are more open to me now and have gained some sense of independence... This has been possible because of the lessons we gather during parental engagement on nurturing problem-solving among children and youth.”

Parent, Kajiado County, Kenya

4

Error Analysis Informs National Response for Foundational Numeracy

110 Schools • 956 Teachers (434F; 522M)

The Problem We Set Out to Solve

In foundational numeracy, errors are often treated as failure, missing a crucial opportunity to understand misconceptions and strengthen teaching.

What We Did and the Role We Played

Zizi partnered with the Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTEA) and numeracy actors to embed error analysis into instructional practice.

Zizi's role: Evidence partner, technical support, training and learning design



110
Schools



956
Teachers
(434 F 522 M)



207
Middle-level
Policy Makers



Photo: Zizi Afrique Foundation staff observes a learner during the Error Analysis endline assessment in Bungoma County, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and CEMASTEА.

Partnerships That Made This Possible

CEMASTEA • School Leadership • Curriculum Support Officers • Numeracy Partners in Kenya

Evidence of Results



87%

Teachers facilitated discussions with learners on observed errors



93%

Adapted lesson plans based on learner mistakes



15 Counties

Error analysis adopted by CEMASTEAs as a core approach during diagnostic assessments in 15 counties

Why This Matters

When teachers treat errors as insight, children build confidence, reasoning, and deeper mathematical understanding. If teachers treated errors that learners make as data, then instructional practice could be improved, and learning gaps could be bridged for children falling behind.

What We Learnt

Teacher practice shifts fastest when tools are simple, classroom-tested, and reinforced through coaching, not one-off training.

What Comes Next

Error analysis will continue shaping national approaches to numeracy teaching, assessment, and curriculum support, and inform the Numeracy at Scale collaborative national intervention from 2026.

5

Life Skills and Values Embedded Into Pre-Service Teacher Training

Four (4) Teacher Training Colleges • 141 Teacher Educators

The Problem We Set Out to Solve

Across East Africa, education systems are shifting towards Competency-Based Education (CBE), yet teacher preparation has not kept pace. Many teacher training programmes still prioritise content delivery, leaving teacher trainees underprepared to nurture life skills, values, collaboration, and learner agency—the very outcomes CBE demands. Without changing how teachers are trained, the CBE system reform seems like a long stretch.

What We Did and the Role We Played

In 2025, Zizi Afrique partnered with four Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) to pilot a life-skills and values-integrated teacher training model that embeds these competencies directly into pre-service education.

Zizi's role: Technical lead, model co-designer, learning partner

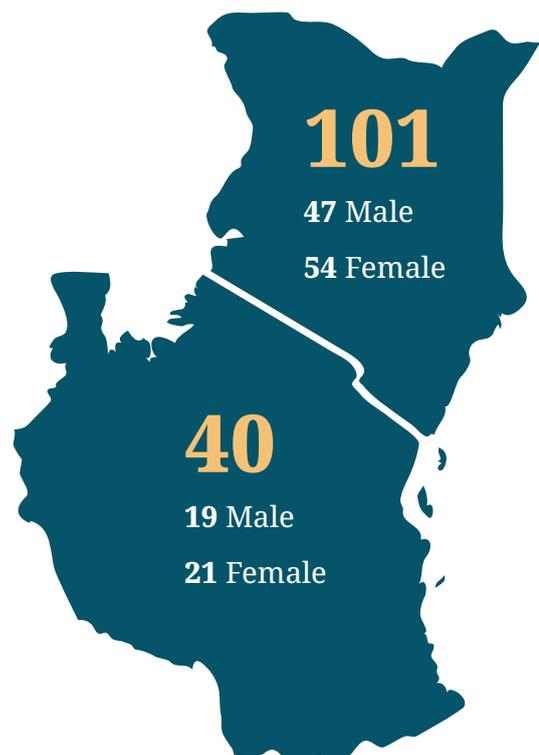


141
Teacher Educators



Where?

- Machakos and Eregi Teacher Training Colleges (**Kenya**)
- Morogoro and Marangu Teacher Training Colleges (**Tanzania**)



Partnerships That Made This Possible

• Teacher Training Colleges • College Leadership and Tutors • Parents and Communities • National Teacher Education Stakeholders • Development Partners

Evidence of Results (Measurable Outcomes)

- 141 (66 M, 75 F) teacher educators actively applied the integrated model across four TTCs
- Tutors reported increased confidence in embedding life skills and values in:
 - Lesson planning and instruction
 - Classroom and co-curricular activities
 - Assessment practices
 - Daily routines and institutional culture
- The work deliberately leveraged existing communities of practice, strengthening peer learning and reflective teaching. Non-teaching staff and parents were also engaged, reinforcing a whole-college approach to modelling values.
- Across campuses, values became visible and lived:
 - Noticeboards, staff rooms, and common spaces displayed core values
 - Sports t-shirts were redesigned to reflect respect, empathy, and responsibility
 - Daily interactions increasingly mirrored the values being taught

Why This Matters

Strong foundations begin with teachers. When teachers are trained to live the values and life skills they are expected to nurture, classrooms become more relational, inclusive, and supportive of deep learning. This model addresses CBE at its root – teacher preparation – rather than attempting to fix gaps later in the system.

What We Learnt

- Teacher educators are powerful change agents when trusted and supported
- Embedding values into everyday practice is more effective than stand-alone modules
- Institutional culture matters as much as curriculum content

Implications for What Comes Next

This pilot signals a deeper system shift: preparing teachers who are grounded in life skills and values from the start. As the model continues to mature, it offers a scalable pathway for strengthening teacher education across East Africa, ensuring future educators are not only confident and skilled but also ready to help learners thrive in school and in life.

6

Moving From Zizi-Led to Government-Led Intervention

55 Government Institutions • Five (5) System Levers

The Problem We Set Out to Solve

Foundational learning cannot improve sustainably through projects alone. Across East Africa, core system levers: curriculum, assessment, teacher education, quality assurance, and parental engagement have not been adequately aligned to the full set of foundational skills children need: literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values. As a result, systems often measure recall over competence, and teachers struggle to translate the many ideals into classroom practice. On the other hand, non-state interventions create parallel interventions to the system that never join to the needed whole.

What We Did and the Role We Played

In 2025, Zizi Afrique transitioned fully from direct programme delivery to government-led system transformation through three complementary initiatives:

1. ALiVE (Action for Life Skills and Values): Building the architecture for defining, measuring, and integrating life skills and values into education systems in East Africa.
2. Numeracy at Scale: Strengthening evidence and actor alignment to improve foundational numeracy in Kenya.
3. HERI Africa (Harnessing Education Research for Impact): Revitalising Africa-led education research to impact education across Africa.

Zizi's role: Technical partner, convener, thought leader, systems strengthening catalyst.



Collaboration with **55 government institutions**, semi-autonomous agencies and academia, and **100 civil society partners** across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania (Mainland and Zanzibar), with system-facing tools and reforms designed for national scale.

Partnerships That Made This Possible

Government Institutions and Semi-Autonomous Agencies across East Africa (Curriculum bodies, assessment/examination boards, quality assurance directorates, and teacher education institutions) • Universities and Academia • 100 Civil Society Partners • Regional and Global Knowledge Partners • 13 Funders

Evidence of Results (Measurable Outcomes)

The snapshot below illustrates how these shifts are crystallising:

<p>1. Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearer skill definitions and progression pathways now inform curriculum reform across Uganda, Tanzania Mainland and Zanzibar • Learning progressions tools developed and tested with 8,030 learners in Uganda and Tanzania (4,040M/3,990 F) • 21st Century Skills prioritised and contextualised frameworks developed in Zanzibar. 	<p>2. Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment systems are increasingly able to measure what learners can do and who they are becoming, not just what they recall. • ALiVE assessment tools, datasets and reports hosted on the open-source platform accessed by 138 users from 51 organisations. • ALiVE book hits 48,000 Downloads
<p>3. Teacher Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new generation of teachers is being prepared to nurture life skills and values as core outcomes of foundational learning. • Four TTCs integrated life skills and values into pre-service and in-service programmes, reaching 141 teacher educators (101 in Kenya; 40 in Tanzania). • 3 modules finalised and piloted across the 4 TTCs. 	<p>4. Quality Assurance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School quality assurance is now defined in ways that recognise holistic competencies beyond academics. • The National Education Quality Assurance and Standards Framework (NEQASF) revised in Kenya (including handbook and tools), with 4,960 staff hours by the Ministry of Education.
<p>5. Parenting and Caregiving</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents are increasingly recognised and equipped as co-educators, supporting acquisition of skills, values, and learning at home. • A national Training Manual finalised and launched by the Directorate of National Values (Kenya). • Formal partnership with the National Parents Association in Kenya, revitalising coordination of parents' actions 	

Why This Matters

This work signals a deep shift: foundational skills are no longer treated as isolated programme outcomes but as system responsibilities embedded in how governments design curriculum, assess learning, prepare teachers, assure quality, and engage families. When these levers align, children experience more coherent teaching, more meaningful assessment, safer learning environments, and stronger support at home and at scale, not just in pockets.

What We Learnt

- Systems move faster and more sustainably when government priorities lead, and partners provide regulated technical support.
- Measuring life skills and values requires not only tools but legitimacy, platforms, peer-reviewed evidence, and adoption pathways.
- Quality assurance reform becomes transformative when digitisation turns monitoring into actionable, real-time learning.
- Parental engagement is strongest when it is treated as a permanent function of schooling, not an optional add-on.

Implications for What Comes Next

The reforms and tools strengthened in 2025 set up the period 2026–2030 for scale and consolidation:

1. Government partners are positioned to deepen the rollout of life skills and values, measurement tools, and learning progressions across jurisdictions.
2. Kenya's quality assurance reforms are poised for nationwide application.
3. The numeracy roadmap provides a shared national agenda for aligning curriculum support, teacher development, benchmark development, and policy coherence.
4. HERI-Africa's launch in February 2026 will anchor a new era of Africa-led evidence generation, ensuring research feeds directly into system reform and classroom improvement.



The Directorate of Quality Assurance and Standards (DQAS) has benefited from a strong and results-driven partnership with Zizi Afrique Foundation, which has significantly strengthened quality assurance systems in Kenya's Basic Education sector. Through this collaboration, the NEQASF has been reviewed and enhanced, the IBQA Guide developed, and a comprehensive QASOs Handbook formulated to standardise Quality Assurance practice nationwide. A major milestone has been the digitisation of core QASO monitoring tools, including Whole School Assessment, Lesson Observation, NEQASF Monitoring, and IBQA monitoring, ushering in real-time data collection, improved accuracy, and evidence-based decision-making. This partnership continues to anchor a modern, robust, and learner-centred Quality Assurance system aligned with national priorities and global best practices.

(Ms. Evelyne Owoko, Director, Quality Assurance and Standards, Ministry of Education, Kenya)

Photo: Learners showcasing their drawing skills at Moi Forces Academy during the Values Campaign at the Regional Music and Drama Festival, organized by ALiVE in partnership with KICD.

7

A Backbone Organisation That Distributes Power and Resources

100+ Partners Across Five (5) Countries in Africa

The Problem We Set Out to Solve

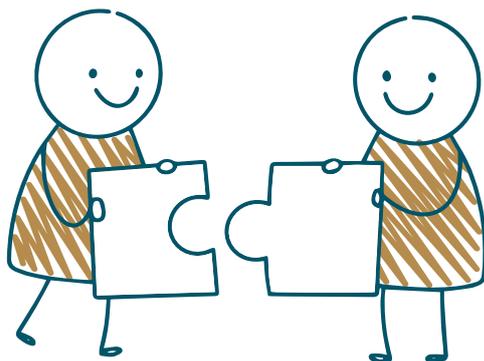
Foundational learning challenges cannot be solved by single organisations or isolated programmes. Across Africa, efforts to improve learning are often fragmented, under-resourced, and shaped by unequal power dynamics, limiting scale, context-relevance, sustainability, and system ownership.

What We Did and the Role We Played

In 2025, Zizi Afrique intentionally leaned into its role as a backbone organisation, connecting actors, aligning efforts, and distributing power so that change could be led where it mattered most. Our work focused on five interconnected pathways:

- **Advocacy & Narrative Shaping:** Participated in national, regional, and global conferences to influence how foundational learning is understood, prioritised and financed.
- **Transnational Learning & Coalitions:** Facilitated cross-country learning to inform national reform agendas.
- **Shared-Power Regranting:** Channelled resources directly to proximate partners to lead implementation and learning.
- **Formalised Government Partnerships:** Embedded collaboration within government systems for scale and sustainability.
- **Partner Capacity Strengthening:** Invested in the organisational health and leadership of sub-national actors.

Zizi's role: Ecosystem builder, steward of shared power



100+ Partner Institutions

Over 100 partner institutions spanning government, civil society, academia, research, media, and philanthropy at sub-national, national, regional, and global levels.

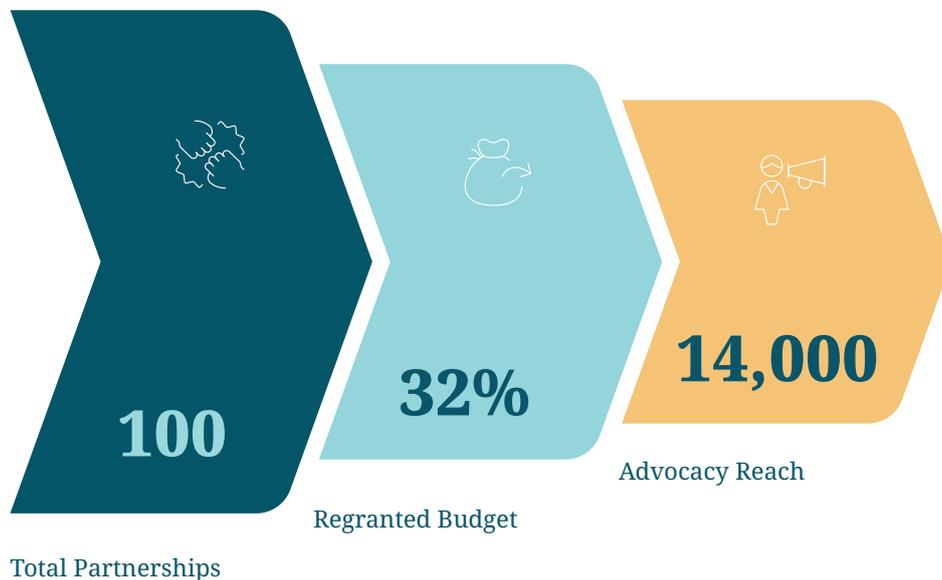
Partnerships That Made This Possible

• National and County Governments • Civil Society Organisations • Universities and Research Institutions • Global Coalitions and Peer NGOs • Media Institutions • Funders committed to trust-based philanthropy

Evidence of Results (Measurable Outcomes)

- 18 interviews with partners and funders surfaced 9 leadership standards, shaping Zizi's approach to ecosystem building. These principles, grounded in trust, co-creation, and distributed leadership, are now guiding partnerships and informing a contextualised framework for collective impact.
- Lighthouse Coalition (in Kenya) co-established with global south partners (Centro Lemann [Brazil], Funda Wande [South Africa], and Central Square Foundation [India]).
- RELI Africa transitioned into a fully independent network.
- Advocacy through KEPSHA reached over 14,000 Heads of Institutions, amplifying school-level commitment to foundational learning.
- 32 percent of Zizi's annual budget regranted to 29 partners across five countries (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Cameroon).
- Seven new MoUs signed in 2025; total of 100 partnerships active.
- HERI Africa established with a community of 15 partners, including government agencies, universities, non-state organisations and funding agencies.

Zizi's Partnership Network



Why This Matters

System change is relational work. When organisations collaborate with trust, share power and resources, and align behind government-led priorities, scale becomes possible. This collective approach ensures reforms are not only designed well but also owned, sustained, and expanded over time. How: By convening diverse actors, sharing power and resources, and strengthening partner capacity to lead change alongside government.

What We Learnt

1. Collective impact requires explicit principles, not just goodwill, to guide relationships.
2. Power-sharing through regranting strengthens ownership, accountability, and innovation.
3. Transnational learning accelerates national reform when adapted, not copied.
4. Strong sub-national partners are essential for translating policy into practice.

Implications for What Comes Next

1. The leadership principles emerging from this work will anchor Zizi's Vision 2040 ecosystem strategy.
2. Transnational coalitions like NAT will continue shaping long-term national agendas.
3. Regranting will remain central to Zizi's shared-power model.
4. Stronger partners and formal government relationships position the ecosystem to deliver system-wide foundational learning gains at scale.



“The figures are speaking volumes. There is a lot for us to do. I am hopeful we will lead a transformation in this country on Foundational Learning. We have the will, potential, and ability to lead change.”

- Numeracy Action Team Member, Kenya



Photo: Learners showcase their artwork during the Values Campaign at the Regional Drama and Music Festival, led by ALIVE in collaboration with KICD.

8

Putting Data in the Hands of Decision Makers

Three (3) County Governments Use Evidence • Evidence Used to Answer Five (5) Policy Questions • Gender-Responsive Evidence Generated and Used

The Problem We Set Out to Solve

Across education systems, valuable research often fails to inform policy and practice. Evidence is produced, but not always accessible, timely, or usable by the people making decisions closest to children: middle-level managers, school leaders, employers, parents, and communities.

What We Did and the Role We Played

In 2025, Zizi Afrique focused on moving evidence to where it matters most: into planning rooms, policy processes, classrooms, and public dialogue.

Zizi's role: Evidence generator, knowledge broker, evidence synthesiser, capacity supporter

Reach: County governments, national ministries, civil servants, researchers, teachers, parents, youth, employers, media, and civil society across Kenya and the region.



Our work concentrated on five interconnected evidence-to-action pathways;

Focus Area	Key Activities	Reach / Participation	Outputs	Outcomes / Influence
ECD (0–3 Years) Evidence-Use Outreach	Disseminated ECD (0–3) evidence with 19 county partners in Siaya, Mombasa, and Samburu across education, health, and social services sectors.	116 ECD actors engaged (46M; 76F).	County-level ECD evidence dialogues and planning forums	County ECD action plans in three counties strengthened budgeting and resource allocation for nurturing care.
	Established a multi-sectoral technical working group in Samburu linking education and health data (0–6 years).	County officials and sector leads.	Integrated education-health data coordination mechanism.	Improved cross-sector planning and evidence use for early childhood services.

Focus Area	Key Activities	Reach / Participation	Outputs	Outcomes / Influence
Evidence-Use Fellowships	Engaged evidence champions through Evidence Synthesis Academy, Gender Fellowships, and Graduate Associate Programme.	54 evidence champions (ministry officers, researchers, CSOs, academics).	Fellowship cohorts supported across evidence generation and uptake.	Strengthened national capacity for policy-relevant evidence use.
	Delivered hands-on evidence synthesis training with EEF (UK), Durham University, and eBASE Africa.	30 participants trained.	Practical evidence synthesis competencies built.	Improved quality and use of research in policy processes.
	Ministry-led teams addressed five policy-relevant research questions.	Government technical teams.	Research agendas on ECD leadership, ECDE equity, data systems, post-secondary transitions, QA readiness.	Evidence embedded into sector reform discussions.
	Supported PhD Graduate Associates and Gender Fellows.	12 PhD Associates; 12 Gender Fellows (9F; 3M).	19 publications (blogs, policy briefs, OpEds).	Strengthened gender-responsive and academic contributions to policy debates.
Evidence Shaping Youth Employment Systems – Mombasa	Disseminated Future of Work research and facilitated multi-stakeholder dialogue in hospitality.	58 stakeholders (government, industry, TVETs, youth groups).	Evidence dialogues toward a Jobs Observatory.	Foundation laid for a hospitality Jobs Observatory in Mombasa.
	Supported policy reform for TVET alignment.	County leadership and sector actors.	Finalised Mombasa County TVET Bill (Aug 2025).	Legal framework created for TVET investment and labour-market alignment.
National Alignment of Hospitality Sub-Sector	Harmonised hospitality standards across industry, training institutions, and associations.	National sector stakeholders.	Unified classification and certification framework.	National coherence for skills development and certification adopted.
Evidence Informing Career Guidance	Used evidence to develop Senior School (Grade 10) career guidance guidelines.	Directorate of Secondary Education.	Career guidance framework produced.	Evidence integrated into national transition guidance for learners.
Evidence in the Public Domain – Media & Convenings	Convened conferences, media engagements, publications, and townhalls.	18 conferences (5 national, 10 regional, 3 global); 63 media features; ~20,000 stakeholders reached.	19 publications (blogs, OpEds, policy & learning briefs).	Education positioned as a leading public concern nationally.
	Hosted Citizen TV townhalls on education.	10 million Kenyans reached.	National public dialogue platforms activated.	Evidence amplified through mass media and citizen engagement.

Why This Matters

Systems do not change because evidence exists. They change when evidence is understood, trusted, and used. By placing data in the hands of those closest to decisions, Zizi helped move education reform from intention to action.

What We Learnt

1. Evidence uptake accelerates when users help shape the questions, and building internal capacity creates lasting demand for evidence—beyond project cycles.
2. County-level ownership is essential for translating national policy into practice.
3. Media and public discourse are powerful levers for public accountability and reform.

Implications for What Comes Next

1. Partnership with the National Council for Children Services (NCCS) positioned to scale coordination nationally.
2. Expanding evidence dashboards and real-time data use.
3. Launching the Mombasa Jobs Observatory in 2026.

Strengthening Africa-led research and evidence-use pipelines under Vision 2040.



Photo: Representatives from the Ministry of Labour, the County Government of Mombasa, Zizi Afrique Foundation, Global Development Incubator (GDI), Swahilipot Hub, and the hospitality sector in Mombasa at the 'Future of Work' Report Dissemination Forum.



We appreciate the work Zizi has done in supporting this multistakeholder engagement in Samburu; the findings are a true reflection of challenges facing ECD work in the County. We have now created a technical working group including the Department of Health and Education, which now are working together to harmonise the data for children 0–6 years. This will help us track progress of development, health and nutritional problems.

(Director ECD Samburu Mr. Robert Lentauwo)

9

Advancing Gender Equity Through Education Systems

From Intention to Transformation

The Problem We Set Out to Solve

Gender inequality in education persists not only because of gaps in policy, but because of deep-rooted norms, power dynamics, and limited institutional capacity to act on gender evidence. Too often, gender is treated as a cross-cutting theme rather than a system responsibility, leading to fragmented action and limited accountability.

What We Did and the Role We Played

In 2025, Zizi Afrique advanced a gender-transformative journey, one that deliberately linked internal organisational change with external system influence. Our approach focused on two mutually reinforcing pathways:

1. Engendering Zizi Afrique from within; and
2. Advancing gender transformation across the education ecosystem.

Zizi's role: Organisational change agent, thought leader, catalyst, and evidence partner

Reach: Zizi staff and leadership, implementing partners, gender researchers, government agencies, gender institutions, and cross-sector actors.



Photo: Members of the Zizi Afrique Foundation Gender Unit participating in a validation workshop on the establishment of a Centralized Gender Data Hub and the co-creation of the National Transformative Gender Research Agenda.

Evidence of Results

Focus Area	Activity / Indicator	Key Results	Gender & Inclusion Breakdown
Engendering Zizi Afrique (Internal)	Leadership gender balance	Increased women in leadership from 25% (2024) to 40% (2025)	Leadership team composition improved
	Gender Unit strengthened	6 gender champions embedded across directorates	3 Male, 3 Female
	Staff capacity strengthening	50+ staff, champions, and fellows trained	19M, 31F, 1 Female with Disability
	Gender & diversity tracking	Gender and diversity metrics integrated across roles, directorates, and regions	Ongoing institutional tracking
Advancing Gender Work in the Ecosystem (External)	Gender fellowship with KIPPRA	Fellowship programme launched with 12 fellows	3 Male, 9 Female
	Partner orientation	33 implementing partners oriented using the gender capacity assessment tool	Partner institutions engaged
	Peacebuilding training	35 police officers trained on gender and peacebuilding	26 Male, 9 Female
	National Gender Research Agenda	First National Gender Research Agenda (2025–2029) developed	Institutional policy milestone
	Co-creation forums	5 forums held with 75 stakeholders	30 Male, 45 Female
	National validation webinar	305 participants engaged	122 Male, 228 Female
	Gender & Equality Data Hub	Endorsed as national resource	System-level outcome
	Gender in Education Movement Summit	Movement revitalised; summit convened with 62 stakeholders	32F, 22M, 2 Intersex, 6 PWD

Why This Matters

Gender-transformative change requires more than representation; it demands shifts in power, practice, and accountability. By working simultaneously on internal transformation and external system influence, Zizi helped reposition gender equity as a core driver of education quality and inclusion.

What We Learnt

1. Internal culture change strengthens external credibility and influence.
2. Gender transformation accelerates when evidence, leadership commitment, and accountability align.
3. Inclusive dialogue, especially on boys, girls, and learners with disabilities, deepens collective ownership of gender equity.

Implications for What Comes Next

1. Deepening gender-responsive leadership across Zizi and partner institutions.
2. Scaling the Gender in Education Research Fellowship and research outputs.
3. Operationalising the Gender and Equality Data Hub to inform policy and practice.
4. Embedding gender accountability more firmly within the education system reform under Vision 2040.

10

A New Strategy, Better Clarity, Deeper Engagement: 2026–2040



Why This Matters

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, most children complete primary school without achieving core foundational skills that underpin wellbeing and citizenship. Those furthest behind due to poverty, gender, disability, language, displacement, or geography face the steepest barriers.

In this context, children experience *“too much schooling, too little learning.”* They are not just falling behind; the system is leaving them behind. The result is long-term and compounding: disengagement, inequality, and lost potential every passing year. This is a system-wide challenge, and addressing it requires a shift in how we define, deliver, and support learning.

Our Purpose and Ambition (WHY)

Purpose: Advance equity by transforming education systems so that every child, especially those furthest behind, acquires foundational skills to learn, relate, and thrive.

2040 Ambition: Serve as a backbone and catalyst for field-wide change, enabling government and ecosystem actors to achieve what none can do alone. By 2040, catalyse foundational learning for at least 10 million children, shape system-level reform across 10+ countries, and help build an enduring, African-led ecosystem for equitable education.

What We Mean by Foundational Skills:

- i. Literacy:** The ability to read with understanding, express ideas clearly, and access knowledge.
- ii. Numeracy:** The ability to understand and apply basic mathematical concepts in everyday life.
- iii. Life skills:** The capabilities children need for self, relating with others, and contributing to society, such as self-awareness, problem-solving, and collaboration.
- iv. Values:** The beliefs and attitudes that shape behaviour, such as love, respect, empathy, responsibility, and integrity.

What We Do (WHAT)

We close the foundational skills gap by working with and through systems—not around them—to:

1. Support teachers, school leaders, and mentors to create safe, relational classrooms where all children can learn.
2. Strengthen government functions (teacher preparation, curriculum, assessment, quality assurance, policy coherence).
3. Equip families as co-educators and partners in learning and wellbeing.
4. Elevate youth voice – we now recognise the powerful role of youth as innovators, advocates, and leaders. We focus now on nurturing youth agency to drive foundational skills.
5. Generate, use, and share real-world evidence to inform policy shifts and guide strategy and course-correct.

Theory of Change (Summary)

If we centre excluded learners, strengthen systems from within, and nurture a values-based ecosystem, then all children can gain the foundational skills to learn, relate, and thrive.

We act as a trusted anchor and backbone, strengthening systems from within and catalysing collective action. Our systems lens targets five dynamics: Structures (roles/resources), Power (who decides), Mindsets (what counts as success), Relationships (trust/collaboration), and Practices (day-to-day behaviours and actions). Change is relational, adaptive, and co-owned.

Five Interlinked Interventions (Functions We Enable Across the System):

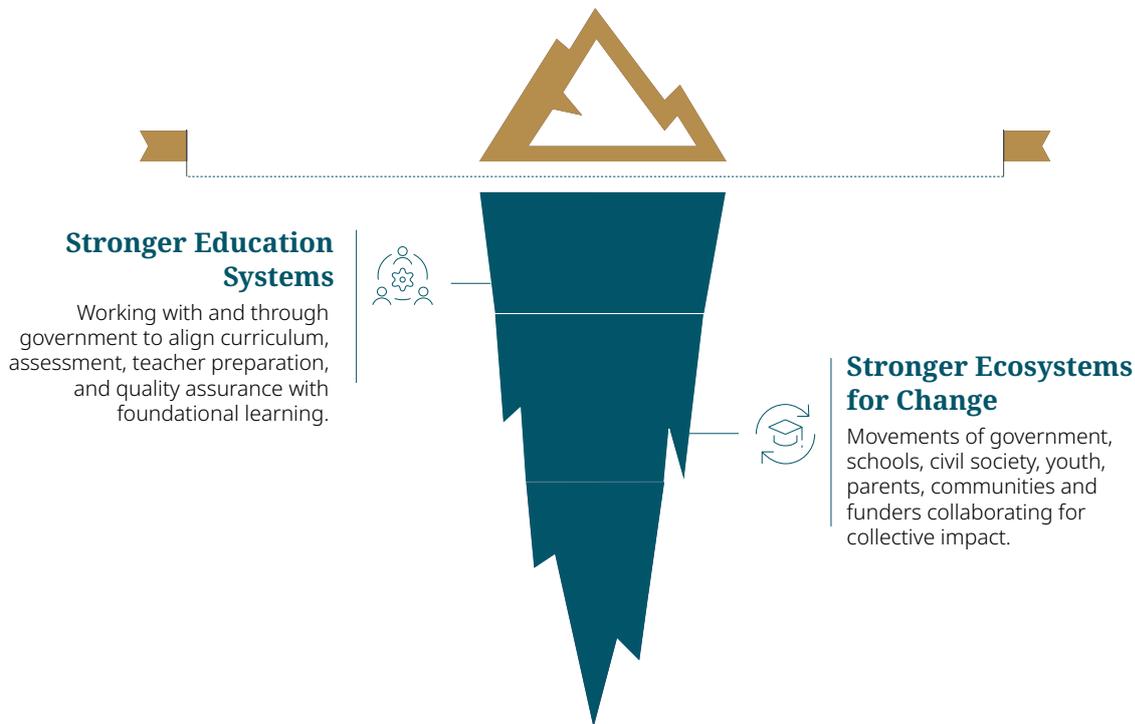
1. **Training and Capacity Strengthening** – Equip educators, school leaders, teachers, policymakers, families, and youth mentors with skills and mindsets to embed values-based, inclusive, and relational learning across the system.
2. **Ecosystem Building** – Identify and support emerging leaders and locally rooted actors and organisations within the system, nurturing the collective capacity of educators, civil society, and community organisations to influence, shape, and sustain inclusive learning ecosystems.
3. **Technical Support** – Provide curriculum, assessment, and policy advice to government agencies, teacher training institutions, and regulators, grounded in evidence.
4. **Research and Evidence Use** – Facilitate deep dives into outcomes and data with system actors, enabling shared reflection, pattern spotting, and actionable learning.
5. **Relational Convening** – Learning labs, dialogues, and feedback loops that build trust and shared commitment.



The power of many: **children discovering their potential** while teachers, parents, and governments move together.

Stronger Foundations for All

Children, especially those furthest behind gain literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values that shape learning, relationships, and life chances.



Three Strategic Goals (2026–2040)

1. Foundational Skills as a Lever for Equity:

We will redefine foundational skills, not just as competencies, but as catalysts for equity. This means:

- Prioritising the skills that enable all children to learn, relate, and thrive, especially those furthest behind.
- Bridging classroom learning with real-life application, ensuring relevance to learners’ lives.
- Moving from pilots to influencing how foundational skills are defined, assessed, and supported at scale.

2. Systems Strengthening From Within:

We will move beyond delivering programmes within the system to helping transform it. This involves:

- Working with and through the government to co-create sustainable solutions.
- Supporting the strengthening of data systems, teacher preparation, quality assurance, and policy reform.
- Applying a systems lens where we engage across levels, embrace complexity, and anchor in local leadership.

3. Building a Stronger Learning Ecosystem:

We will act as a backbone and convener, intentionally enabling others, supporting collective capacity, and building movements for change. This includes:

- Sharing tools, evidence, and spaces for mutual learning.
- Collaborating with government, civil society, and funders as equal partners.
- Elevating learner voice and leadership in shaping the future of education.

Together, these shifts position Zizi Afrique as a field-builder, systems enabler, and movement ally committed to long-term, transformative change grounded in equity, evidence, and African leadership.

Who We Work With

- Primary Beneficiaries: Children in early and middle childhood who are furthest behind.
- Boundary Partners and the Wider Ecosystem:
 - i. **Educators and Learning Enablers:** Teachers, school leaders, curriculum support officers, quality assurance officers, youth mentors, CSOs, among others.
 - ii. **Families and Caregivers:** Parents, guardians, caregivers and parents' associations.
 - iii. **System Stewards and Influencers:** Politicians, policymakers, curriculum developers, teacher educators, local leaders, private sector actors, elected representatives.
 - iv. **Centring people with lived experiences** (Young people, women, and people with disabilities) to lead change.

Where We Work and How We Scale

Scope: Sub-Saharan Africa

2040 Target: Sustained presence across at least 10 countries, sequenced over three 5-year cycles, using tiered models:

- Tier 1 (Direct System Reform): Kenya
- Tier 2 (System Reform Through Partners): Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda
- Tier 3 (Field Building & Influence): Cameroon, Malawi, Others

Entry Criteria: Readiness/demand, strategic fit, enabling political economy, partner ecosystem, potential for impact/learning, and resourcing capacity.

Approach: Local listening, partner due diligence, context mapping, phased publication of focus countries, and adaptive MEL/governance per context.

Summary of Financial Performance in 2025

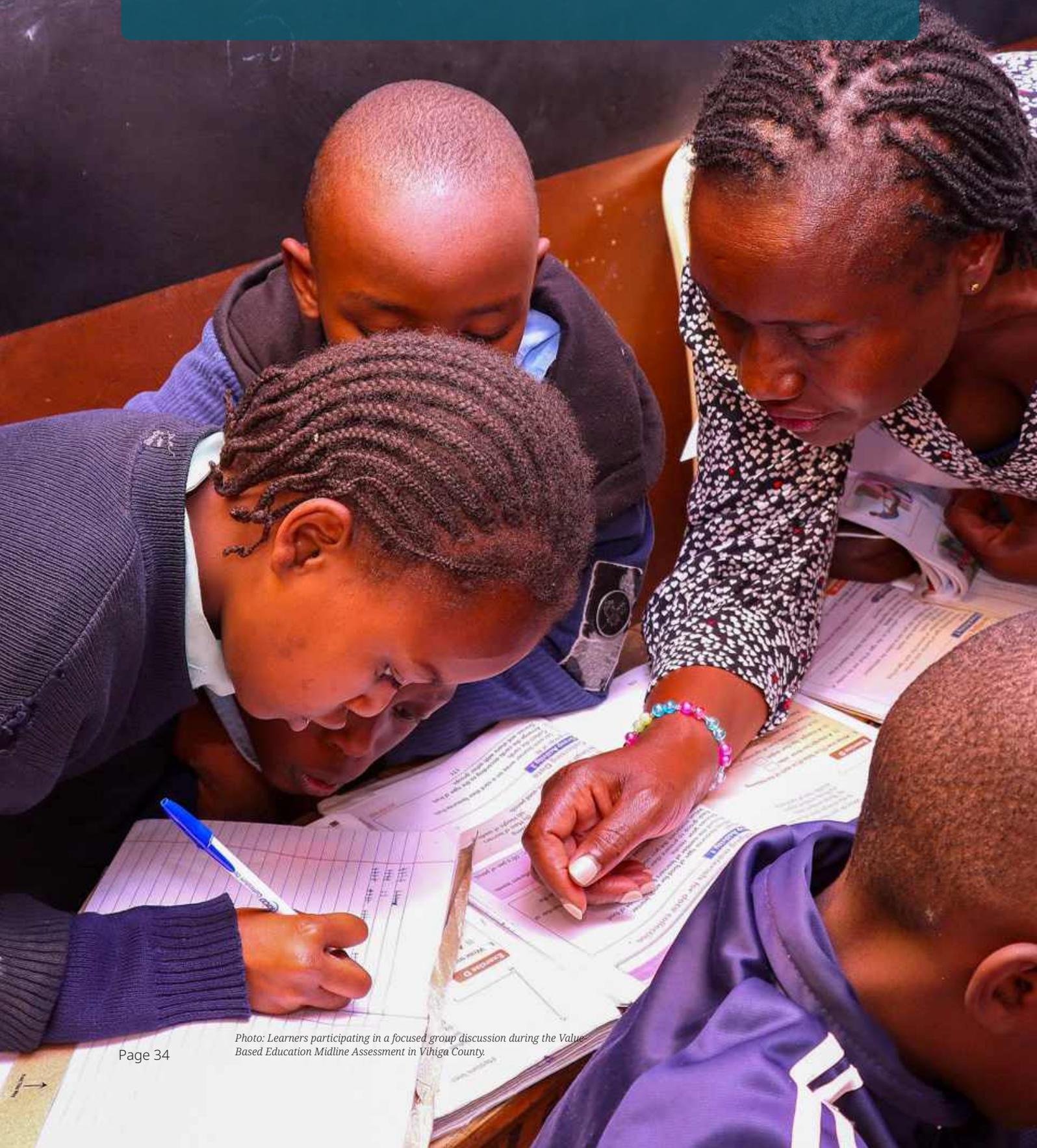
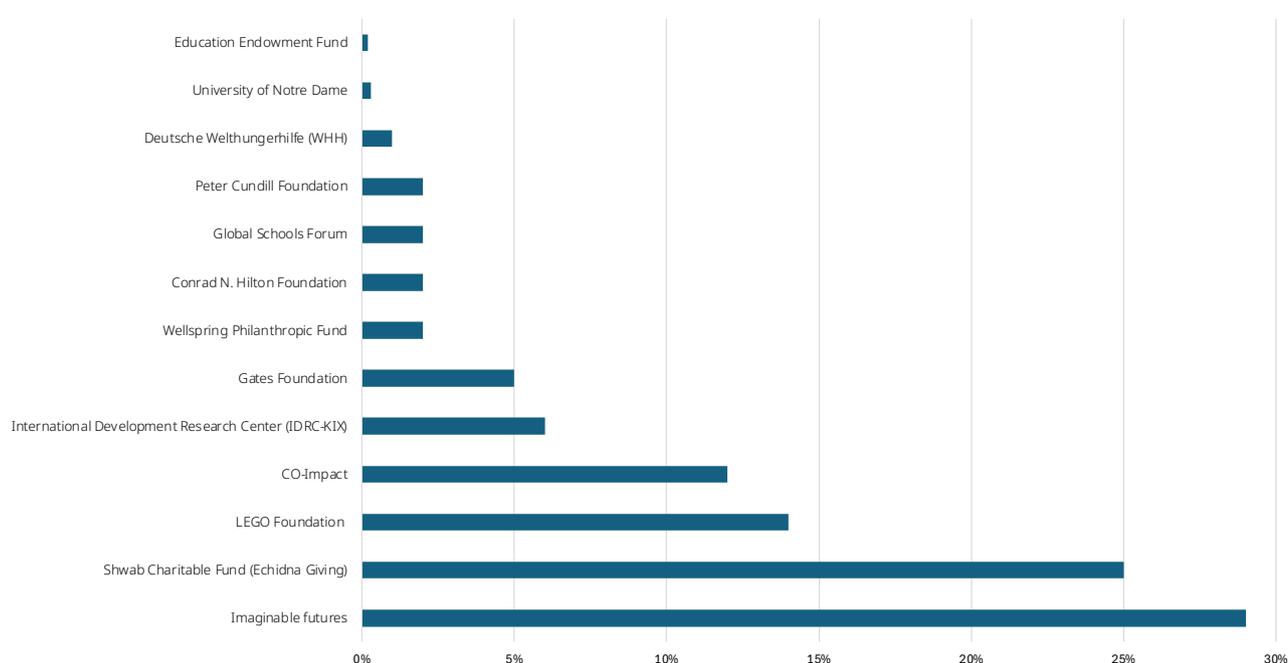


Photo: Learners participating in a focused group discussion during the Value-Based Education Midline Assessment in Vihiga County.

Total Income as of 31st December 2025

Category	KES	USD	Share
Recognised Income (2025)	1,231,059,177.91	9,543,870.37	67%
Deferred Income (2024)	618,510,056	4,794,651.62	33%
Total Position	1,849,569,233.91	14,338,521.99	100%

Percentage Share of Funding Jan - Dec 2025



Income Profile

Restricted/Flexible Income	KES. 1,198,124,569.54	97%
Fully unrestricted Income	KES. 32,934,608.37	3%

Financial Position Note as of 31st December 2025

At the end of the reporting period, the organisation was in a strong and stable financial position, with total assets of **KES 1,071,771,126.93** and total liabilities of **KES 625,337,685.41**, resulting in net assets of **KES 446,433,441.52**. This positive position reflects prudent financial management and provides a solid foundation for delivering programmes and meeting organisational commitments.

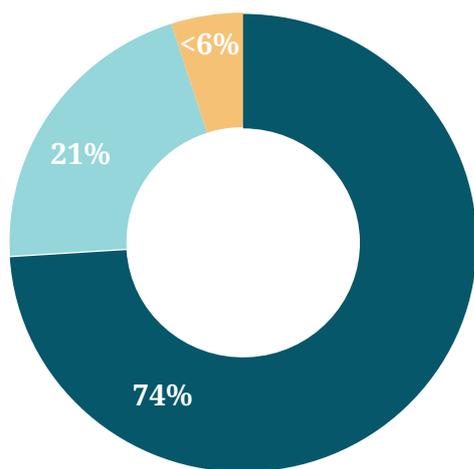
Most of the organisation’s resources are held in cash and bank balances (**KES 792,628,878.97**), ensuring the ability to fund ongoing activities and respond to emerging needs. Partner advances and receivables (**KES 221,605,813.11**) support programme implementation through partners, while non-current assets (**KES 57,536,434.85**) underpin long-term operations. Overall, the organisation’s financial strength supports sustainability, accountability, and continued impact for the communities it serves.

Total Assets Vs Total Liabilities

Description	Amount (KES)
Total Assets	1,071,771,126.93
Total Liabilities	625,337,685.41
Net Assets	446,433,441.52

Financial Position – Asset Composition

Item	Amount (KES)	% of Total Assets
Cash & Bank	792,628,878.97	73.96%
Partner Advances & Receivables	221,605,813.11	20.68%
Non-Current Assets	48,502,744.77	4.53%
Fixed Assets	9,033,690.08	0.84%
Total Assets	1,071,771,126.93	100.00%



74% in Cash & Bank
Ensures timely programme delivery, partner payments, and rapid response to emerging needs.



21% in Programme Receivables
Supports delivery through trusted local partners reaching communities.



Less 6% in Fixed Assets
Prioritises programme impact over infrastructure investment.

Priorities moving ahead

- Diversify the funder base and sources of income
- Grow levels of unrestricted income, through calls to donors to fund the new strategy
- Strengthen partner engagement and grants management capacities
- Enhance long-term sustainability

Funders



The LEGO Foundation



Impact Partners





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