MIZIZI
ELIMU AFRIKA

VISION 2040

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

Stronger Foundations, Brighter Futures

Strategic Blueprint (2026-2040)

MIZIZI
ELIMU AFRIKA

VISION 2040

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

Contact Details

For enquiries related to this Strategy, please contact:

Executive Director, Mizizi Elimu Afrika
Email: info@mizizielimu.org
Website: www.mizizielimu.org
Telephone: +254 734 620 181

Address

Le'Mac Building, First Floor, Suite 1
Westlands, off Church Road
Nairobi, Kenya

Message from the Executive Director

It gives me great joy to present Vision 2040, Mizizi Elimu Afrika's strategic blueprint and a bold dream for transforming education for Africa's children.

This strategy is both a commitment and an invitation.

Over the eight years since the founding of Zizi Afrique, we have listened closely to children, families, teachers, youth, government partners, and fellow practitioners across Africa. What evidence has told us is that too many children are moving through school without gaining the foundations they need to learn, to belong, and to thrive. This is not because they lack ability or effort, but because the systems around them too often fail to meet them where they are.

Vision 2040 reflects what we have learned, unlearned, and relearned together. It affirms our belief that foundational skills are a matter of social justice, and that lasting change cannot be delivered by any one organisation alone. It must be built with and through those closest to children, within systems, and across relationships.

As Mizizi Elimu Afrika, we are committing to show up differently: with humility, with courage, and with patience for the long work of systems strengthening and collective impact. We will continue to partner deeply with government, communities, educators, families, and young people, not as implementers of quick fixes, but as companions in learning and transformation.

This strategy is not a fixed blueprint. It is a compass. It will guide our choices, anchor our values, and help us stay oriented to what matters most, even as contexts shift and complexity grows.

We invite you to walk this journey with us. Together, we can help build education systems where every child, especially those furthest behind, has the foundation to learn, relate, and thrive.

"we are committing to show up differently: with humility, with courage, and with patience for the long work of systems strengthening and collective impact.

Dr. John Mugo
Executive Director
Mizizi Elimu Afrika

Who We Are

Mizizi Elimu Afrika is an African-led education organisation working to ensure that all children, especially those furthest behind, have the foundational skills they need to learn, relate, and thrive. Formerly Zizi Afrique Foundation, we serve as a backbone and catalyst for systems change, working with and through government, communities, and partners to unlock change that no single actor can achieve alone. We believe that weak foundational skills are not simply a learning problem, but a social justice issue rooted in deeper inequities of poverty, gender, disability, language, and geography. Rather than delivering parallel programmes, we strengthen education systems from within, supporting teachers, families, system stewards, and young people to build inclusive, values-based learning environments where children feel safe, confident, and engaged. Our work is grounded in relationships, evidence, and lived realities, and driven by a commitment to equity, African leadership, and collective impact across the continent.

Our Core Values

Ubuntu

Learning and change are collective. We lead with humanity, interdependence and shared responsibility.

Curiosity

We ask hard questions, learn continuously and remain open to evidence and lived experience.

Safety

We prioritise physical, emotional and psychological safety. Safeguarding is non-negotiable.

Ubuntu

Learning and change are collective. We lead with humanity, interdependence and shared responsibility.

Curiosity

We ask hard questions, learn continuously and remain open to evidence and lived experience.

Strategy at a Glance (2026–2040)

WHY: Advancing Fairness and Opportunity for All

We believe every child deserves a fair chance. Learning to read, write, do maths, and develop life skills and values is a right for all children, not just a lucky few. Education is a human right and a public good. When all children, especially those furthest behind, build strong foundations, they gain confidence, find their voice, agency, and help create stronger, more equal societies.

Our Big Goal for 2040

Catalysed improved foundational learning for at least
10 Million Children

Created pathways for system-level reform across
10+ Countries

Strengthened an enduring, African-led ecosystem for
Equitable Education

As a result...

more children will feel safe, confident, and engaged in learning, will navigate school and life with resilience and purpose, and ultimately, will thrive as learners and members of their communities.

Three Strategic Goals (2026–2040)

1 Stronger Foundations for All

We will strengthen the teaching and learning of foundational skills – literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values – in classrooms and communities.

2 Stronger Education Systems

We will help shape a more coherent, inclusive, and accountable education system – one that centres foundational learning, reflects real-world needs, and takes responsibility for outcomes.

3 Stronger Ecosystems for Change

We will foster a vibrant ecosystem of actors – government, civil society, funders, and learners – working collaboratively to improve foundational learning.

Our Ambition to Shift Systems (2026–2040)

Deepen and scale our contribution to systems strengthening

What We Mean by Foundational Skills

At Mizizi Elimu Afrika, we understand foundational skills as the essential capabilities that enable children, especially those furthest behind, to learn, relate, and thrive, not only in school but across life, work, and community.

For us, foundational skills encompass:

Numeracy
The ability to understand numbers and apply mathematical concepts confidently to solve problems in everyday life.

Literacy
The ability to listen with understanding, read with comprehension, write with clarity, and speak with confidence.

Life Skills
The capabilities children need for self, relating with others, and contributing to society, such as self-awareness, problem-solving, and collaboration.

Values
The beliefs and attitudes that shape behaviour, such as respect, empathy, responsibility, and integrity.

How We Work

1. We Partner with government to strengthen core system functions, including teacher preparation, curriculum, assessment, quality assurance, and policy coherence.

2. We Convene the ecosystem to connect educators, families, youth, communities, civil society, and the private sector to co-create solutions and enable collective impact.

3. We Listen, learn and adapt, using participatory, evidence-informed approaches that respond to context and system dynamics.

4. We Elevate youth agency to create meaningful roles for young people as leaders, mentors, and co-creators, not just beneficiaries.

5. We Generate and use real-world evidence to guide decisions, close feedback loops, and make change visible, credible and actionable.

6. We Tackle root causes of exclusion and apply a power-aware, equity and gender-justice lens so no child is left out.

What We Do: Our Pathways to Change

Training and Capacity Strengthening: We equip teachers, school leaders, policymakers, families, and mentors to embed inclusive, relational, values-based pedagogy across classrooms and communities.

Technical Support: We provide evidence-grounded advice on curriculum, assessment, and policy, aligning tools and standards with foundational learning.

Ecosystem Building: We identify and support locally rooted leaders and organisations, fostering peer learning, solidarity, and field-wide capacity.

Research and Evidence Use: We facilitate outcome and data deep-dives with system actors to inform strategy and address critical transitions where many learners are lost.

Relational Convening: We host dialogues, learning labs, and feedback loops that build trust, strengthen collaboration, and sustain collective action for equitable systems change.

We believe every child deserves a fair chance. Learning to read, write, do maths, and develop life skills and values is a right for all children, not just a lucky few.

Table of Contents

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR I
WHO WE ARE II
Our Core Values II

OUR STRATEGY AT A GLANCE (2026–2040)
Mizizi's Why: Advancing Fairness and Opportunity for All III
How We Work IV
What We Do IV

ACRONYMS 1
FOREWORD 2

OUR IDENTITY
Brand Transition: From Zizi Afrique Foundation to Mizizi Elimu Afrika 4
Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Vision and Mission 5
Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Guiding Principles 5
Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Golden Circle 6

THE DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE
The System We Are Trying to Change 8
The Effects of the Foundational Skills Gap 9
What Mizizi Elimu Afrika Means by Foundational Skills 10

MIZIZI'S AMBITION TO SHIFT SYSTEMS
Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Strategic Shifts 12
Who Mizizi Elimu Afrika Targets 14
How Mizizi Elimu Afrika Works: Our Approaches to Change 16
Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Theory of Change 17
Strategic Boundaries, Critical Assumptions, and Risks 19

STRATEGIC ENABLERS: HOW MIZIZI ELIMU AFRIKA DELIVERS VISION 2040
People, Leadership & Culture: Becoming the Organisation the System Needs 22
Resource Mobilisation & Management: Powering Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Mission for 2040 24
Learning, Evidence & Improvement: Building the Infrastructure for Adaptive Change 25
Partnerships, Influence & Advocacy: Catalysing Collective Action 26
Governance and Operations 27

APPENDIX I: GLOSSARY OF TERMS 30
APPENDIX II: EXAMPLES OF CONTINUUM OF CHANGE 33
Continuum of Change: Educators and Learning Enablers 34
Continuum of Change: Families and Caregivers 35
Continuum of Change: System Stewards and Influencers 35

Acronyms

Mizizi	Mizizi Elimu Afrika
CBC	Competency-Based Curriculum
CBE	Competency- Based Education
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
ECDE	Early Childhood Development and Education
FLN	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
HRIS	Human Resource Information System
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SDG 4	Sustainable Development Goal 4
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
ToC	Theory of Change

Foreword

This strategic blueprint marks a pivotal moment in the journey of Mizizi Elimu Afrika. It reflects our evolution from the energy and experimentation of a founder-led start-up to the steady rhythm of a learning organisation committed to long-term, systemic transformation in Education across Africa.

It is not a fixed roadmap with pre-determined answers. It is a compass: grounded in our purpose, informed by evidence and hard-won learning, and responsive to the complexity of the systems in which we work. It reflects eight years of insight since our founding in September 2017, while creating space for deeper partnerships, new questions, and bolder ambition.

This strategy also signals a shift in worldview. We increasingly understand that the barriers to learning, in Kenya and across Africa, are not isolated failures but systemic symptoms of deeper dynamics of inequity, disengagement, trauma, and inertia. Addressing these challenges demands more than technical interventions. It calls for a way of working that is relational, co-created, power-aware, and rooted in lived realities.

The process of shaping this strategy mirrored the kind of change we believe in:

1. It was co-created with staff, partners, and system actors.
2. It was iterative and adaptive, allowing new insights to surface over time.
3. It was evidence-informed, grounded in Mizizi Elimu Afrika's own research, including validation of over 125 outcomes, and enriched by insights from broader education research.
4. It was future-facing, deliberately imagining pathways to scale impact while preserving our values, relationships, and integrity.

Participatory tools, including outcome harvesting and structured reflection cycles, ensured that this strategy is grounded in the realities of those closest to the challenge. External validation affirmed both the strength of Mizizi Elimu Afrika's contribution and the necessity of going deeper, particularly in shifting systems rather than expanding isolated interventions.

Looking ahead to 2026–2040, this strategic blueprint commits Mizizi Elimu Afrika to three fundamental shifts:

1. Prioritising foundational skills as a lever for equity, with a focus on literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values as the essential capabilities that enable children to learn, relate, and thrive.
2. Deepening our systems lens and working intentionally with complexity, recognising that change is dynamic, relational, and requires adaptive, power-aware approaches.
3. Strengthening the ecosystem for collective impact, enabling others, and building the field for sustained shared collective impact.

This strategy is both a strategic guide for action and a reflection of who we are becoming: an organisation rooted in equity, guided by values, and unwavering in its belief that with the right support, all children can acquire foundational skills to learn, live, and thrive.

We commit to showing up with humility, clarity, and courage: walking alongside partners, catalysing collective action, and learning together in motion. We invite you to join us as we build an ecosystem capable of transforming education systems not for some, but for all.

VISION
2040

Our Identity

Our Identity

Brand Transition: From Zizi Afrique Foundation to Mizizi Elimu Afrika

As part of advancing Vision 2040, Zizi Afrique Foundation has adopted a new organisational identity: Mizizi Elimu Afrika. This transition reflects who we have become as an organisation, what we stand for, and the future we are working towards.

While Zizi Afrique Foundation served us well in our formative years, the name often required explanation and, in some contexts, carried unintended meanings in other languages. As our work, partnerships, and influence have grown across Africa, the need for an identity that speaks clearly, confidently, and authentically in our own African voice has become evident. Mizizi Elimu Afrika tells our story more directly and proudly.

The name Mizizi Elimu Afrika is deeply rooted in African language, values, and meaning.

- Mizizi means roots or foundations—a powerful symbol of strength, connection, and grounding. It reflects our core belief that strong foundations in learning are essential for individual and societal flourishing. It refers to three roots which symbolise literacy, numeracy, and life skills and values, the foundational capabilities at the heart of our work.
- Elimu Afrika speaks to education and learning across the continent, affirming our African identity and our continental ambition.
- MEA, our short name, evokes growth, blossoming, and thriving, capturing the journey from strong roots to visible, sustained impact.

This identity mirrors how we understand learning and systems change.

i. Just as roots nourish a tree, foundational learning gives children the base they need to grow, thrive, and flourish.
ii. Families, teachers, and schools form the soil that nurtures learners.
iii. Education systems and policies are the stem that sustains growth.
iv. The fruits are children and young people equipped with the competencies, confidence, and values needed for school, life, and society.

Mizizi Elimu Afrika represents this ecosystem, rooted in African realities, nourished by evidence, and committed to ensuring that every child learns and thrives.

The transition to Mizizi Elimu Afrika is not a departure from our legacy but an evolution. It strengthens our voice, presence, and positioning as a backbone and catalyst for systems change in education. The name Zizi Afrique Foundation is retained as a protected legacy and legal identity, safeguarding our institutional history and intellectual property. The Board has also approved the reservation of related names to ensure brand integrity and continuity.

A phased transition plan accompanies this change, encompassing brand strategy, visual identity refresh, digital platforms, and public communications. This includes updates to our logo, colour palette where necessary, website and content, social media presence, and the development of a brand reveal narrative and video. These elements are guided by a clear intention: for the Mizizi Elimu Afrika brand to feel African, human, and hopeful, while remaining credible, professional, and trusted by governments, partners, funders, and communities.

The public launch of Mizizi Elimu Afrika is planned for March 2026, alongside the unveiling of Vision 2040. This moment marks a new chapter, one grounded in strong roots, shaped by learning, and oriented towards a future where education systems work for all children, especially those furthest behind.

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Signature Contribution and Ambition for 2040

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's unique contribution is to serve as a backbone and catalyst for field-wide change, enabling others and building a lasting ecosystem for collective impact and African leadership. By 2040, Mizizi Elimu Afrika will have catalysed foundational learning for at least 10 million children, created pathways for system-level reform across at least 10 countries, and built an enduring ecosystem of African leadership and evidence for equitable education.

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

We collaborate with those closest to children and youth to shift mindsets, improve learning experiences, strengthen relationships, use evidence, and influence policies and resourcing to ensure that children furthest behind have the foundation to learn, relate, and thrive.

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Guiding Principles

Adaptive Learning and Innovation

We stay open to what emerges. We embrace curiosity, evidence, and iteration. We listen deeply, reflect often, and learn in motion, adjusting with humility as systems shift. We use technology as a tool to support learning and inclusion, never as a replacement for relationships or deep understanding

Social Justice

We believe social justice is both our compass and our destination. It means actively challenging the root causes of inequity and exclusion, so that all children, regardless of circumstance, can access their rights, realise their potential, and contribute to a fairer society. For Mizizi Elimu Afrika, social justice is not a separate add-on but the thread running through all our strategies, partnerships, and daily decisions.

Equity and Inclusion

We prioritise children and communities furthest behind in learning, recognising that when the system works for them, it works better for everyone. We champion gender equity as a matter of justice, challenging structural inequalities that hold back girls and women. We value diverse experiences and amplify underrepresented voices across gender, geography, generation, language and role. We put these commitments into practice by ensuring gender and equity analysis is built into our monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) systems, disaggregating data to make invisible barriers visible, and by building diverse, inclusive leadership at every level of Mizizi Elimu Afrika's work.

Accountability with Integrity

We hold ourselves accountable, not just to funders or outputs but to the communities and learners we serve. Our accountability is transparent, reciprocal, and grounded in lived realities. We use technology thoughtfully, ensuring it enhances access and inclusion without widening divides.

Relational and Power-Aware Change

We are part of a movement, intentionally supporting, convening, and amplifying the work of others. We see change as inherently relational and as everyone's responsibility. We promote collaboration, cultivate trust, and build coalitions that act in solidarity for the greater good. We challenge extractive dynamics and tokenistic participation, supporting the meaningful agency of children and young people, shared decision-making, and co-ownership. Above all, we commit to doing no harm, working with integrity and respect for the communities we serve.

Education as a Public Good

Education is a human right and a shared responsibility that upholds individual dignity and collective wellbeing. Our commitment extends to preparing children for a changing world and building sustainable education systems for future generations. We thus prioritise improvement of the public education system and the state's provision of education.

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Golden Circle

WHY: Advancing Equity through Transformative Education Systems

Mizizi Elimu Afrika exists to advance equity by transforming the conditions that exclude children from meaningful learning and participation in society.

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, at most, one in five learners are achieving foundational learning by the end of primary school. Those furthest behind, whether due to poverty, gender, disability, language, displacement, or geography, face the greatest barriers to acquiring the literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values they need to learn, relate, and thrive. These barriers are not isolated failures but systemic symptoms of inequity, disengagement, trauma, and inertia.

For us, equity is not simply about reducing gaps in learning. It is about reimagining education systems to be inclusive, responsive, and anchored in the rights and realities of every learner. It means recognising and addressing structural and historical disadvantages, and building systems that uphold the full dignity and potential of every child.

We recognise education is a human right and a public good, essential not just for individual opportunity but for a more just, inclusive, and caring society. When those furthest behind are no longer left out, everyone benefits: opportunities expand, systems grow stronger, and the next generation leads with confidence, care, and purpose.

Our commitment is not only to help children learn, it is also to build the kind of society where every learner is seen, supported, and able to shape their future.

HOW: Strengthening Systems from within to Enable Lasting Change

We strengthen education systems from within, not as the central leader, but as a trusted convener, supporter, and backbone for collective impact.

We understand that foundational skills do not emerge in isolation. They are shaped by the environments in which children live, learn, and grow and by the systems that either support or fail them.

Mizizi Elimu Afrika partners with government and system actors to improve core functions such as teacher preparation, curriculum innovation and implementation, assessment, and policy coherence. We do not impose new structures; instead, we support the system to work better for those it serves, especially children who are furthest behind.

As we do this, we apply a systems lens that helps us understand and influence the broader dynamics at play. We recognise that strengthening one part of the system, such as how teachers are supported, can generate ripples across others, shifting:

- Structures – how responsibilities and resources are organised and accessed.
- Power – who gets to decide and participate.
- Mindsets – how learning, inclusion, and success are understood.
- Relationships – how trust is built and sustained; and
- Practices – how actors behave and apply what they know.

This approach helps us see and act on the complexity of real-world change. It also keeps us grounded in the belief that transformation is relational, adaptive, and co-owned: not something we deliver, but something we catalyse and accompany.

WHAT: Closing the Foundational Skills Gap

We work to close the foundational skills gap by enabling all children to build literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values – the essential capabilities for lifelong learning and wellbeing. This directly supports Sustainable Development Goal 4, which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

We work with the premise that education is a public good and a human right that is essential, not just for individual opportunity but for building a more just, inclusive, and caring society. When those furthest behind gain foundational skills, everyone benefits: opportunity expands, systems grow stronger, and the next generation leads with confidence, care, and purpose.

Our commitment is not only to help children learn but also to build the kind of society where every learner is seen, supported, and able to shape their future.

Our change agenda is clear: to enable all children—especially those furthest behind—to acquire the foundational skills that underpin lifelong learning and wellbeing. These include literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values – all essential capabilities that help children learn, express themselves, relate with others, make ethical decisions, and thrive across school, work, and society.

> ... transformation is relational, adaptive, and co-owned: not something we deliver, but **something we catalyse** and accompany.

VISION
2040

The Development Challenge

The Development Challenge

One in five primary school-age children in sub-Saharan Africa is still out of school; of those in school, only about one in five is achieving foundational skills by the end of primary school (UNESCO, 2024). Those furthest behind – due to poverty, gender, disability, language, displacement, or isolation – face the greatest barriers to acquiring the skills they need to learn, relate, and thrive.

The System We Are Trying to Change

Education systems across Africa are struggling to deliver on their promise, especially for the children who need it the most. Despite growing investment and reform efforts by governments, donors, NGOs, and other actors, far too many children, especially those furthest behind, move through the early years of primary and lower secondary education (Grades 1–9) without acquiring foundational skills. In Kenya and across Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 70% of children aged 10 cannot read or understand a simple story. Millions more lack the basic numeracy, life skills, and values-based competencies that form the building blocks of lifelong learning. This is not simply a technical problem; it is systemic, rooted in how education systems are resourced, structured, governed, and experienced.

We see systems where:

- Learning is reduced to a compliance exercise, privileging grades and performance metrics over confidence, curiosity, and care, with little or no accountability for children's learning. Schools, teachers, and curriculum support officers often face no meaningful consequences for failing to ensure learning, allowing systemic underperformance to persist.
- Educators are overwhelmed and under-supported, receiving theoretical training with limited resources, and little in-service support to translate curriculum into practice (ADEA, 2023).
- Education System Stewards ask children to learn in unfamiliar languages, with materials and instruction that assume readiness many do not have. Globally, 40% of learners are taught in a language they do not understand (UNESCO, 2016).
- Families and Caregivers are disengaged as partners, treated as bystanders rather than co-educators, despite their critical role in emotional development and school readiness. Only 16% of parents in low-income countries are actively involved in their children's learning (Won Kim, 2018).
- Intergenerational disadvantage is reinforced, as parents without foundational skills are less able to support their children, entrenching cycles of exclusion. In Sub-Saharan Africa, approximately 63% of adults lack foundational literacy skills (United Nations, 2024).
- Education System Stewards, together with Educators, often fail to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Fragmented mandates across ministries, curriculum developers, teacher service commissions, and quality assurance bodies contribute to disconnected efforts. This results in limited use of evidence, whether from assessment data, classroom observations, or learner feedback, to guide responsive improvement and inform day-to-day teaching practices.
- Education System Stewards neglect gender and social inclusion, failing to address the specific barriers faced by girls, children with disabilities, those from the poorest families, and other excluded learners. Nearly 129 million girls are out of school globally (UNICEF, 2023).
- Educators, Families, and Education System Stewards sustain unhelpful mindsets about what success looks like, who is capable of learning, and what kinds of knowledge matter most.

In this context, children are not just falling behind. They are being left behind. As one colleague put it, we see "too much schooling, but too little learning." The cost is long-term and compounding: disengagement, inequality, and lost potential with every passing year.

The Effects of the Foundational Skills Gap

The consequences of the foundational learning gap are profound and felt by learners, families, schools, and society at large.

For children, lacking foundational skills means more than falling behind in class. Many become disengaged early in their schooling, struggling to keep up, internalising failure, and losing confidence. Some eventually drop out altogether. Even those who stay often progress without the essential capabilities they need, entering adolescence unable to read with understanding, express themselves clearly, or relate to others with care and confidence. Over time, their ability to navigate school, work, and society is diminished. Without intervention, they face increased vulnerability, limited life choices, and reduced prospects for decent work and civic participation.

For education systems, the costs are systemic and compounding. When foundational skills are not acquired, the burden shifts upwards: teachers are overwhelmed, classrooms become harder to manage, and secondary systems are strained. Reform efforts lose traction as the disconnect between policy and practice widens. Parents, especially those facing intergenerational disadvantage, often lack the confidence, information, or support to help their children learn. Without inclusive data, strong feedback loops, or space for local voice, systems miss the signals needed to adapt. Trust erodes as families question the value of education that does not lead to visible progress.

This gap also represents a profound lack of return on public investment. Governments allocate significant resources to education, but when foundational skills are not achieved, the dividends, in terms of human capital, workforce readiness, and social wellbeing, fail to materialise. Instead, the costs shift elsewhere: to health systems strained by the social determinants of poor education, to criminal justice systems dealing with the fallout of exclusion and disengagement, and to welfare systems that must compensate for limited economic opportunities. In short, a system that fails to equip learners with foundational skills creates long-term costs that ripple across society.

For society, the implications are far-reaching. A population without strong foundational skills means a workforce that is less prepared, an economy that is less competitive, and a civic space that is more fragile. Inequality deepens, and opportunities shrink, especially for those who are already furthest behind. As belief in the power of education to change lives fades, so too does faith in public systems. The social fabric begins to fray, and the promise of education as a public good and a path to equity and inclusion remains unfulfilled.

But when all children gain foundational skills, society gains. Inequality narrows. Trust is restored. Opportunity expands. And the next generation leads with confidence, care, and purpose.

What Mizizi Elimu Afrika Means by Foundational Skills

At Mizizi Elimu Afrika, we understand foundational skills as the essential capabilities that enable children, especially those furthest behind, to learn, relate, and thrive, not only in school but across life, work, and community.

While foundational skills are often defined internationally as basic literacy and numeracy, we take this further, grounding our approach in the realities of the learners we serve, the values we uphold, and our experience in the education space. For us, foundational skills encompass:

- **Literacy:** the ability to listen with understanding, read with comprehension, write with clarity, and speak with confidence.
- **Numeracy:** the ability to understand numbers and apply mathematical concepts confidently to solve problems in everyday life.
- **Life Skills:** the capabilities children need for self, relating with others, and contributing to society, such as self-awareness, problem-solving, and collaboration.
- **Values:** the beliefs and attitudes that shape behaviour, such as respect, empathy, responsibility, and integrity.

These are not soft skills. They are the foundation for equity, wellbeing, employability, and active citizenship. When children lack them, the consequences ripple outwards: disengagement from school, limited life opportunities, and fractured futures.

In practice, our values-based education approach comes to life in safe, relational learning environments where learners develop not just academic skills but also confidence, empathy, and a sense of agency. For example, in our work with teacher training institutions and schools, we have seen the impact of integrating relational pedagogy and reflective practice into classroom routines, where teachers model respect, encourage collaboration, and create space for students to express themselves and support one another.

This approach differs from dominant national policy framings, such as Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC), which—while progressive in emphasising competencies—often prioritises performance outcomes and technical skills over deeper engagement with values and social-emotional development. Similarly, while the Ministry of Education benchmarks focus on literacy and numeracy, they under-emphasise life skills and values as core capabilities. Mizizi Elimu Afrika's approach bridges this gap by explicitly placing values and life skills at the heart of foundational learning, recognising them as essential for meaningful participation in school and society.

Our Contribution across the Continuum

Our primary focus is on children in early and middle childhood, when these skills are first formed, but we also engage with adolescents and young adults, recognising their vital roles as caregivers, mentors, and changemakers who shape the conditions in which the next generation can thrive.

By working across this continuum, Mizizi Elimu Afrika contributes not only to individual learning outcomes but to the systems and values that build more just, inclusive, and caring societies.

These are not soft skills. They are the **foundation for equity,** wellbeing, employability, and active citizenship. When children lack them, the consequences ripple...

VISION
2040

Our Ambition to Shift Systems

Our Ambition to Shift Systems

Mizizi Elimu Afrika exists to ensure all children, especially those furthest behind, develop the foundational skills they need to learn, relate, and thrive. Between 2026 and 2040, we aim to deepen and scale our contribution to systems change through three interconnected goals:

1. Stronger Foundations for All

We will strengthen the teaching and learning of foundational skills – literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values – in classrooms and communities. Our ambition is for more children to acquire the competencies they need to navigate school, work, and life with confidence and purpose.

2. Stronger Education Systems

We will help shape a more coherent, inclusive, and accountable education system – one that centres foundational learning, reflects real-world needs, and takes responsibility for outcomes. We will influence policy, strengthen institutional capacity, and scale practices that work.

3. Stronger Ecosystems for Change

We will foster a vibrant ecosystem of actors – government, civil society, funders, and learners – working collaboratively to improve foundational learning. We will enable collective learning, elevate African knowledge, and cultivate leadership and ownership across the continent.

These goals reinforce each other. By working across classrooms, systems, and ecosystems, we aim to tackle the root causes of poor learning and transform how foundational skills are understood, taught, and assessed.

Our work will be grounded in evidence and shaped by relationships with learners, families, educators, and communities. We believe meaningful change happens when those closest to the problem are central to the solution.

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Strategic Shifts

To realise our ambition, we will make three pivotal shifts that sharpen our focus and expand our influence:

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.

1 Stronger Foundations for All

We will strengthen the teaching and learning of foundational skills – literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values – in classrooms and communities.

2 Stronger Education Systems

We will help shape a more coherent, inclusive, and accountable education system – one that centres foundational learning, reflects real-world needs, and takes responsibility for outcomes.

3 Stronger Ecosystems for Change

We will foster a vibrant ecosystem of actors – government, civil society, funders, and learners – working collaboratively to improve foundational learning.

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 Mizizi Elimu Afrika as a field-builder, systems enabler, and movement ally who is committed to long-term, transformative change grounded in equity, evidence, and African leadership.

Who Mizizi Elimu Afrika Targets

Children and Young People Ultimately Benefit

Scope and Concentration: Our work now spans the full continuum of 0–25 years, encompassing early childhood, foundational years, adolescence, and youth. Within this range, the strategic anchor is set at ages 4–12, when foundational literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values take root. Approximately 80% of our effort is concentrated on this age band. The remaining 20% extends to the early years (0–3), supporting nurturing care and school readiness, and to adolescents and youth (13–25), fostering smooth transitions, lifelong learning, and active citizenship.

Primary Beneficiaries (4–12 years): We centre children in early and middle childhood (4–12 years) who are furthest behind due to intersecting barriers, including poverty, gender, disability, language, displacement, and geographic isolation. Our direct interventions strengthen the capacity, practices, and relationships of boundary partners - educators, families, and system stewards—so that children experience inclusive, values-based, and responsive education systems.

Early Childhood (0–3 years): Our work in early years focuses on strengthening the enabling environment, parental engagement, and school readiness. This spans supporting nurturing care and school readiness.

Role of Youth (18–25 years): Youth are a vital resource and ally in the ecosystem. We engage them to unlock their agency as mentors, peer supporters, advocates, and co-creators who help drive foundational learning and sustain change. Youth are not the primary target for direct interventions in this strategy; rather, they are enabled as boundary partners who amplify system shifts.

How This Advances Equity: By investing where foundations form (during the critical 0–12 years) and by working with and through those who shape children's daily learning environments, we tackle the root causes of exclusion. Our engagement with adolescents and youth further ensures continuity, agency, and leadership, enabling co-owned, system-wide transformations that endure.

Boundary Partners and the Wider Ecosystem: Who We Work With

We work with boundary partners, not as recipients of a Mizizi Elimu Afrika-led agenda, but as co-creators and drivers of systemic change. Our role is to accompany, connect, and amplify their efforts.

Boundary partners fall into three broad groups:

Educators and Learning Enablers

Teachers, school leaders, curriculum support officers, quality assurance officers (mainly in the public sector), youth mentors, private schools and their associations, and civil society organisations (CSOs).

> We support them to adopt inclusive, values-based, and relational approaches that foster safe, engaging learning environments where all children can build foundational skills.

Families and Caregivers

Parents, guardians, caregivers, as co-educators and parent associations.

> We equip them to be confident, informed co-educators, supporting learning, wellbeing, and values at home and in partnership with schools.

System Stewards and Influencers

Politicians, policy makers, curriculum developers, education officials, teacher educators, local leaders, private sector actors (including education financiers), and elected representatives.

> We work with them to build enabling policy, curricular, and governance conditions that prioritise foundational learning, redistribute power and voice, and reach children most often left behind.

See glossary for definitions of "boundary partners", "ecosystem", and related terms.

Geographic Focus and Scaling: How We Decide Where and How to Grow

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's scope is Africa, with our work focused primarily in Sub-Saharan Africa. Mizizi Elimu Afrika will pursue a tiered geographic approach, aiming for meaningful impact in at least 10 African countries by 2040, sequenced across three 5-year cycles.

Mizizi Elimu Afrika is deeply rooted in Kenya, with active partnerships in several countries across Africa. Our ambition is to support foundational learning systems change beyond national borders, but we know that each context is unique, and scaling must be both intentional and adaptive.

We set a target list of at least 10 countries across Sub-Saharan Africa by 2040. To balance ambition with capacity and ensure clarity on depth of engagement, our presence is organised into three tiers of engagement (systems reform, sub-national lift, and field building). This is while still applying clear criteria to guide when and how we deepen, expand, or adapt.

Criteria for Expansion and Engagement

- Readiness and Demand: Is there genuine government, community, or partner interest in systems change for foundational skills? Are there urgent needs or opportunities for Mizizi Elimu Afrika's contribution?
- Strategic Fit: Does the context align with Mizizi Elimu Afrika's mission, values, and systems approach? Are foundational learning inequities pronounced and persistent?
- Political Economy: Is there enabling political leadership, policy space, and a stable environment for reform and co-creation?
- Partner Ecosystem: Are there credible local organisations, coalitions, or networks to work alongside? Is there openness to shared learning and co-ownership?
- Potential for Impact and Learning: Will engagement contribute to both tangible outcomes for children and insights for the broader ecosystem?
- Resource and Capacity Alignment: Can Mizizi Elimu Afrika mobilise sufficient resources and team capacity to support sustainable, high-quality engagement?

Models for Growth

Tier	Model of Growth	Target Countries
Level 1 – Direct System Contribution	Mizizi Elimu Afrika leads national-level engagement as a backbone organisation working directly with system actors at national and sub-national levels.	Kenya
Level 2 – System-wide Partnerships	Collaborating with strong national partners to drive system-wide change.	Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda
Level 3 – Field Building & Continental Influence	Providing technical assistance, piloting, and seeding frameworks; supporting evidence and networks that inspire wider change.	Cameroon, Malawi, and at least 4 other countries where meaningful demand and connection emerge.

Adaptation and Context Sensitivity:

- Each new geography requires adaptation of our MEL, partnership, and governance models.
- We commit to local listening, partner due diligence, and context mapping before entry.
- Political cycles, policy shifts, and local leadership changes will trigger regular review and adaptation.

Phased Approach:

- For each 5-year cycle, Mizizi Elimu Afrika will identify and periodically publish its focus countries, partner regions, and rationale.
- Resourcing, staffing, and MEL systems will be tailored to the needs and opportunities of each geography.

How Mizizi Elimu Afrika Works: Our Approaches to Change

At Mizizi Elimu Afrika, we believe that change is not delivered from outside but catalysed, accompanied, and co-owned by those who are part of the system itself. Our role is not simply to implement projects but to serve as a backbone and catalyst for collective action, enabling government, partners, and communities to drive enduring improvements in foundational learning for every child, especially those furthest behind. Above all, our role is to accompany, not dominate; to convene, not direct; and to catalyse the relationships and actions that make enduring change possible.

We start with a deep commitment to working with and through government. We know that lasting systems change cannot be imposed from outside. Instead, we build long-term, trust-based relationships with public institutions, supporting and amplifying government leadership wherever possible. Sometimes this means co-locating our own team members within ministries or providing technical advice to shape core functions such as teacher preparation, curriculum reform, assessment, and policy coherence. Our goal is to strengthen existing structures, not create parallel systems. By doing so, we help governments and system actors become the architects and stewards of their own transformation.

However, we know that no single actor can achieve this change alone. At the heart of our approach is the belief that systems change is a collective effort. We work intentionally to catalyse energy across the ecosystem by building coalitions, nurturing grassroots leadership, and supporting peer organisations to influence. Our partnerships are grounded in shared values, clear roles, and strong governance, always aiming to complement existing networks and avoid duplication. We bring together families, civil society, and the private sector alongside government, ensuring education reform is truly participatory and co-created.

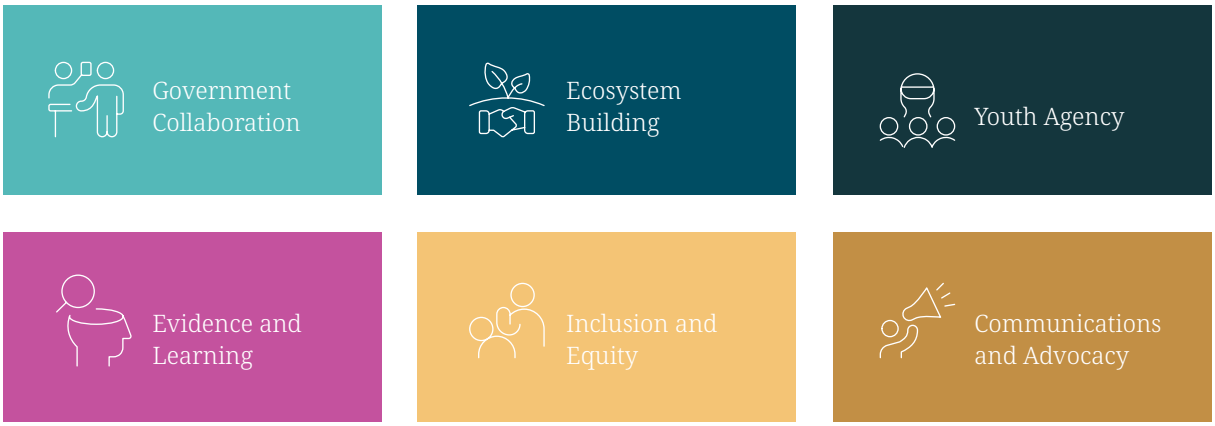
While children are our primary focus, we also recognise the powerful role of youth as innovators, advocates, and leaders. Our strategy seeks to unlock youth agency, not by treating young people simply as beneficiaries but by inviting them into decision-making and supporting youth-led initiatives that can sustain and amplify the gains in foundational learning. By nurturing youth agency as a resource for the system, we create space for new ideas, energy, and perspectives that can push the entire ecosystem forward.

Evidence and learning are at the core of Mizizi Elimu Afrika's work. We see the use of data, research, and collective reflection as essential for driving progress and making good on our promises. Our monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems are participatory and adaptive, designed to capture not just outputs but deeper, more intangible shifts in relationships, mindsets, and power. We regularly convene learning labs and feedback sessions that enable us and our partners to reflect, adapt, and innovate in response to what we discover together.

We are also deeply committed to tackling the root causes of exclusion, whether these stem from poverty, gender, disability, language, or geography. Our interventions are deliberately designed to address these structural and social barriers, with a focus on operationalising gender justice, equity, and inclusion. By disaggregating data and centring the voices of those who have been excluded, we hold ourselves and our partners accountable for ensuring that no child is left out.

Finally, strategic communications and advocacy are central to how we create change. We use storytelling and thought leadership to shape the public narrative around foundational learning, influence policy, and mobilise broader support. By engaging the media, digital platforms, and key influencers, we amplify the voices of our partners, keep foundational learning on the national agenda, and build a movement that extends beyond our own organisation.

Taken together, these approaches define not just how Mizizi Elimu Afrika works but what makes us unique. They ensure that the change we seek is collective, sustainable, and rooted in the realities of the children and communities we serve. By grounding our strategy in these ways of working, we make our 15-year vision both credible and achievable, turning ambition into lasting impact.



Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Theory of Change

Our theory of change is built on one bold idea:

If we centre the most 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.

Impact (Why We Exist)

To contribute to a more just, inclusive, and equitable society where all children, especially those furthest behind, acquire the foundational skills to learn, thrive, and contribute to lifelong learning and collective wellbeing.

Final Life Outcomes (What We Seek for Learners)

Children acquire foundational skills and:

- Feel safe, confident, and engaged in learning.
- Build foundational literacy and numeracy.
- Demonstrate life skills and values.
- Navigate learning environments and life transitions with resilience and purpose.
- Thrive across learning environments and life transitions.

Immediate Outcomes (What We Aim to Change at Systems Level)

These are the end-state shifts we seek to influence across five dimensions of the system.

Dimension	Outcome Statement
Structures	Responsibilities, roles, and resources across the education system are organised to prioritise foundational skills, with aligned policies, budgets, and support mechanisms that reach the furthest behind.
Power	Decision-making becomes more inclusive, distributed, and accountable. Politicians, educators and policymakers, teachers, families, youth, and community actors are recognised as co-shapers of education policy and practice, not just implementers.
Mindsets	Prevailing beliefs about learning, inclusion, and success shift. Education is seen not just as academic attainment but as a foundation for dignity, agency, and lifelong wellbeing, especially for those who are excluded.
Relationships	Trust and collaboration deepen across system actors. Schools, families, civil society, private sector and government co-create solutions, close feedback loops, and centre the lived experience of learners.
Practices	Day-to-day behaviours of educators, policymakers, and communities become more inclusive, reflective, and relational, translating policies and values into concrete change in classrooms, schools, and homes.

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Interventions (How We Strengthen the System)

Mizizi Elimu Afrika strengthens education systems through five interlinked interventions. These are not projects that Mizizi Elimu Afrika delivers alone; they are functions we enable across the system, supporting others to embed and sustain change. The interventions are not applied in a strict sequence; instead, we use a systems lens to adapt and prioritise interventions based on the programme focus, context, and assumptions. This allows for flexibility in how we engage, recognising that different entry points and combinations may be needed to catalyse change in diverse settings.

Intervention Type	Input (What Mizizi Elimu Afrika Does)	Output (What Changes)
Training & Capacity Strengthening	Equip educators (school leaders, teachers, policymakers, parent/ caregiver/families, and youth mentors) with capacities to embed values-based, inclusive, and relational learning across the system for improved Foundational learning outcomes.	Learners experience classrooms and communities that foster foundational skills, wellbeing, and belonging, supported by confident, reflective actors
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. This work expands opportunities for frontline actors, fosters peer learning and solidarity, and cultivates the networks and relationships needed for long-term, systemic change. Our contribution is as a backbone: connecting, supporting, and amplifying the work of local actors	Local actors gain the credibility, leadership, and collaborative power to catalyse change and shape more responsive, grounded education systems
Technical Support	Provide curriculum and assessment support and policy advise to government agencies, teacher training institutions and regulators grounded in evidence.	Curricula, frameworks, tools, and standards are better aligned with foundational learning, including life skills, values, and inclusive pedagogy
Research & Evidence Use	Facilitate deep dives into outcomes and data with system actors, enabling shared reflection, pattern spotting, and actionable learning	Governments and partners use real-world evidence to shape strategies, improve the critical transition from primary to secondary education – where many learners drop out or fail to progress – and respond to systemic barriers
Relational Convening	Host dialogues, learning labs, and feedback loops that foster trust, close the distance between actors, and make space for new alliances and narratives. This work strengthens relationships and builds the mutual understanding and shared commitment needed for collective impact and responsive systems change. Importantly, this work is not about starting from scratch or duplicating what already exists. Rather, we deliberately build on the foundations laid by networks such as RELI Africa and Elimu Yetu Coalition, among others, complementing the existing collaborative efforts	Stronger relationships and shared commitments yielding collective impact needed for equity to emerge across the ecosystem, paving the way for more joined-up action and systemic responsiveness. Over time, this contributes to a more responsive and equitable education system, one where collective impact is not just possible but sustained through trust and connection

Strategic Boundaries, Critical Assumptions, and Risks

What Mizizi Elimu Afrika Will Not Do

To remain focused, effective, and true to our mission, Mizizi Elimu Afrika commits to clear boundaries in its work. We will:

- Not engage in direct delivery of classroom instruction or social services to children or youth as a primary implementer.
- Not expand into sectors outside of education (e.g., health, agriculture, livelihoods), unless directly relevant to our foundational skills mandate.
- Not pursue activities or projects that do not contribute meaningfully to systems change, or that divert from our core focus on foundational learning and equity.
- Not scale into new geographies without clear readiness, strategic fit, and strong local partnerships.
- Not accept funding or partnerships that require us to compromise our values, mission, or long-term objectives for short-term gain.

These boundaries ensure that Mizizi Elimu Afrika remains disciplined in pursuit of systemic change and accountable to its stakeholders and core beneficiaries.

Critical Assumptions

Our strategy and theory of change rest on several critical assumptions:

- Boundary partners (educators, families, system stewards) are willing and able to engage with new ideas, tools, and practices that promote foundational skills and inclusion.
- Government policies and leadership remain sufficiently stable and supportive to enable system-level change.
- Sufficient resources and political will can be mobilised to implement, adapt, and sustain evidence-informed reforms.
- Communities and families are willing and able to share responsibility for learning and to participate meaningfully.
- Data and evidence systems will improve to provide timely, accurate, and inclusive feedback to guide decision-making and adaptation.

Risks and Mitigation

We recognise several key risks that could threaten the achievement of our mission:

- Resistance to change among entrenched actors and structures.
- Political instability, funding constraints, or shifts in priorities that could disrupt reform processes or slow progress.
- Persistent inequities and socio-economic barriers that limit the participation and agency of excluded groups.
- Fragmentation of efforts and duplication, without strong coordination and alignment.
- Mission drift or dilution of focus, particularly through pressure to expand too rapidly or pursue donor-driven projects not aligned with Mizizi Elimu Afrika's purpose.

How We Respond

Mizizi Elimu Afrika is committed to:

- Systematically monitoring these assumptions and risks;
- Documenting and regularly reviewing them with leadership and governance;
- Adapting our strategies and interventions as needed; and
- Maintaining flexibility, transparency, and resilience in our approach.

Risks and mitigation plans will be tracked and updated in our internal operational systems, with strategic risks reported to the Board for oversight and timely action.

How We Operationalise Risk Management

To deliver on our mission with integrity and resilience, Mizizi Elimu Afrika embeds a proactive, learning-oriented approach to risk management across the organisation. Our intentional management of risk is operationalised through:

- A comprehensive risk management framework and central risk register.
- Ongoing identification, likelihood-impact analysis, and mitigation planning for major risks.
- Alignment with compliance frameworks covering donor, legal, data protection, and safeguarding obligations.
- Regular scenario planning for political instability, funding disruptions, or other shocks.
- Annual risk reviews and reporting to the Board, with clear links to governance and decision-making.
- Business continuity planning to ensure we can adapt and deliver through uncertainty.

By making risk management an organisational discipline, not just a compliance exercise, we strengthen our ability to adapt, learn, and safeguard our mission for the long term.

... grounded in evidence and shaped by relationships with learners, families, educators, and communities. We believe **meaningful change happens** when those closest to the problem are central to the solution.

VISION
2040

Strategic Enablers

Strategic Enablers How Mizizi Elimu Afrika Delivers Vision 2040

For each of the strategic enablers and delivery areas outlined here, detailed operational plans covering HR, Monitoring & Evaluation, resource mobilisation, risk management, and more, are developed and updated at the start of each 5-year cycle and reviewed annually to ensure adaptability and accountability. These operational plans provide the "how" behind our strategic intent, supporting staff, partners, and stakeholders to implement, track, and adapt as we move towards our Vision 2040.

People, Leadership & Culture: Becoming the Organisation the System Needs

Delivering on Mizizi Elimu Afrika's vision for 2040 calls for more than technical expertise or project management. It demands a people-first, values-driven approach to leadership, culture, and team development. Mizizi Elimu Afrika's role as a catalyst, convener, and trusted ecosystem partner is only possible if we become the organisation the system needs: adaptive, equitable, collaborative, and resilient.

From Bureaucratic to Networked: Our Organisational Evolution

Mizizi Elimu Afrika has moved beyond its founder-led, charismatic phase and is now transitioning from an integrated, function-based structure to a networked model. This evolution is about more than lines on an organisational chart. It is about distributing leadership, flattening hierarchies, and structuring around strategic missions and multi-disciplinary teams that blend technical expertise, partnerships, research, MEL, and communications. As a "backbone" organisation, Mizizi Elimu Afrika is building teams that not only deliver, but also convene, enable, and amplify the work of others across the field.

Distributed Leadership & Inclusive Talent Development

We are committed to team-based, distributed leadership. Leadership and decision-making authority are shared across the Executive Director, mission leads, backbone functions, and partnership roles. We are intentionally building a leadership pipeline with a focus on emergent young leaders, gender equity, and inclusion at every level. Our staff are stewards of Mizizi Elimu Afrika's mission and values, not just employees. They are expected to model relational integrity, humility, and systems thinking, and to act as field catalysts as well as project managers.

Capacity for Systems Change & Wellbeing

Our team is our most important asset. We invest in continuous professional development, coaching, and systems change capacity-building for all staff, ensuring every team member understands their role as part of a broader ecosystem. Workforce planning is aligned to programmatic growth and geographic expansion, with a focus on maintaining manageable workloads, preventing burnout, and sustaining organisational energy. Performance management is values-based, and accountability is mutual. Staff are supported and held to high standards, but also empowered to innovate and adapt.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in Practice

Equity, gender justice, and inclusion are lived commitments, not just stated values. We disaggregate data by gender and inequality indicators, include gender and youth analysis in MEL, and build inclusive leadership pipelines. We are attentive to intersectionality and create pathways for diverse staff, including young people, women, and underrepresented groups, to shape Mizizi Elimu Afrika's work and culture.

Enabling Internal Policies & Systems

Mizizi Elimu Afrika operates with up-to-date, best-in-class policies on HR, safeguarding, finance, DEI, procurement, and data. We systematise onboarding, appraisal, and induction processes to bring every team member into our values and ways of working. Policy enforcement, audit, and compliance mechanisms are in place to strengthen trust, accountability, and transparency across the organisation and with our partners.

Culture of Learning, Reflection & Adaptation

We seek to embody the adaptive, reflective, and relational approach we champion in the education system. Regular feedback loops, reflection sessions, and cross-team learning moments are built into our rhythms. We nurture a culture where risk-taking, learning from failure, and course correction are celebrated as signs of organisational maturity.

More detailS on our frameworks for talent development, HR, safeguarding, organisational policies, and accountability can be found in our operational plans. These are reviewed and updated at the start of each 5-year cycle and annually, in line with Mizizi Elimu Afrika's growth and the evolving demands of the system.

These operational plans provide the "how" behind **our strategic intent,** supporting staff, partners, and stakeholders to implement, track, and adapt as we move towards our Vision 2040.

Resource Mobilisation & Management: Powering Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Mission for 2040

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's vision for 2040 demands a new approach to funding; one that is as bold and future-focused as our strategy. Our ambition is not only to secure the resources required to achieve our mission but also to model transparency, equity, and sustainability in how we mobilise and steward those resources.

From Project to Mission-Based Fundraising

We are shifting from fragmented, project-based fundraising to a mission-driven resource mobilisation model. Our approach seeks long-term, unrestricted, and diversified funding, with an explicit commitment to building strong, trust-based partnerships with donors, philanthropists, and mission-aligned investors. Mizizi Elimu Afrika prioritises multi-year support, flexible capital, and the engagement of local and African philanthropists alongside international funders.

Income Diversification & Financial Strategy

Our financial resilience is rooted in a deliberate plan to diversify income streams and minimise risk. This includes:

- Growing unrestricted and flexible funding, including core philanthropic capital.
- Expanding local and regional philanthropy, and cultivating partnerships with African businesses, networks, and individuals.
- Exploring earned income opportunities, social enterprise models, and new financing vehicles (such as social finance, public-private partnerships, and blended capital).
- Seeking cost-sharing, technical assistance, and advocacy partnerships – not just grants.

Partnerships Beyond Funding

We welcome partners, not only as funders but as co-owners of the movement for foundational learning. Our public ask is for strategic alliances that bring advocacy muscle, convening power, technical expertise, and credibility to the cause. We seek collaborations that advance our mission and strengthen the entire ecosystem.

Financial Stewardship & Accountability

Transparency and stewardship are non-negotiable. We commit to multi-year budgeting, robust financial risk management, and maintaining prudent reserves. Cost-efficiency is balanced with the need for impact at scale. We proactively report to partners on both the use of funds and our collective progress towards long-term outcomes, using learning and evidence to drive adaptation.

Investment Readiness for Scale

Mizizi Elimu Afrika is preparing for a more dynamic resource environment by building investment readiness for alternative financing mechanisms. This includes strengthening governance and due diligence, updating policies, and fostering innovation in resource mobilisation and social finance.

Phased Growth & Review

Resource mobilisation targets are set for each 5-year cycle, aligned with Mizizi Elimu Afrika's operational growth, regional expansion, and adaptive review points. We are committed to regular strategy reviews, learning from experience, and adjusting our approach to secure the resources needed for each stage of our journey.

Operational details covering donor stewardship, financial controls, risk management, income diversification, and fundraising pipelines are set out in Mizizi Elimu Afrika's operational resource mobilisation and finance plans, which are reviewed at the start of each 5-year cycle and annually.

Learning, Evidence & Improvement: Building the Infrastructure for Adaptive Change

Delivering on Mizizi Elimu Afrika's long-term vision means embracing learning: not as an add-on, but as the backbone of our work, culture, and partnership approach. We are building a learning and continuous improvement infrastructure that enables Mizizi Elimu Afrika and its partners to adapt, course-correct, and lead change in complex, shifting systems.

Why This Matters

Too often, measurement in education is reduced to counting outputs or compliance. At Mizizi Elimu Afrika, we know that strengthening the educational system requires us to track what really matters: outcomes for children, the deeper shifts in relationships, mindsets, and power, and the growth of a collective ecosystem for change.

Structured for Long-Term Impact: Five-Year Learning Cycles

Vision 2040 will be delivered through three intentional 5-year cycles, each building on the learning and momentum of the previous one. Each cycle serves as a building block towards Mizizi Elimu Afrika's larger ambition and provides a structured opportunity to:

- Set clear targets and learning priorities.
- Gather and analyse evidence of progress.
- Reflect and adapt to emerging needs and context.
- Reset our approach, partnerships, and priorities for the next stage.

These structured cycles ensure we remain agile and responsive, with annual reviews and mid-cycle course corrections linked to major contextual shifts, such as political cycles in our priority geographies.

Our Learning Agenda: Questions That Drive Change

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's work is guided by a set of ambitious learning questions that underpin both our measurement and our culture:

- How can policy be shifted from within, while preserving values and independence?
- How do we model power redistribution and stay attuned to shifting dynamics?
- How do we unlock youth agency and shift narratives of learning and inclusion?
- How do we move from isolated excellence to collective impact?
- How do we build teams and systems that remain adaptive?
- How can we track and share learning from complex systems to make change visible, credible, and useful for others?

These questions keep us oriented to our "true north" and ensure that learning and adaptation are always central, not an afterthought.

What's Different About Mizizi Elimu Afrika's Approach?

- Systems-level MEL: Our monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework is designed for complexity. We measure not only gains in foundational skills but also shifts in structures, power, mindsets, relationships, and practices. This means tracking progress at the level of learners, systems, and the broader ecosystem.
- Participatory and adaptive: We use participatory methods, including outcome harvesting, reflection cycles, and community feedback, to surface what is working, what is emerging, and where we need to adapt. We value both stories and numbers.
- Open learning agenda: Our learning questions are not just internal; they guide our work, drive partnerships, and are shared with the field. We are committed to learning out loud: regularly sharing evidence, dilemmas, and lessons to support the wider movement for foundational learning.
- Real-time, continuous improvement: Mizizi Elimu Afrika's infrastructure generates timely, actionable insights for teams, partners, and system actors. We invest in digital systems that support reflection, collaboration, and transparent reporting across projects and geographies.
- Driving adaptive management: Our approach ensures MEL is not a reporting exercise, but the engine for ongoing course correction, especially as contexts shift due to political cycles, policy changes, or emerging risks.

What Does This Look Like in Practice?

- Clear frameworks and tools: Each 5-year cycle, we set and track SMART indicators for every major outcome, with baselines and annual targets. For complex systems change, we use a continuum of change frameworks (see appendix for details) to recognise early signals and track deepening progress.
- Multi-level measurement: We monitor:
    i. Learner-level: Progress in foundational skills, confidence, wellbeing, and voice.
    ii. System-level: Uptake of inclusive policies, feedback loops, accountability, and investment.
    iii. Ecosystem-level: Strength of partnerships, coalitions, and public

i. discourse.

- Participatory MEL: Families, teachers, youth, and local partners are involved in defining success, gathering data, and sense-making, ensuring our learning reflects the realities of those closest to the challenge.
- Data for adaptive management: Evidence is used in regular reflection cycles, feeding directly into decision-making, partnership adjustments, and programme improvements.
- Open communication and influence: Mizizi Elimu Afrika documents and shares its journey – successes, challenges, and failures – to inspire partners, guide the field, and influence policy and practice.

Enabling Innovation and Digital Inclusion

- We are investing in ed-tech tools and digital strategies to improve programme delivery, knowledge sharing, and data use for learning, while maintaining a strong commitment to digital inclusion and data protection, especially for children and marginalised groups.
- Our digital MEL infrastructure is designed to enable real-time insights, promote transparency, and ensure every partner and stakeholder can participate in learning and improvement.

Looking Forward

By embedding learning and continuous improvement at every level, Mizizi Elimu Afrika aims to build not only its own capacity for adaptive change but to help grow the ecosystem's ability to learn, adapt, and achieve ambitious outcomes together. As the strategy unfolds, our frameworks and learning questions will be reviewed and adapted every five years (and annually), making our learning visible, credible, and useful to all who are working for change.

Partnerships, Influence & Advocacy: Catalysing Collective Action

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's influence lies not in working alone but in catalysing a powerful, collective movement for foundational learning across Africa. Our strategy is built on humility, deep partnership, and a belief that durable systems change only happens when many actors share ownership, power, and voice.

Strategic Partnerships for Shared Impact

Mizizi Elimu Afrika is committed to being a backbone organisation fostering strong, values-aligned partnerships across government, civil society, local communities, the private sector, and peer organisations. We define partnership not simply as collaboration but as a long-term, trust-based relationship rooted in shared goals, mutual accountability, and co-created values.

How we partner:

- Clear principles: We choose partners who share our values, commitment to equity, and dedication to serving children furthest behind. Due diligence processes ensure alignment and shared ethical standards.
- Defined roles: We clarify expectations, contribution, and decision-making from the start, ensuring that every partner has a voice, agency, and a defined stake in the outcome.
- Shared delivery & co-ownership: We promote governance models that support joint leadership, distributed accountability, and collective impact.
- Strengthening the ecosystem: We invest in grassroots and locally-led organisations, helping to build their capacity, credibility, and reach, not compete for space or visibility.

Ecosystem Convening & Collective Energy

Mizizi Elimu Afrika acts as a convener and facilitator, bringing diverse actors together to share evidence, learn from each other, and co-create solutions that none could achieve alone. Our approach to relational convening is grounded in respect, trust, and an ethic of accompaniment. We create spaces for:

- Deep listening and shared sense-making.
- Building new alliances and amplifying under-represented voices (including youth and learner-led initiatives).
- Honest reflection on both progress and barriers, ensuring the learning ecosystem remains vibrant, inclusive, and action-oriented.

We are intentional about supporting existing networks (such as RELI Africa, Elimu Yetu Coalition) and avoiding duplication, always seeking to complement and strengthen what already exists.

Advocacy, Thought Leadership & Narrative Change

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's advocacy and influence strategy is rooted in evidence, credibility, and a strong public narrative about why foundational skills matter for social justice, equity, and national development. Our advocacy aims to:

- Influence education policy, budgets, and system priorities through constructive engagement, joint learning, and policy coalitions.
- Elevate foundational learning on the national and continental agenda, targeting ministries,

- legislators, funders, and opinion leaders.
- Deploy deliberate advocacy campaigns that combine policy briefs, media engagement, and coalition-building to shift public discourse.
- Embed evidence and learning from Mizizi Elimu Afrika and its partners in key reforms, demonstrating what works at scale.

We use our voice responsibly, preferring to amplify local actors and youth voices wherever possible, and to position Mizizi Elimu Afrika as a credible, relational catalyst rather than as the main character.

Media, Digital Engagement & Storytelling

To change mindsets and sustain political attention, Mizizi Elimu Afrika invests in a bold media and digital engagement strategy. This includes:

- Strategic use of social media, digital storytelling, and multimedia to communicate impact, learning, and lived experience.
- Thought leadership platforms, op-eds, and influencer engagement to shape narratives and generate momentum.
- Transparent, accessible sharing of research, progress, and challenges that build public trust and sector credibility.

Youth Agency, Co-Creation & Stakeholder Voice

Young people are key resources and change agents. Mizizi Elimu Afrika creates space for youth and learner-led initiatives, co-creation mechanisms, and direct participation in governance and advocacy. Stakeholder mapping ensures that all relevant voices, especially those most often excluded, are brought to the table and meaningfully engaged.

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's strategy for partnerships, influence, and advocacy is to catalyse collective action, convene the ecosystem, and shape public narratives—always from a position of humility, inclusion, and a relentless focus on foundational learning for social justice. Through these efforts, we aim to build the alliances, evidence, and public will needed to transform systems, not just for some but for all.

Governance and Operations

Delivering Mizizi Elimu Afrika's long-term vision requires governance and operational systems that are as intentional and values-driven as our programme work. Strong governance and fit-for-purpose operations are the backbone that hold complexity, steward resources responsibly, and ensure that our commitments to children, partners, and funders are honoured in practice. As we grow in scale, geography, and influence, our governance and operations must remain rooted in equity, social justice, and power-aware ways of working.

Purposeful, Values-Driven Governance

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's governance is anchored in our purpose: advancing equity through transformative education systems. The Board's primary role is to safeguard this purpose, steward Vision 2040, and hold the organisation accountable for its impact, integrity, and financial health. Governance structures and processes are explicitly guided by our guiding principles of social justice, equity and inclusion, accountability with integrity, and relational, power-aware change. This means the Board and leadership regularly reflect on how decisions affect those furthest behind, and how power, voice, and resources are distributed across the organisation and ecosystem.

Fit-for-Scale Governance Architecture

As Mizizi Elimu Afrika evolves from a Kenya-rooted foundation into a continental backbone organisation, we will progressively adapt our governance architecture for scale and complexity. This includes:

- A capable, diverse Board with clear terms of reference, role descriptions, and succession plans, ensuring the right blend of expertise in education systems, finance, governance, philanthropy, and lived experience.
- Board committees (Strategy, Finance & Operations and Audit & Risk) that provide focused stewardship on core aspects of Vision 2040, while avoiding duplication with management.
- Clear delegation of authority and decision-making matrices, defining what rests with the Board, what is delegated to the Executive Director and leadership team, and where joint decision-making is required.
- An Advisory Committee that brings in expertise and perspectives from the ecosystem, that provides input into strategy, learning, and sense-making.

An Operating Model that Enables, Not Constrains

Mizizi Elimu Afrika's operating model is designed to be lean, coherent, and enabling. Operations are organised to support multi-country, multi-partner work without creating unnecessary bureaucracy. Core elements include:

- Backbone functions (finance, HR, operations, fundraising, MEL, communications, IT, and legal/compliance) that are strong enough to support growth, yet agile enough to respond to context.
- Clear, documented processes and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for planning, budgeting, procurement, grant and sub-grant management, travel and events, and asset management.
- Integrated planning cycles that link strategy, programmes, MEL, and budgets, ensuring

- that operational decisions reflect our priorities for foundational learning and equity; and
- A project and portfolio management approach that allows us to see across grants, geographies, and missions, avoid fragmentation, and allocate resources where they are most needed.

As Mizizi Elimu Afrika expands into new countries and roles, the operating model will adapt. This may include regional hubs, country coordination arrangements, or hosting agreements with local partners. In all cases, we prioritise localisation, working through and alongside local actors rather than duplicating structures.

Digital, Data and Knowledge Infrastructure

Effective operations depend on reliable, secure, and inclusive digital systems. Mizizi Elimu Afrika will invest in an integrated digital backbone that supports:

- Financial management and reporting that meets both Board-level and donor requirements.
- Human resource information systems (HRIS) for recruitment, onboarding, performance, learning, and wellbeing.
- Monitoring, evaluation, and learning platforms that enable real-time data use, outcome tracking, and shared sense-making; and
- Knowledge management systems that organise our tools, evidence, and learning for easy access by staff and partners.

Data protection and digital safeguarding are non-negotiable, particularly where children and marginalised groups are involved. Our operations will comply with relevant data protection laws and best practice standards, with clear protocols for consent, storage, access, and responsible use of data. We will also remain attentive to the digital divide, ensuring that technology enhances inclusion rather than widening disparities.

Safeguarding, Procurement and Ethical Operations

Governance and operations are key vehicles for living our commitments to "do no harm." Our policies and practices will:

- Embed child and adult safeguarding into all operational processes, from recruitment and partner selection to event management and field visits.
- Apply ethical, transparent procurement processes that balance value-for-money with quality, integrity, and support for local economies.
- Integrate gender, equity, and inclusion considerations into operational decisions—for example, in staff deployment, working conditions, facilities, and vendor choices; and
- Address environmental sustainability, including mindful travel policies, responsible event management, and efforts to reduce our ecological footprint in line with our broader social justice commitments.

Continuous Review and Alignment to Vision 2040

Governance and operations are not static. They will be reviewed and adapted at the start of each 5-year strategic cycle and annually, alongside our learning and risk reviews. Key questions will guide these reviews:

- Do our governance structures still match our scale, footprint, and ambition?
- Are our operational systems enabling frontline work and partnerships, or creating barriers?
- How well are we embodying our values, especially equity, gender justice, and accountability in the way we govern and operate?

Detailed governance and operations manuals, including Board charters, committee terms of reference, delegation frameworks, SOPs, and compliance protocols, will sit beneath this strategic enabler. Together, they will ensure that Mizizi Elimu Afrika's governance and operations hold the centre as we grow: steady enough to provide assurance, and flexible enough to support transformative, system-changing work across Africa.

VISION
2040

Appendices

Appendix I: Glossary of Terms

Not sure what a term means? This glossary breaks down the key words and phrases you'll find in our strategy. If you hit a bit of jargon or something sounds fuzzy, just pop back here for a quick explanation. We want everyone to feel that they are on the same page as they read, so use this section as your friendly guide.

Accountable Governance. Making sure that leaders and decision-makers are answerable to the people they serve, acting transparently and upholding high standards of integrity. At Mizizi Elimu Afrika, this means our governance bodies openly report, listen, and adapt to feedback from our partners, beneficiaries, and stakeholders.

Adaptive Learning/Adaptive Management. A flexible approach where strategies and activities are regularly reviewed and updated based on what is learnt from experience and evidence. Mizizi Elimu Afrika uses adaptive learning to quickly respond to changing contexts and emerging challenges.

Alliance-Building/Coalitions. Forming formal or informal groups of organisations, communities, or stakeholders to pursue a shared goal. Mizizi Elimu Afrika builds alliances to pool expertise, amplify impact, and ensure lasting change through collaboration.

Boundary Partners. The key individuals, groups, or organisations whose behaviour and practices must shift for Mizizi Elimu Afrika to achieve its goals for children. Examples include teachers, government officials, families, and community leaders. These are people who directly influence learning environments.

Capacity Strengthening. Helping people, organisations, or systems to build the skills, resources, and confidence they need to fulfil their roles more effectively. Mizizi Elimu Afrika strengthens capacity through training, mentoring, and sharing tools.

Change Agent/Changemaker. An individual or group that actively promotes and supports positive change, especially in systems or communities. Mizizi Elimu Afrika supports change agents such as teachers, parents, or youth leaders who drive transformation from within.

Child/Youth Agency. The ability of children and young people to have a voice, make choices, and influence decisions that affect their lives. Mizizi Elimu Afrika promotes agency by creating space for children and youth to participate meaningfully in education and community life.

Children Furthest Behind. Children who are most at risk of being excluded from quality education due to poverty, gender, disability, language, displacement, or where they live. Mizizi Elimu Afrika prioritises reaching these children to ensure equity and inclusion.

Collective Impact. When organisations, government, and communities work together in a coordinated way towards a shared goal, achieving results that would not be possible working alone. Mizizi Elimu Afrika fosters collective impact through partnership, shared measurement, and joint action.

Co-creation/Co-owned Change. Designing solutions or strategies together with those affected, such as teachers, learners, families, and policymakers, rather than imposing ideas from outside. Co-creation leads to stronger ownership, relevance, and sustainability.

Complex Systems. Systems made up of many interacting parts (like schools, families, government, communities) where small changes can have big, unpredictable effects. Education systems are complex because everything is connected and change is rarely straightforward.

Continuum of Change. A way of understanding progress as a series of steps or stages, not a single leap. Mizizi Elimu Afrika uses this concept to track how individuals, organisations, or systems gradually move from current practices to desired new behaviours and outcomes.

Data Disaggregation. Breaking down data into categories (such as gender, location, disability) to see differences and make sure no group is left behind. Disaggregation helps Mizizi Elimu Afrika measure progress on equity and inclusion.

Ecosystem (in education). All the people, organisations, policies, relationships, and environments that influence how children learn and grow. Mizizi Elimu Afrika works within the whole ecosystem – government, civil society, families, private sector – to strengthen learning outcomes.

Ecosystem Building. Strengthening the connections, resources, and shared purpose among the different actors in the education ecosystem. Mizizi Elimu Afrika builds the ecosystem by fostering collaboration, trust, and shared action across organisations and sectors.

Enabling Conditions. The factors that make positive change possible, like supportive policies, committed leadership, enough resources, and shared values. Mizizi Elimu Afrika works to create and maintain these conditions so that progress in foundational learning can take root and last.

Equity. Fairness in access, opportunity, and outcomes—recognising that different people have different needs and barriers. Mizizi Elimu Afrika works for equity by giving extra support to those furthest behind, so that every child can succeed.

Exclusion/Inclusive Education. Exclusion happens when certain children are left out of quality education because of who they are or where they live. Inclusive education means making sure every child—regardless of ability, gender, poverty, language, or background—can learn and thrive.

Foundational Skills. The essential abilities every child needs to learn, relate, and thrive—especially literacy, numeracy, life skills, and values. Mizizi Elimu Afrika's definition goes beyond reading and math to include the attitudes, habits, and values that support lifelong learning and wellbeing.

Governance. The structures and processes for making decisions, setting direction, and ensuring accountability within an organisation or system. For Mizizi Elimu Afrika, governance includes the Board, leadership, and other bodies that guide strategy and safeguard integrity.

Inclusive Education. A way of teaching and organising schools so that all children, regardless of background or ability, can learn and participate fully. Mizizi Elimu Afrika champions inclusive education to break down barriers and build belonging.

Learning Agenda. A set of key questions and topics that an organisation focuses on to deepen understanding and improve its work. Mizizi Elimu Afrika's learning agenda guides research, reflection, and adaptation, helping the team stay curious and responsive.

Learning Questions. Big questions Mizizi Elimu Afrika asks itself and others to drive learning, improvement, and adaptation. For example: "How can we shift power within systems?" or "What does it take to support the furthest behind?" These questions shape priorities and practice.

Localisation. A shift in power and resources to local actors, organisations, and communities. In Mizizi Elimu Afrika's context, localisation means supporting African-led, community-rooted leadership and solutions in education.

Marginalisation. The process by which certain groups (such as children with disabilities, girls, or those living in poverty) are pushed to the edges of society or denied full participation and opportunities. Mizizi Elimu Afrika focuses on reaching those most marginalised in education systems.

Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL). The systems and practices used to track progress, measure results, learn what works (and what doesn't), and improve programmes and strategies over time. At Mizizi Elimu Afrika, MEL goes beyond numbers. It includes stories, feedback, and learning.

Outcome Harvesting. A method for identifying and making sense of outcomes (intended or unintended) resulting from an organisation's work, especially in complex environments. It helps Mizizi Elimu Afrika learn what is changing and why, even if the change wasn't part of a set plan.

Participatory MEL. An approach to tracking and learning that involves those most affected – children, families, partners, and communities – in defining what success looks like, gathering evidence, and making sense of the findings together.

Political Economy. The interplay of politics, economics, and social factors that shapes how decisions are made and resources are allocated in a country or region. Mizizi Elimu Afrika adapts its approach to the unique political economy of each context.

Power (Shifting Power). Who has voice, influence, and decision-making authority within education systems and organisations. Mizizi Elimu Afrika aims to shift power towards those historically excluded, especially children, families, and local organisations.

Practices. The daily actions, routines, and behaviours of people working in and around the education system (teachers, leaders, policymakers, parents, etc.). Mizizi Elimu Afrika works to support new and better practices for foundational learning.

Relational Convening. Bringing together diverse people and organisations to build trust, share perspectives, and co-create solutions. For Mizizi Elimu Afrika, relational convening is about forging meaningful connections and collective action, not just holding meetings or events.

Relationships (in Systems). The quality of connections, trust, and collaboration among people and organisations. Strong relationships are essential for system change and for children's learning and wellbeing.

Scaling. Expanding the reach and impact of successful approaches, either by growing Mizizi Elimu Afrika's own work or supporting others (government, partners, networks) to adopt and adapt proven practices. Scaling is always context-sensitive.

Social Justice. The principle of ensuring fairness, equity, and dignity for all, especially for those who have been excluded or disadvantaged. Mizizi Elimu Afrika's commitment to social justice drives its focus on foundational skills, inclusion, and systemic change.

Strategic Enablers. The internal systems, resources, and capacities (such as people, funding, technology, and governance) that make it possible for Mizizi Elimu Afrika to deliver on its long-term strategy.

Structures (in Systems). The formal rules, roles, institutions, and resources that shape how education systems function. Changing structures (for example, how schools are funded or teachers are trained) is part of Mizizi Elimu Afrika's systems approach.

Systems Change. A long-term, holistic approach to transforming the underlying structures, relationships, and dynamics in education. Rather than fixing just one part, Mizizi Elimu Afrika aims to shift how the whole system works to improve foundational learning for all.

Theory of Change. A clear description (often with a diagram) of how and why Mizizi Elimu Afrika believes its actions will lead to the desired outcomes and impact. It helps guide strategy, measure progress, and communicate intent to partners.

Values-Based Education. An approach that intentionally integrates core human values - such as respect, empathy, responsibility, and integrity - across teaching and learning to support children's social and emotional development, foster ethical behaviour, and create inclusive, caring learning environments. It complements academic learning and prepares children to thrive and contribute positively to society.

Appendix II:
Examples of Continuum of Change

Continuum of Change: Educators and Learning Enablers

Dimension of Change	Early Signs of Change	Established Practice	Embedded Transformation
Structures	Access to inclusive teaching tools begins. Pilot trainings are introduced. Some flexibility in time and curriculum use.	Schools and TTCs adopt inclusive teaching guidelines. Resources and time for foundational skills are formally allocated.	Inclusive pedagogy is embedded in national pre- and in-service training. Accountability and incentives reflect holistic learning.
Power	Teachers are consulted in design and curriculum discussions. Youth mentors begin to be recognised.	Teachers participate in school improvement processes and peer networks. Youth mentors contribute to community learning agendas.	Educators co-lead education reforms. Power is shared through participatory leadership structures.
Mindsets	Teachers begin questioning performance-only definitions of success. Early awareness of learner wellbeing and diversity.	Schools shift culture towards holistic learning. Inclusion is normalised. Teachers begin recognising learners as agents.	Learning is viewed as relational, emotional, and inclusive. Teachers see themselves as equity leaders and changemakers.
Relationships	Peer collaboration begins. CSOs facilitate exchanges. Trust is limited but growing.	Stronger peer learning communities form. Parent-teacher relationships strengthen. Youth mentors become trusted learning partners.	Collaborative relationships are sustained across the ecosystem. Relational accountability drives school improvement.
Practices	Teachers try new strategies (group work, formative assessment). Mentors apply relational approaches.	Inclusive, competency-based teaching is routine. Learners influence planning. Adaptive pedagogy is practised intentionally.	Teaching is fully responsive, reflective, and relational. Educators actively adapt based on context and learner feedback.

Continuum of Change: Families and Caregivers

Dimension of Change	Early Signs of Change	Established Practice	Embedded Transformation
Structures	Parents begin participating in school meetings or community education forums. Occasional access to learning materials or parenting information.	Regular parent engagement sessions are embedded in school structures. Learning-at-home tools and support are locally available.	Parent engagement is institutionalised across schools and policy. Family learning support is budgeted, resourced, and adapted to context.
Power	Families are consulted in school-level discussions, often reactively. Some begin to express their voice in feedback forums.	Families co-design learning support activities and participate in school committees or improvement planning.	Families shape school policy, budgeting, and accountability. They act as recognised co-educators and learning advocates at community level.
Mindsets	Parents begin to see their role as important to learning, not just discipline or logistics. Education is seen as a shared responsibility.	Families increasingly value their influence on learning and wellbeing. Caregivers believe in their capacity to support even without formal education.	Families view themselves as central actors in shaping their children's futures. Learning is understood as emotional, ethical, and lifelong.
Relationships	Initial efforts at communication with teachers. Some positive shifts in trust. CSOs help mediate relationships.	Trust-based, two-way communication between families and schools becomes regular. Shared problem-solving occurs.	Sustained relationships of mutual respect exist between families, educators, and communities. Family-school collaboration becomes a norm.
Practices	Parents begin supporting basic learning activities at home (e.g., reading aloud, storytelling). Caregivers ask more questions about school.	Families routinely engage in structured learning support. Parents facilitate values-based conversations and emotional regulation at home.	Learning environments extend into homes and communities. Families adapt strategies to support learning transitions and social-emotional growth.

Continuum of Change: System Stewards and Influencers

The Continuum of Change is directly integrated into Mizizi Elimu Afrika's MEL framework, serving as the bridge between our systems-change ambition and the indicators we track. Each stage: Early Signs, Established Practice, Embedded Transformation, corresponds to specific learner-, system-, and ecosystem-level indicators that help us measure incremental and non-linear progress across structures, power, mindsets, relationships, and practices. By aligning these stages with both qualitative and quantitative indicators, the continuum enables us to identify early shifts, monitor adoption, and recognise deeper institutionalisation of change, ensuring that learning and adaptation are continuous and grounded in real system behaviour.

Dimension of Change	Early Signs of Change	Established Practice	Embedded Transformation
Structures	Foundational skills begin to be acknowledged in policy discourse. Ad hoc collaboration with CSOs or research partners emerges.	Policies, budgets, and institutional mechanisms reflect prioritisation of foundational skills. Interdepartmental coordination improves.	Foundational learning is fully institutionalised in national and sub-national systems – across curriculum, budgeting, teacher development, and accountability.
Power	System actors begin inviting civil society, teachers, and youth voices into consultations. Space opens for dialogue.	Shared decision-making occurs across stakeholder groups. Co-creation of reforms becomes common. Marginalised voices are increasingly present in key platforms.	Power is redistributed structurally: communities, educators, and youth influence policy, resource allocation, and accountability frameworks.
Mindsets	Foundational skills are recognised as more than early literacy and increasingly linked to citizenship, wellbeing, and equity.	System actors internalise that equitable systems require shifts in how success is defined. Inclusion becomes a design principle, not a burden.	Mindsets shift from control to enablement. Systems embrace complexity, diversity, and relational wellbeing as essential to learning.
Relationships	Initial alliances with reformers and CSOs are built. Some openness to evidence-informed dialogue and convening.	Strong coalitions form between government, civil society, and research actors. System stewards participate in relational gatherings and sense-making processes.	A culture of relational governance emerges, characterised by long-term partnerships, adaptive dialogue, and collective accountability.
Practices	Officials begin using data to identify inequities. Policies reference inclusive education, but implementation is limited.	Practices shift towards evidence use, inclusive planning, and responsive supervision. Policy becomes more grounded in classroom realities.	Policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring become iterative, inclusive, and grounded in lived experience. Reflexivity is built into system routines.

Reader's Notes

MIZIZI
ELIMU AFRIKA

Connect With Us

Le'Mac Building, 1st Floor,
Nairobi - Kenya

info@mizizielimu.org

+254 734 620 181

mizizielimu.org