FACTSHEET: EDUCATION IN ZAMBIA

The education system in Zambia:

The Ministry of General Education manages the Zambian Education System at the national level. At the lower levels the Provincial Education Offices (PEO) coordinate and supervise the District Education Board Secretariats (DEBS). The DEBS supervises the running of the schools in the respective District and is responsible for monitoring the objectives of the national education policy Educating Our Future (1996). The education system in Zambia is structured into different areas:

- Early Childhood Education (ECE)
- Basic Education
- Secondary Education (Junior Secondary, grades eight and nine and upper secondary, grades ten to twelve)
- Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training
- University Education
- Skills Training
- Adult Literacy

The age range that defines the critical period of Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) is 0 to 6 years. ECCDE programs contribute to school preparedness and developmental readiness. ECCDE also has gender implications as it enables women to work and participate in development activities while the children are being cared for. ECCDE in Zambia has remained mainly in the hands of the private sector and with civil society organisations. The Zambian government is planning to put up Early Childhood Education Centres which cater for children aged 3 to 6 years.

Primary education offers schooling in Grades 1 to 7. Education from grade 1 to 7 is for free. In addition to the schooling provided directly by government, the Ministry of Education, Science, Technology, Vocational Training and Early Education also recognizes two alternative approaches to primary schooling: Interactive Radio Instruction (IRI) centres, which are run by Educational Broadcasting Services (EBS) and community schools.

IRI consists of radio lessons written and produced by Educational Broadcasting Services of the Directorate of Open and Distance Education. For each grade, 150 lessons exist.

A community school is set up and run by a community. The community members may, for example, donate the land or secure donated land, help to build the school by preparing bricks and even constructing it, while the DEBS can distribute funds to community schools.
that are officially registered as such: Community schools with an enrolment of more than 400 pupils shall request for funds from the DEBS office to have their infrastructure upgraded from temporal to permanent. Community schools with enrolments less than the above shall be considered at the discretion of the DEBS. For more information on community schools, click here

**Secondary Education** in Zambia consists of junior secondary (Grade 8 and 9) and upper secondary (Grades 10 to 12). While primary education is free, fees are due from grade 8 onwards.

**Tertiary education** includes public and private universities and colleges. Through the Higher Education Act (2013), a Higher Education Authority for the coordination of all higher level education is being established.

**Life Skills:** Skills Training Courses take place at Centres for Continuing Education. They are meant for school-leavers and adults. Centres for Continuing Education are registered with the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA), which is a requirement for all institutions conducting skills training in the country.

**Adult Literacy:** At adult literacy centres, adults who have never been to school, or who had to drop out of school, can attend literacy classes. Most of the adults attending literacy classes are women.

**What laws and policies govern the education sector?**

The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of Zambia states that:

> “the State shall *endeavor* to provide equal and adequate educational opportunities in all fields and at all levels for all”.

But no provision in the constitution specifically protects the right to education. In 2013 a new constitution was proposed which includes a Bill of Rights that declares the right of persons to education, the right of children to free basic education and the right of persons with disabilities to education.

**The Sixth National Development Plan:** is a medium term plan that outlines strategies for development in Zambia, including education and skills development. It recognizes the high importance of education for development:
“Education and Skills Development plays a critical role in socio-economic development. It provides opportunities for growth, poverty reduction, employment, productivity and human development” (cf. SNDP, p.91).

**Education Sector National Implementation Framework, 2011-2015 (NIF III):** The NIF III aims to improve the general quality of education provision. Not only does the framework aim to increase enrolments but also to address quality aspects like better equipment in schools, qualified teachers and curriculum reforms. Though progress has been made in the education sector, e.g. increased access to education through expansion of infrastructure, a number of challenges still remain. The National Implementation Framework states as challenges, amongst others, inadequate teaching and learning materials and insufficient infrastructure, inadequately qualified teachers and high dropout rates.

**Educating Our Future, 1996:** This policy sets out the general principles of education in Zambia. For example it states that every child should have access to nine years of good quality basic education by 2015. The national education policy is currently being revised to take into account various developments in education since the 1996 Educating Our Future, including the transformation of basic and high schools into primary and secondary schools; the merging in 2011 of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Science, Technology and Vocational Training into the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education; and the provisions of the 2011 Education Act.

**Free Education Policy, 2002:** To enhance access, the Government announced the abolishment of all user fees for grades 1-7 and made school uniforms become optional. This policy especially enhanced the access to schools for vulnerable children like orphans and children from poor families. Since the introduction of the free basic education policy, enrolment in basic education levels has steadily increased.

**Re-entry Policy, 1997:** It regulates that girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy should have the chance to go back to school after giving birth. In December 1997 the Ministry of Education issued a circular to all Provincial Education Officers, District Education Officers and heads of schools which formalized the re-entry policy.

**The Education Act 2011** identifies that

- every person has a right to early childhood education, basic education and high school education
- every child has the right to free basic education
The act prohibits discrimination by education institutions and ensures equal access to all learners, including poor and vulnerable children.

**Teaching Profession Act, 2013:** The Teaching Council was established by this Act. It is, amongst other assignments, responsible for the registration of teachers, developing, maintaining and improving standards of qualification in the teaching profession and advising the government on matters relating to the teaching profession. The Teaching Profession Act also provides for the accreditation and regulation of colleges of education in order to maintain a high standard in the teaching profession.

**Higher Education Act, 2013:** This Act repealed and replaced the University Act, 1999. It provides for the establishment of the Higher Education Authority and for quality assurance and quality promotion in higher education institutions such as universities and colleges. For example, the Higher Education Authority is responsible for developing and recommending policy on higher education, including the establishment of public higher education institutions and the registration of private higher education institutions.

**Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Act, 1998 and Amendment Act 2005:** Under this Act, the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) was created. The functions of the TEVETA are amongst others to:

- Regulate and coordinate apprenticeship and trade testing facilities;
- Develop the national curricula in consultation with all stakeholders;
- Set minimum standards and qualifications for any occupation, skill, technology or trade for institutions in accordance with developments in industry; and
- Regulate and conduct national examinations relating to technical education, vocational and entrepreneurship training.

**Zambia Qualifications Authority Act, 2011:** The Higher Qualification Authority Act, 2011 established the Higher Qualifications Authority, which is responsible for developing and maintaining a national qualification framework for learning achievements in Zambia. Through this, the quality of education and training shall be enhanced and education, training and employment opportunities promoted.

**Examinations Council of Zambia Act, 1983:** established the Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ) which has the mandate to conduct school, teacher training as well as technical education vocational and entrepreneurship training examinations. In addition the council also awards certificates or diplomas to candidates who pass examinations, advises any public institution on development and use of any system of testing or examining. Examinations conducted by the ECZ include
• Grade 7 Composite Examination
• Junior Secondary School Leaving Examination
• Joint Examination for School Certificate (SC) and General Certificate of Education (GCE)
• Teacher Training Examinations
• Technical Education Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Examinations

Operational guidelines for community schools, 2016: The operational guidelines for community schools provides guidelines to stakeholders who manage and coordinate community schools. It provides an operational framework under which community schools must follow as they provide education to learners in community schools. It outlines the specific policies the government has put in place to support the operation of community schools. It also states the requirements and conditions which community schools should meet and observe as they operate.

Standards and Evaluation guidelines, 2015: The Standards and Evaluation Guidelines outlines the levels/standards for the provision of quality education. These minimum standards are intended to provide policy guidance on required educational inputs, processes and outputs. This document also provides a common framework for education programmes and practices that should be followed by all players in education at Early Childhood, Primary and Secondary levels of education.

Vision 2030: This document lays out the priorities the government intends to focus on to ensure that Zambia attains its goal to become a middle income nation by 2030. The overall vision for education is “Innovative and productive lifelong education and training for all by 2030”.

Revised decentralisation policy, 2013: Decentralisation involves the transfer of responsibilities to provincial, district and sub district levels of government. This document outlines the process of decentralisation in Zambia and particular look at the education sector implies the devolution of responsibilities to the council and what it will mean for the schools, staff and other stakeholders involved in the education sector in Zambia.

Civil Society Organisations work on Education: At present there are approximately 20 Zambian and 10 international CSOs implementing projects in the education sector - including Zambia National Education Coalition (ZANEC), Zambia Education and Development Organisation (ZEDAO), Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS) and Reformed Open Community Schools (ROCS) - are active in the field of Education. For example, ZANEC has developed a Budget Tracking Tool for Early Childhood Education, Care and Development and a report on The Quality of
Basic Education in Zambia. ZOCS has researched and reported on access for children with disabilities to appropriate education; and published reports on teacher shortages in community schools and budget-allocation by government to community schools. Meanwhile ROCS works closely with children and parents to increase their abilities to influence the local DEBS offices allocation of resources to the community schools, and to improve school governance and the quality of education in the schools.