



# PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

## Voice and Accountability: Community Empowerment for Improved Local Service Delivery Project (Project ID: P173472)

### Client

Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR)  
Lusaka, Zambia

### Financed by

Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF) and administered by the World Bank

### Implementing Period

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# Contents

Contents .....	ii
Acronyms.....	iv
Executive Summary .....	vi
1. BASIC DATA SHEET .....	xi
2. INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT CONTEXT .....	1
4. METHODOLOGY USED TO COMPLETE THE PCR .....	3
4.1 Structuring and Alignment with Official Guidelines .....	3
4.2 Extraction and Analysis of Project Management Records.....	3
6.0 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION .....	8
6.1 Overall Achievement of Project Objectives .....	8
Implementation of Activities by Component.....	17
6.3.1 Component 1: Community Awareness and Mobilization .....	17
Component 2: Strengthening Social Accountability Platforms .....	18
6.3.3 Component 3: Project Coordination, Monitoring, and Learning .....	19
Implementation Issues at Project Level .....	19
6.5 Implementation of Project Activities and Budget Performance by Component .....	23
Annual Disbursement Trends and Performance (2021–2025) .....	26
7.0 PROJECT MANAGEMENT.....	30
7.1 Financial Management .....	30
7.1.1 Budget Execution Analysis by Cost Category .....	30
8.0 Procurement .....	33
9.0 Environmental and Social Safeguards.....	35
10.0 Communication and Dissemination (including the status of the communication strategy implementation) .....	37
11. Fraud and Corruption .....	39
12.0 LESSONS LEARNT.....	40
13. KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION.....	43
14. RECOMMENDATIONS .....	46
Annex A: V&A Project - Status of the Results Framework as of June 2025 .....	42
Annex B: List of Schools Supported by the V&A Project .....	44
Annex C: List of Key Project Partners.....	46
Annex D: Project Advisory Committee Members.....	46
Annex E: Sample Community Scorecard Tool.....	47
<b>Monitoring, Training, and Dataflow.....</b>	<b>48</b>



## Acronyms

CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSPR	Civil Society for Poverty Reduction
CTM	Community Training Manual
DAC	Designated Account Ceiling
DPO	District Planning Officer
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESSP	Education and Skills Sector Plan
FAWEZA	Forum for African Women Educationalists of Zambia
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
IEC	Information, Education, and Communication
IFR	Interim Financial Report
JSDF	Japan Social Development Fund
KOBO	KOBO Toolbox (digital data collection platform)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoGE	Ministry of General Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NCE	No-Cost Extension
PAC	Project Advisory Committee
PIM	Project Implementation Manual
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPF	Project Preparation Facility
PPFM	Planning, Programming and Financial Management
PTC	Parent-Teacher Committee
PTF	Partnership for Transparency Fund
SAC	Social Accountability Committee
ToR	Terms of Reference

ToT	Training of Trainers
V&A	Voice and Accountability
WB	World Bank
WDC	Ward Development Committee
ZANEC	Zambia National Education Coalition
ZEEP	Zambia Education Enhancement Project

## Executive Summary

The Voice and Accountability (V&A) Project, financed through a US\$2.75 million grant from the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) and administered by the World Bank, was implemented between March 2022 and June 2025. The Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) served as the sole implementing agency, with technical support from the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF). Project activities were executed in nine districts across Zambia's Eastern and Western Provinces, some of Zambia's poorest and underserved provinces.

The Project Development Objective (PDO) was to strengthen community awareness and participation with school management and local authorities for accountable primary and secondary education services in the nine selected districts in Zambia. This was to be achieved by: (i) building community awareness and capacity to apply social accountability tools in education service delivery; and (ii) increasing community participation in a dialogue with school management and local authorities to seek improved education service delivery in nine districts. The project targeted approximately 86,000 rural citizens, of whom an estimated 51,000 were women, through a coordinated series of trainings, community scorecards, interface meetings, and grievance redress platforms aimed to enhance citizen voice and government responsiveness in the education sector.

The project was structured around three components. Component 1 focused on building community awareness and capacity regarding the delivery of education services. Component 2 aimed to increase community participation in education service delivery through the use of social accountability tools and structured engagement with school and local government actors. Component 3 supported project management and administration, monitoring and evaluation, and the dissemination of knowledge products. The project's approach was premised on the recognition that weak education outcomes in Zambia are not solely a result of limited resources, but also stem from insufficient citizen oversight, weak accountability mechanisms, and low levels of stakeholder participation in school governance. Through the empowerment of communities with knowledge and tools to demand better services, especially in underserved and remote areas, the project sought to strengthen the responsiveness of education authorities and promote inclusive, locally driven improvements in service delivery.

Significant progress was recorded in all three components. The project directly engaged over 45 schools and surrounding communities, established 45 Social Accountability Committees (SACs), and held more than 250 meetings on education service delivery with local authorities from 2022 to 2025. Tools such as school scorecards, and a Community Manual on Social Accountability were developed and deployed to guide ongoing engagement between citizens and education authorities. In early phases of implementation, the PTF Social Accountability Adviser worked closely with district-level stakeholders to identify community priorities and introduce structured training on rights, entitlements, and mechanisms for engaging with local government institutions. These trainings emphasized the transition from passive community

acceptance to active civic engagement, culminating in the preparation of localized action plans and the establishment of interface meetings as a formal space for dialogue.

The training process followed a cascade model whereby district-level participants were equipped with facilitation skills, manuals, and workshop content, to replicate the sessions at community level using local languages. Materials developed included comic-style manuals to sustain knowledge retention within rural communities, while core content focused on absenteeism, menstrual hygiene, textbook access, and school grant monitoring. Trainings also covered updates to education policy, including changes to school funding, access to CDFs, and new teacher recruitment drives. This holistic training package laid the groundwork for SAC-led scorecard activities and interface sessions throughout 2023 and 2024. Additionally, dashboard monitoring, and the use of KOBO Toolbox helped improve education issue follow-up and efficient feedback from duty bearers.

The V&A Project registered measurable gains across all three PDO indicators, affirming strong progress towards its stated goal of strengthening community awareness and participation in education service delivery. By March 2025, 96% of trained community members reported enhanced knowledge of their entitlements and the functioning of education systems, surpassing the end-of-project target of 95%. Participation by underrepresented groups, particularly women, youth, and persons with disabilities, also increased meaningfully, with 87% of these participants reporting that their voices were heard during interface dialogues, exceeding the 85% target. Most notably, the proportion of education issues raised by communities that were subsequently addressed by duty bearers rose from a baseline of 23% to 63%, well above the 50% target. These results show that the project not only facilitated civic learning, but also translated that learning into improved accountability relationships between citizens and education actors.

In addition to the core achievements, 91% of all outcome-level changes documented during the project period were directly attributed to the V&A Project interventions, particularly community trainings, school scorecard exercises, and structured interface dialogues. The Final Impact Survey reinforces these findings, showing that 95% of respondents observed improvements in teacher and pupil attendance, while 97% of key informants, who included headteachers and District Education Board Secretaries, reported increased community access to and involvement in school budget processes. Furthermore, awareness of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) application process increased markedly, with over 90% of both community members and key informants citing the project as the primary source of information. In practical terms, more than 112 school-level action plans were developed and partially implemented by SACs, leading to localized improvements in areas such as textbook tracking, construction of school latrines, and provision of desks.

Despite a delayed onset due to initial fiduciary compliance requirements, field-level implementation started in March 2022 onwards. Constraints included limited digital literacy in rural districts, delays in procurement and cost table approvals, and staff turnover within

the Project Management Unit (PMU). These challenges were progressively addressed through a combination of measures. C SPR recruited full-time project staff for key roles in monitoring and communications, strengthening the internal capacity of the PMU. The Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) provided sustained technical guidance and mentorship, especially in refining the M&E system and designing social accountability tools. Routine monitoring of project work plans by C SPR, alongside support supervision missions from the World Bank, contributed to clearer sequencing of field activities and better compliance with fiduciary requirements. Trainings in social accountability tools improved the effectiveness of stakeholder engagements, while SACs and community facilitators took the lead in preparing localized action plans, which informed dialogue meetings and community monitoring efforts.

By the end of the first quarter of 2025, the project had expended a total of US\$1,750,733.88. This represents 63.66 percent of the total project allocation of US\$2.75 million. Expenditures were primarily directed toward community scorecard implementation, capacity-building trainings, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation systems. The analysis of budget execution variances is based on a direct comparison between the cumulative expenditures and the original component-based budget allocations. For example, Component 1 registered a 56.32 percent utilization rate, while Component 2 showed mixed execution, with sub-component variances ranging from 45.21 to 128.4 percent. These fluctuations were largely due to adjustments in training intensity, realignment of activities in response to field conditions, and deferred procurement of certain knowledge dissemination products.

As the project progressed, the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) played a strategic oversight and advisory role. Comprising representatives from C SPR, PTF, key government ministries, and selected civil society organizations, the PAC convened periodically to review implementation progress and offer technical guidance. In addition, PAC members contributed to midterm reflections and endorsed greater institutionalization of community engagement tools within local education systems. While not involved in day-to-day operations, the PAC helped steer dialogue on sustainability and provided an external accountability mechanism to reinforce transparency across project activities. PAC members also highlighted key areas for future programming, including stronger policy integration, streamlined grievance handling, and community-led sustainability planning.

In addition to the PDO-level progress, the project successfully delivered results across all seven intermediate indicators. A total of 1,345 community members were trained in social accountability against a target of 900. The number of active Social Accountability Committees (SACs) reached 135, meeting the full target. Community participation in consultative meetings surpassed expectations, with 1,856 individuals engaged against a target of 600. Thirteen peer-to-peer community learning events were held, exceeding the target of 9. However, certain indicators, such as the number of meeting minutes recording community concerns (141 out of a target of 333), and the proportion of communities that completed monitoring of more than three education activities (90.8% out of a target of 100%), fell slightly short. These outcomes are detailed in full in Annex A.

From a sustainability perspective, the V&A project introduced several tools and platforms that have the potential to be embedded within existing governance systems, such as Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and Parent-Teacher Committees (PTCs). The scorecard methodology, interface meeting model, and grievance redress mechanisms developed under the project have been recognized by stakeholders as promising tools for wider application in national education programming.

### **Forward-Looking Recommendations**

Looking ahead, key recommendations include:

- i. Integrating citizen engagement tools into local education governance frameworks by institutionalizing the use of community scorecards, grievance redress mechanisms, and Safe School Plans within the routines of WDCs, PTCs, and School Management Committees (SMCs), with oversight and capacity support from District Education Boards;
- ii. Sustaining capacity support for SACs and WDCs beyond the project's lifespan by institutionalizing refresher trainings, providing simplified monitoring tools in local languages, allocating community-level facilitation budgets within CDF frameworks, and ensuring periodic mentorship from district education officers or civil society partners;
- iii. Strengthening the alignment between CSO-led interventions and government sector programs by deepening collaboration with District Education Boards, engaging Provincial Program Management Teams (PPMTs) in planning and monitoring, aligning SAC and WDC activities with government-led school improvement plans, and ensuring that project-generated tools such as community scorecards and Safe School Plan monitoring guides are integrated into Ministry of Education structures;
- iv. Institutionalizing peer learning platforms to promote scale-up of successful practices by formalizing the inter-district exchange workshops piloted in Mongu and Chipata into annual review forums coordinated by the Ministry of Education at provincial level, with technical inputs from CSOs and support from cooperating partners.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the V&A project succeeded in strengthening community awareness and participation with school management and local authorities for accountable primary and secondary education services in the nine selected districts in Zambia. The project contributed to heightened community awareness, increased use of social accountability tools, and more participatory oversight of school-level decisions. Community actors reported improved responsiveness from school heads, greater access to policy information, enhanced monitoring of absenteeism, and inclusion in discussions about resource allocation and infrastructure gaps.

The project demonstrated a viable model for strengthening citizen engagement in education accountability systems.

# 1. BASIC DATA SHEET

**Project Title:** *Voice and Accountability: Community Empowerment for Improved Local Service Delivery (V&A)*

**Project ID:** P173472

**Country:** Zambia

**Financing Source:** Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF)

**Total Grant Amount:** US\$ 2.75 million

- Component 1: US\$ 0.97 million
- Component 2: US\$ 1.38 million
- Component 3: US\$ 0.40 million

**Administrator:** World Bank

**Implementing Agency:** Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR), with technical support from the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF)

**Grant Agreement signed:** September 21, 2021

**Effectiveness date:** December 2021

**Closing Date:** 30 June 2025

**Project Objective:** To strengthen community awareness and participation with school management and local authorities for accountable primary and secondary education services in the nine selected districts in Zambia.

This will be achieved by: (i) building community awareness and capacity to apply social accountability tools in education service delivery; and (ii) increasing community participation in a dialogue with school management and local authorities to seek improved education service delivery.

**Geographical Scope:** 45 project schools in nine districts across two provinces:

- *Western Province:* Kalabo, Kaoma, Nalolo, Senanga, Sesheke
- *Eastern Province:* Katete, Mambwe, Sinda, Vubwi

**Project Description:** *Component 1:* Increasing Community Awareness of the Delivery of Education Services; *Component 2:* Enhancing Community Engagement and Participation in the Delivery of Education Services; *Component 3:* Project Management and Administration, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), and Knowledge Dissemination.

## **Key Project Activities**

- Trainings in citizen rights and social accountability methods

- Community-led monitoring of education service delivery in the following areas:
  - Construction and renovations
  - School grants and Budgets monitoring
  - Teacher and pupil absenteeism
  - Textbook delivery
  - Safe school plans implementation
- Communicating monitoring results with education officials at the school, district, province and national levels

### **Primary Beneficiaries**

- 86,000 rural citizens in 45 School communities (parents, learners, teachers)
- Parent-Teacher Committees (PTCs)
- Social Accountability Committees (SACs)
- Ward Development Committees (WDCs)
- Local education and government officials
- Persons with disabilities and other under-represented groups

## 2. INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT CONTEXT

This Project Completion Report (PCR) presents the final deliverable for the V&A Project, implemented in Zambia with financial support from the World Bank–administered Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF). Covering a four-year period between 2021 and 2025, the report marks the formal closure of implementation activities by the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR), the national partner responsible for execution. It offers an evidence-based reflection on project delivery, achievements, challenges encountered, and lessons generated during the course of implementation. Drawing from routine monitoring, evaluation exercises, and learning documentation, the report also offers practical recommendations to guide similar community-driven governance initiatives in the education sector.

The V&A Project was conceived within a broader national development and education reform agenda aimed at deepening decentralization, improving accountability, and fostering citizen participation in service delivery. Despite Zambia’s commitment to these goals, longstanding weaknesses in education governance, especially in rural and underserved communities, persisted. Local oversight structures such as Ward Development Committees and School Management Committees often lacked the tools, capacity, and mandate to engage meaningfully in school affairs. Furthermore, widespread public dissatisfaction with service delivery, limited access to information, and weak feedback mechanisms highlighted the urgent need for an intervention that could equip communities to participate more actively in education governance.

The project was thus designed to address these governance and participation gaps, and it directly responds to several national policy frameworks, including the 2022–2026 Ministry of Education Strategic Plan, the National Decentralization Policy (2023), and the Eighth National Development Plan. These frameworks emphasize transparency, stakeholder inclusion, and the use of social accountability tools as critical pathways for improving service outcomes. The introduction of the Free Education Policy in 2022 further transformed the delivery context by offering new opportunities, as well as new pressures, for local actors to engage in monitoring school resources, textbook delivery, teacher attendance, and infrastructure improvements. The V&A Project leveraged this evolving policy space to position community members not just as beneficiaries, but as active co-producers of education outcomes.

Implementation took place in 45 public schools across nine districts, five in Western Province (Kalabo, Kaoma, Nalolo, Senanga, and Sesheke) and four in Eastern Province (Katete, Mambwe, Sinda, and Vubwi). These districts were purposively selected through a multi-criteria process outlined in the Project Implementation Manual (PIM), taking into account geographic marginalization, civil society presence, willingness of local authorities to collaborate, and evidence of weak local accountability systems. At the heart of the intervention was the recognition that sustainable accountability cannot be imposed externally

but must be cultivated from within. This required a participatory and adaptive approach that emphasized voice, inclusion, and locally led problem-solving.

The project's design also acknowledged the enabling environment created by complementary national efforts such as the Zambia Education Enhancement Project (ZEEP), expanded Constituency Development Fund (CDF) provisions, and a presidential directive to improve school infrastructure through increased desk provision. These parallel reforms provided additional entry points for community engagement and increased the potential for sustainability. For instance, SACs were encouraged to work closely with WDCs and Parent-Teacher Committees to align monitoring activities with ongoing CDF applications and school improvement planning processes.

The development objective of the project was to strengthen community awareness and engagement with school management and local authorities in order to improve accountability in education service delivery. This objective was based on the view that communities, when equipped with the right information, tools, and channels for interaction, are more likely to demand and sustain improvements in public services. The project aimed to deepen community participation while also improving the responsiveness of service providers at the local level.

The project was implemented through three components. The first component sought to raise awareness within school communities about education service norms, budget allocations, and citizen roles under Zambia's evolving education policies. The second component focused on operationalizing social accountability tools and platforms, including scorecards, interface meetings, and community feedback mechanisms. These activities were primarily implemented through SACs. The third component supported project coordination, monitoring and evaluation, knowledge sharing, and compliance with environmental and social safeguards.

This report is presented in ten sections. Following the Basic Data Sheet and this introductory context, Section 4 outlines the project approach and methodology. Section 5 examines the sectoral and institutional context in which the project was situated, with particular attention to education policy priorities, and governance frameworks. Section 6 presents the implementation of project components and assesses progress made toward achieving the Project Development Objective and intermediate indicators. Section 7 reviews key aspects of project management, including the role of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), performance of the Project Management Unit (PMU), procurement, safeguards, and oversight mechanisms. Section 8 provides a detailed financial analysis, summarizing disbursements, budget variances, and audit outcomes. Section 9 reflects on key lessons learnt during implementation. The report concludes with Section 10, which sets out recommendations and outlines agreements relevant for future programming and sector-wide replication.

## **4. METHODOLOGY USED TO COMPLETE THE PCR**

The preparation of the PCR for the V&A Project was informed by a structured, document-based methodology rooted in evidence triangulation, contextual analysis, and results-based reporting. The process drew on more than thirty verified project documents, encompassing planning frameworks, implementation records, financial reports, evaluation studies, and learning products. The methodology followed the ten-section reporting format outlined in the official Completion Report Outline provided through World Bank guidance on JSDF-supported projects.

The approach unfolded through four interrelated phases described below:

### **4.1 Structuring and Alignment with Official Guidelines**

The initial phase involved defining the structural framework of the report in line with the World Bank's recommended Completion Report Outline. This structure enabled the systematic organization of content across ten sections, encompassing project background, context, implementation performance, results, lessons, and sustainability. Orientation was also obtained from internal reporting tools developed by CSPR and PTF, including reporting templates, annotated outlines, and technical partner reflections. These resources collectively informed the sequencing, thematic coherence, and level of detail expected across sections.

### **4.2 Extraction and Analysis of Project Management Records**

The second phase focused on a comprehensive review of operational and managerial documents that captured the day-to-day and strategic implementation of the project. Key references included the Zambia V&A Project Implementation Manual (November 2021), the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP), and the Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) compliance reports. Additional resources included annual and semi-annual workplans and budgets for the years 2022 through 2025, a consolidated summary of planned versus actual activities, and procurement and financial tracking reports. These materials informed core sections of the report, particularly Sections 4, 5, and 6, by supplying factual data on activity completion, procurement performance, safeguard compliance, and stakeholder participation mechanisms such as grievance redress, safe school planning, and Social Accountability Committees.

### **4.3 Triangulation of Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Reports**

The third phase involved synthesizing performance evidence drawn from project monitoring systems, evaluation findings, and learning documentation. Semi-annual progress reports submitted to the World Bank between 2022 and early 2025 provided a chronological account of implementation progress, emerging challenges, and adaptive strategies. The Baseline reports and MTR guided on Project Implementation. These were complemented by the Final Outcome Harvesting Report (March 2025), the Final VA Scorecard Report (March 2025), and the Final Impact Survey (March 2025), all of which offered outcome-level insights

on the responsiveness of local duty bearers, improvements in citizen oversight, and school-level accountability shifts. The Baseline and the Mid-Term Review Report (November 2023) further supported the triangulation of results to assess the project development objective and intermediate indicators. This evidence was used primarily to inform Sections 6, 7, and 8 of the report.

#### **4.4 Contextualization through Baseline and Political Economy Analysis**

The final phase involved grounding the analysis in broader contextual realities that shaped project design, uptake, and performance. Two documents were especially critical in this regard: the Baseline Survey Report (November 2022), which provided starting-point data on community awareness, participation, and education service gaps; and the Political Economy and Stakeholder Analysis (2023), which examined the influence of institutional dynamics, decentralization, elite capture, and shifting power relations on citizen engagement. These contextual documents were instrumental in informing Sections 2 and 3 of the PCR, helping to interpret implementation patterns and outcome variance across districts.

## 5.0 SECTORAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Zambia's education sector is governed through a multi-tiered structure that mirrors the country's ongoing decentralization reforms. The Ministry of Education retains primary responsibility for policy formulation, curriculum development, and sector oversight, while service delivery responsibilities are delegated to Provincial Education Offices and District Education Boards. Local authorities and school management teams play a direct role in implementation, supported by community-based structures such as Parent Teacher Committees and Ward Development Committees. These mechanisms are intended to bridge national policy with school-level action, but in practice, their effectiveness is constrained by limited technical capacity, weak accountability, and poor community engagement.

Although statutory frameworks such as the Education Act (2012), the Local Government Act (2019), and the revised Ward Development Committee guidelines affirm the principle of citizen participation in service delivery, these provisions remain largely aspirational in many parts of the country. The gap between formal mandates and on-the-ground practice is especially visible in underserved districts, where communities often lack basic awareness of their service entitlements and face practical barriers to engagement with school authorities. Consequently, opportunities for collaborative planning, budget tracking, and performance monitoring are either missed or dominated by a small group of elite actors.

The V&A Project was designed to address these governance challenges by enhancing grassroots participation, strengthening citizen oversight, and activating dormant accountability mechanisms. Its core objective was to improve the responsiveness of education services by equipping school communities with the tools and platforms needed to engage constructively with duty bearers. The project approached this challenge through a participatory and layered institutional model, in which implementation was led by CSPR, supported by local civil society organizations, community leaders, and school-based governance bodies. This collaborative structure ensured that activities were not externally imposed but embedded in the social and institutional realities of each target district.

CSPR worked in close collaboration with Parent Teacher Committees, Ward Development Committees, school management teams, district education offices, and relevant service providers. In each district, locally based community facilitators were recruited to serve as the project's interface with beneficiaries. These individuals were selected from within their own

communities and received structured training from CSPR's Provincial staff and members of the Project Planning and Management Team. Their role was to mobilize participation, convene interface meetings, administer scorecards, and facilitate constructive dialogue between school communities and education authorities.

A distinctive feature of the institutional model was the involvement of the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF), an international partner that provided technical support throughout the project. PTF's contributions included the development of training materials, advisory support on social accountability tools, and capacity building for national and local implementers. This partnership improved the project's technical quality and helped ensure alignment with international best practices in citizen engagement and education governance.

The project also benefited from close collaboration with members of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC), which brought together expertise from diverse civil society stakeholders. These partners played a critical role in validating tools, supporting advocacy, and sharing evidence with national policymakers. Their engagement strengthened the project's legitimacy and helped position it within broader sectoral dialogues on education reform, public expenditure tracking, and citizen-state relations.

At a programmatic level, the V&A Project was designed to complement ongoing government and donor initiatives in the education sector. The Zambia Education Enhancement Project (ZEEP), supported by the World Bank, focused on system strengthening, teacher deployment, and infrastructure development. However, it did not include a structured approach to citizen engagement. The V&A Project filled this gap by piloting demand-side mechanisms for community monitoring and feedback in nine underserved districts. In this way, the project served not only as a standalone intervention but also as a strategic complement to existing sectoral investments. Unfortunately, delays in ZEEP implementation meant that only a small number of V&A schools had received ZEEP benefits.

Implementation took place during a dynamic policy period that included the roll-out of the Free Education Policy and the renewed push for decentralization through the 2023 National Decentralization Policy. These reforms expanded access to schooling and increased the flow of public resources to the local level, but also created new accountability pressures for school managers, community structures, and district officers. The V&A Project responded by strengthening community capacity to participate in budget planning, monitor teacher

attendance, track the distribution of textbooks, and engage in dialogue on the implementation of Safe School Plans. The decentralization of MoE responsibilities to the provinces and districts, however, experienced delays that limited the full institutionalization of project tools and approaches within formal government structures.

## 6.0 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

### 6.1 Overall Achievement of Project Objectives

This section reviews the overall performance of the V&A Project against the nine indicators outlined in the revised Results Framework of January 2023. These include three indicators that directly measure progress toward the PDO and seven intermediate indicators. The section begins with a summary of the final results for each indicator as of June 2025, measured against their revised end targets. This is followed by broader reflections on the project's contribution to strengthening community engagement and accountability in education service delivery across the targeted districts.

#### **Indicator 1: Percentage of trained community members reporting enhanced knowledge about entitlements and education service delivery**

As shown in table 1 below, at project start, only a negligible fraction of community members had any awareness of education service entitlements or delivery standards. The V&A Project addressed this through intensive, grassroots training in all participating districts. By project end, 96% of trained community members reported improved understanding, exceeding the revised target of 95%. The result confirms the efficacy of the cascade training model, simplified training materials in local languages, and accessible formats such as comic manuals that enhanced retention in low-literacy communities. This indicator speaks directly to the project's success in demystifying government processes and equipping citizens to demand better services.

#### **Indicator 2: Percentage of underrepresented community members (women, youth, persons with disabilities, and minorities) participating and reporting that their views were heard**

The inclusion of underrepresented community members, specifically women, youth, persons with disabilities, and the elderly, was central to the V&A Project's objective of fostering inclusive education governance. From a 2022 baseline of 58 percent, participation among these groups rose to 87 percent by 2025, exceeding the revised target of 85 percent. This outcome reflects deliberate outreach efforts, gender-balanced composition of SACs, and structured facilitation through community-based organizations and leaders. Data from the Final Impact Survey and Outcome Harvesting Report confirmed that women and youth

increasingly took on leadership roles in interface meetings, scorecard activities, and grievance redress forums, signaling not just quantitative gains in participation but also qualitative improvements in the visibility and influence of historically marginalized voices.

However, disaggregated data from the December 2024 scorecard exercise reveal mixed outcomes across demographic groups. Female participation achieved 134.3% of the target, while youth reached 112.1%, signifying highly effective mobilization. In contrast, participation of persons with disabilities reached only 31.4%, and older persons stood at 68.4%, both falling short of intended targets. These gaps are indicative of the structural barriers, including limited accessibility and insufficient targeted engagement strategies. The project's inclusive design thus registered clear gains in gender and youth participation but exposed limitations in reaching persons with disabilities and older citizens.

**Indicator 3: Percentage of education issues identified by communities that were addressed by duty bearers**

This indicator tracked the responsiveness of education authorities to citizen input. At baseline, only 23% of issues raised by communities had resulted in any remedial action. Through interface meetings and follow-up monitoring, the proportion of addressed issues rose to 63% by 2025, well beyond the 50% target. Qualitative reports indicate that these addressed issues included pupil absenteeism, transparency of school grants, textbook tracking, and Safe School Plan implementation. The result signals that the project fostered not just expression of grievances but actual responsiveness, an essential pillar of accountability.

**Intermediate Results Indicators**

**Indicator 4: Number of community members trained in social accountability**

From a baseline of zero, a total of 1,345 community members were trained against a revised target of 900. Training was delivered in multiple formats, including in-person workshops, comic-style manuals, and digital modules where feasible. Over 50% of the trained cohort were women, reinforcing the project's commitment to equitable capacity-building. These individuals now constitute a cadre of local accountability actors with the skills to convene meetings, administer scorecards, and participate in school planning processes.

**Indicator 5: Number of active community groups with clear mandates and regular meetings**

The project established 135 SACs, matching the exact target. These structures formed the backbone of community monitoring and were embedded in existing governance arrangements, such as Parent-Teacher Committees and Ward Development Committees. Regular meetings were documented in all nine districts. The SACs became trusted vehicles for citizen voice, local information sharing, and planning of education oversight activities.

**Indicator 6: Number of community members participating in consultative meetings**

A total of 1,856 individuals took part in structured consultative meetings, far exceeding the target of 600. This figure includes parents, traditional leaders, headteachers, local government officials, and learners. The high participation levels indicate strong demand for platforms where community voices can be heard. They also points to the legitimacy of the interface meeting model, which was grounded in respectful, locally led dialogue.

**Indicator 7: Number of consultative meetings held between communities and education authorities**

Against a target of 250 meetings, only 141 were held by June 2025. This represents a shortfall, largely due to disruptions from the 2024 cholera outbreak and scheduling constraints in remote districts. However, project records and outcome harvesting indicate that the quality and influence of meetings remained high. For instance, many meetings led to action plans and concrete follow-ups, such as infrastructure improvements, budget reallocations, and enhanced teacher oversight. While the quantitative target was missed, the qualitative outcome remained strong.

**Indicator 8: Percentage of communities that completed monitoring of more than three education service activities**

All 45 project schools, representing 100% of target communities, successfully monitored at least three education service delivery functions. These typically included tracking of pupil attendance, textbook availability, menstrual hygiene facilities, and delivery of school grants. The use of simplified monitoring tools and training in data collection (e.g., via Kobo Toolbox) contributed to this achievement. The 100% performance represents full attainment of the target.

**Indicator 9: Number of meeting minutes recording community concerns and requests**

Only 141 sets of meeting minutes were formally recorded, compared to a target of 333. This shortfall was due to inconsistent documentation practices, particularly in schools with limited staffing or poor digital access. While most consultative meetings were held, many lacked the clerical support to generate formal records. This outcome highlights an area for future improvement, namely, simplifying templates and providing refresher training in minute-taking and digital submissions.

**Indicator 10: Number of peer-to-peer community learning events held**

Thirteen peer-learning events were organized, surpassing the target of nine. These events were hosted in Mongu, Chipata, and Petauke, bringing together SAC representatives, community facilitators, and government officials from different districts. They enabled sharing of good practices, cross-district mentoring, and joint development of sustainability strategies. Participants reported that peer learning helped them refine scorecard implementation, improve grievance redress, and adapt tools to local realities.

**Table 1: Achievement of PDO and Intermediate Results Indicators (as of March 2025)**

Indicator	Baseline (May 2022)	Revised End Target (June 2025)	Final Results (June 2025)	Target Achieved?
1. % of trained community members reporting enhanced knowledge about entitlements and service delivery	0%	95%	96%	Yes
2. % of underrepresented community members (females, disabled, youth, minorities) participating and reporting views	58%	85%	87%	Yes
3. % of education issues identified by communities that were addressed by duty bearers	23%	50%	63%	Yes
4. # of community members trained in social accountability (of which are female)	0	900	1,345	Yes
5. # of active community groups with clear mandates and regular meetings	0	135	135	Yes

6. # of community members participating in consultative meetings	0	600	1,856	Yes
7. # of consultative meetings held between communities and education authorities	0	250	141	No
8. % of communities that completed monitoring of more than 3 education service activities	0%	100%	100%	Yes
9. # of meeting minutes recording community concerns and requests	0	333	141	No
10. # of peer-to-peer community learning events held	0	9	13	Yes

### 6.1.1 Building Community Awareness and Capacity

The V&A Project registered significant results in improving community awareness of education rights, roles, and entitlements, laying the groundwork for active civic engagement in school governance. From a baseline where fewer than 10% of community members had ever participated in school governance and only 6% understood mechanisms for reporting service delivery failures, project interventions led to marked improvements. By June 2025, 96% of trained community members reported enhanced knowledge of their educational rights and service delivery structures, exceeding the target of 95%. This outcome was attributed to a cascade model of training led by PTF and CSPR, which reached 1,345 community members across the nine districts, supported by a tailored training package that included a Community Training Manual, ToT guide, and an innovative local-language comic manual. These resources helped localize learning and build institutional memory.

The establishment of 135 SACs across the 45 project schools served as a key structural outcome. These SACs, supported by 61 trained education officials, became the linchpins of localized monitoring and feedback. Communities reported increased confidence in engaging with school heads and district officials, with Final Scorecard data showing that over 60% of schools earned green ratings in areas such as knowledge of school grant disbursements, planning participation, and financial transparency. Additionally, digital data collection

through KoboCollect improved evidence-based monitoring, although inconsistent usage across remote districts constrained its full potential. Importantly, the Final Outcome Harvesting Report found that 91% of documented behavioral and procedural changes in education governance were directly attributed to project interventions, affirming the V&A model's impact beyond process training to tangible accountability improvements at the local level.

### **6.1.2 Enhancing Community Participation in Dialogue**

Enhanced dialogue between communities and education duty bearers emerged as a hallmark of the V&A Project, both in terms of quantity and quality. A total of 141 formal interface meetings were documented, with participation from over 1,856 individuals, well above the 600-person target. Although the number of meetings fell short of the original 250 target due to cholera-related disruptions and documentation gaps, their qualitative value was high. These forums provided structured opportunities for community feedback, performance monitoring, and co-creation of school improvement strategies. As confirmed by the Outcome Harvesting Report, 48% of all harvested change outcomes occurred in 2024 alone, highlighting the deepening influence of such engagements over time.

Gender and social inclusion outcomes were also substantial. Female participation reached 134.3% of the planned target, while youth participation achieved 112.1%. These results indicate that the project was strong in terms of commitment to equitable engagement, particularly through SAC gender quotas and targeted outreach. However, the participation of persons with disabilities (31.4%) and older persons (68.4%) remained below target, pointing to the need for more deliberate accessibility measures in future interventions. Community dialogues led to observable service improvements, including the repair of sanitation facilities, teacher redeployments, and better adherence to Safe School Plans. These developments indicate both increased awareness and a shift in power relations between communities and service providers.

### **6.1.3 Area-specific Achievements**

Beyond progress on the ten Results Framework indicators, the V&A Project sought to foster deeper civic engagement in key areas of education service delivery that communities themselves prioritized. Through a participatory co-design process involving SACs, WDCs, and

PTCs, five thematic areas were consistently identified as critical for localized accountability: (i) school budgets and grants monitoring, (ii) teacher and pupil absenteeism tracking, (iii) Safe Schools implementation, (iv) inclusive governance and participation, and (v) construction and renovation monitoring. These areas formed the backbone of the scorecard process, interface dialogues, and evidence-based engagement with education authorities. This section presents a synthesis of outcomes across these five domains.

**a. Construction and Renovation Monitoring**

Although infrastructure development was not a direct focus of project financing, community actors took proactive steps to monitor construction and renovation projects funded through the CDF and school grants. According to the Outcome Harvesting Report and qualitative feedback from interface meetings, community members tracked the quality, timeliness, and contractor compliance of ongoing school rehabilitation works in more than 15 schools. For example, in Petauke and Mongu districts, SACs raised concerns about substandard workmanship in classroom renovation, prompting DEBS offices to halt payments and enforce remedial actions. In at least three districts (Chipata, Katete, and Nalolo) community facilitators also worked with local council representatives to verify that CDF-funded projects, including classroom blocks and latrine construction, were completed according to specifications. These efforts signaled a growing confidence among communities to scrutinize infrastructure investments and demand value for money, even when these fell outside the formal project scope. Importantly, they also highlighted how community-based monitoring can complement national public financial management systems by embedding citizen oversight at the point of service delivery.

Figure 1: Monitoring of Construction and Renovation at Sonso Primary School, Sesheke District

<p><i>Monitoring of School constructing at Sonso Primary School – Sesheke District by SAC members</i></p>	<p><i>Outcome after monitoring period</i></p>
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## b. School Budgets and Grants Monitoring

*“The school budget is now open to everyone, and we take part in planning. The finance committee involves some community members as participants, and the budget is displayed on the notice board for everyone to see. This openness has increased awareness and strengthened accountability within the school.” (Community Member, Western Province)*

Across the 45 project schools, community scorecard data revealed marked improvements in transparency and oversight of school budgets. Twenty-nine of the 45 schools (64%) received green ratings on "Awareness of School Grants," signaling that communities had a satisfactory understanding of how school funds were allocated and spent. Moreover, 25 schools (56%) received green scores for displaying budget information on school notice boards, while only 8 (18%) received red scores, indicating persistent weaknesses in financial transparency in a few schools. Communities also used the scorecard platform to track delivery timelines for textbook distribution, CDF bursaries, and infrastructure inputs. A majority of participants confirmed that they were now familiar with bursary application procedures, with 30 schools rated green in this domain.

Figure 2: Monitoring and Display of School Budgets and Grants Taferadziko Primary School – Vubwi District

<i>Monitoring and Display of School Budgets and Grants Taferadziko Primary School – Vubwi District</i>	<i>Outcome after monitoring period</i>
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YEAR	GRANTS RECEIVED	ESTIMATED	ACTUAL	REMARKS
2022				
2023				
2024				
2025				
2026				
2027				

- The school budgets also enhanced participation of community members in the budget and planning processes at the schools.
- The display of school budgets enhanced transparency and accountability in the procurement process and financial management of the school grants.

### c. Teacher and Pupil Absenteeism Monitoring

The project’s capacity-building interventions equipped SACs and community members with

*"Attendance by both teachers and pupils has greatly improved. Teachers are more accountable now because of community monitoring and support from the School Accountability Committees (SACs)" Female Pupil Western Province.*

the skills to monitor absenteeism at both teacher and learner levels. About 42% of SACs reported that absenteeism monitoring had led to direct engagement with school heads, including the establishment of check-in systems for staff and the

submission of absenteeism reports to DEBS offices. These actions led, in some instances, to corrective deployment or supervision interventions. Moreover, absenteeism data collected by SACs were used in interface meetings as evidence to demand greater accountability from education officials.

### d. Safe Schools Implementation

The Safe School Plans, introduced as part of the Free Education Policy reform period, were integrated into the V&A Project’s awareness and monitoring toolkit. Communities were sensitized on the components of Safe Schools, ranging from physical safety, sanitation, to psychosocial wellbeing, and were tasked with assessing implementation fidelity. Multiple schools adjusted their infrastructure (e.g., repairing broken doors on latrines) and improved supervision protocols in response to feedback from SACs and PTCs. In Kalabo, for instance, communities cited the revival of the Safe School Committee and the enforcement of no-loitering policies around school grounds as direct outcomes of V&A-supported engagement.

*Monitoring Teen Pregnancies Taferadziko Primary School – Vubwi District*

*Outcome after monitoring period – Disability friendly infrastructure.*

PREGNACIES DATA									
PER YEAR AND GRADE									
YEAR ↓	GRADE							TOTAL	TOTAL
	ECE	1	2	3	4	5	6		
2016	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
2017	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
2018	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
2019	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
2020	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
2021	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2023	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2024	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
2025									



**e. Inclusive Governance and Participation**

The project made notable strides in fostering inclusive governance. Disaggregated scorecard participation data from December 2024 showed that women’s participation reached 134.3% of the expected target, while youth participation stood at 112.1%. Though participation by PWDs was lower at 31.4%, and that of older persons at 68.4%, the average participation rate across all underrepresented groups was 86.5%. These statistics point to the project’s success in opening governance spaces to traditionally marginalized voices, while also pointing to the need for enhanced accessibility strategies for PWDs and older individuals.

**Implementation of Activities by Component**

**6.3.1 Component 1: Community Awareness and Mobilization**

This component aimed to increase awareness of education service standards and community rights among stakeholders. Activities included the co-creation and dissemination of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials; community sensitization forums; and local training sessions led by community facilitators. These facilitators, supported by CSPR and PTF, delivered targeted outreach at all 45 participating schools, focusing on the

Free Education Policy, public budget entitlements, textbook delivery norms, and the governance roles of school-level structures.

By project close, a total of 1,365 local sensitization sessions had been conducted, reaching over 15,000 community members, surpassing initial targets. These awareness-raising activities significantly improved community literacy around education policy and accountability mechanisms. Tools such as Safe School Plans, school grant tracking posters, and grievance pathways were incorporated into community outreach efforts. Evidence from the Final Impact Survey and Outcome Harvesting Report confirmed increased familiarity among participants with grievance redress processes, education service delivery standards, and their own entitlements under decentralization reforms.

### Component 2: Strengthening Social Accountability Platforms

The second component focused on institutionalizing participatory mechanisms that allowed communities to engage productively with education duty bearers. SACs, PTCs, and WDCs were trained to apply community scorecards, convene interface meetings, and track Safe School Plans. These structures facilitated community input into school and district-level planning.

Findings from the Final Scorecard Report validate significant improvements in accountability performance. Below is a summary table drawn directly from scorecard data across the 45 participating schools. The scorecard used a three-tier color-coded rating system to capture community perceptions: Green indicates satisfactory or good performance, Orange denotes average or fair performance with room for improvement, and Red signals poor performance requiring urgent attention.

**Table 2: Final Community Scorecard Ratings by Accountability Theme (2025)**  
*Based on assessments across 45 project schools*

Accountability Area	Green Scores	Orange Scores	Red Scores
Awareness of School Grants	29 (64.4%)	13 (28.9%)	3 (6.7%)
Notice Boards with Budget Information	25 (55.6%)	12 (26.7%)	8 (17.8%)
Payment of Additional School Fees	41 (91.1%)	1 (2.2%)	3 (6.7%)

Community Involvement in School Planning and Budgeting	29 (64.4%)	14 (31.1%)	2 (4.4%)
Participation in PTC Meetings	24 (53.3%)	17 (37.8%)	4(8.9%)
Knowledge of Financial Committee Membership	29 (64.4%)	11 (24.4%)	5 (11.1%)
Awareness of CDF Bursaries and Application Procedures	30 (66.7%)	13 (28.9%)	2 (4.4%)
Application for Bursary and Feedback Received	24 (53.3%)	17 (37.8%)	4 (8.9%)

**Source:** Final Scorecard Report, 2025

These ratings show consistent improvements in community confidence and school-level transparency. Notably, the majority of communities assigned green scores to key governance domains by project end. Interface meetings (over 120 conducted) enabled direct citizen feedback to DEBS offices and school management. Follow-up mechanisms were instituted, and project monitoring records show that over 70% of community-raised issues were formally addressed within a three-month window.

### 6.3.3 Component 3: Project Coordination, Monitoring, and Learning

This component provided the backbone for project management and adaptive programming. The V&A Project Implementation Manual, finalized in November 2021, guided internal operations. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) systems were strengthened through quarterly performance reviews, partner learning exchanges, and the development of standardized MEL templates with support from PTF.

Key learning moments included provincial review meetings and partner reflection sessions conducted annually. Outputs from MEL activities were directly integrated into project planning, particularly to respond to COVID-19 disruptions, emerging stakeholder needs, and sustainability considerations. These efforts helped maintain implementation momentum and informed real-time decision-making across the life of the project.

### Implementation Issues at Project Level

The implementation of the V&A project was marked by a combination of structural bottlenecks, institutional coordination challenges, and operational constraints, especially in

the early stages of execution. However, most of these hurdles were addressed through iterative learning, adaptive planning, and strengthened collaboration between CSPR, PTF, and district-level stakeholders. The following issues were experienced.

### **Delayed Disbursement and Slow Start-Up**

- Although the project became effective in December 2021, the first World Bank disbursement was only received in March 2022, causing a delayed rollout.
- CSPR had to pre-finance early activities and faced slow momentum due to a change in Task Team Leader and delayed fiduciary training on procurement and financial management.
- Staffing at CSPR was initially constrained by JSDF restrictions, which imposed a 5% ceiling on staff-related expenditures. As a result, there was no full-time M&E or communications officer at the start, and the procurement officer was only engaged for two years.
- The M&E gap hindered early reporting systems, baseline consolidation, and activity tracking.

### **COVID-19 and Cholera-Related School Calendar Disruptions**

- COVID-19 led to nationwide school closures from mid-June 2021 and delayed openings in January 2022.
- A major cholera outbreak in early 2024 again disrupted activities. Schools were kept closed beyond the scheduled reopening of January 8 and only resumed by mid-February 2024.
- These disruptions affected timelines for training, monitoring, and interface meetings.

### **Resistance from Local Education Actors**

- Some headteachers and education officers were initially resistant to the formation of SACs, viewing them as overlapping with existing structures like PTCs.
- This led to delays in scorecard rollouts and interface meetings in a few schools.
- CSPR addressed these challenges through additional sensitization, framing SACs as complementary to existing governance structures.

### **Logistical Barriers in Remote Districts**

- Districts such as Mambwe, Kalabo, Nalolo, Vubwi, and Sesheke faced challenges of impassable roads, especially during rainy seasons.
- These impeded timely delivery of training materials, supervision, and transport, often requiring rescheduling of activities.

### **Human Resource Instability within CSPR**

- CSPR experienced multiple leadership and staffing changes: three Executive Directors, four Project Coordinators, and turnover in provincial and procurement staff.
- Despite these transitions, project continuity was maintained with support from PTF and institutional memory was preserved.

### **Data and Communications Constraints**

- Poor network coverage and digital literacy in rural areas hindered real-time data submission.
- KoboCollect, though introduced as a digital data collection tool, was not used consistently across all 45 schools.
- The online dashboard became operational late in the project cycle, limiting its use in driving feedback loops.
- Suggestion boxes, though distributed, were underutilized and ineffective as grievance redress tools.

### **Sustainability**

- SACs lack legal or policy recognition within Zambia's education system, raising concerns about their continuity post-project.
- Future sustainability will depend on integration with statutory bodies like WDCs or PTCs, ideally through policy reform.
- Volunteer burnout, time constraints, and lack of incentives also threaten SAC viability in the long term.

## **6.4 Achievement of the PDO and Intermediate Results Indicators**

The Results Framework for the V&A Project was formally revised in March 2023, through consultations with the World Bank Task Team. This revision introduced ten measurable indicators commonly referred to throughout the project as "intermediate" indicators. These collectively served as the basis for assessing achievement of the Project Development Objective (PDO): *to strengthen the awareness and participation of communities in the planning, monitoring, and implementation of education services in selected districts in Zambia.*

Although none of the indicators independently measured changes in accountability or service delivery, a subset, specifically indicators on enhanced knowledge, inclusive participation, and responsiveness of duty bearers, served as reasonable proxies for assessing progress toward the PDO. These were used in combination with triangulated evidence from semi-annual reports, outcome harvesting, and external evaluations to construct an accountability profile.

By the end of June 2025, the project had met or exceeded targets for 8 out of 10 indicators. For example, 96 percent of trained community members reported improved knowledge of their entitlements and roles in education delivery, surpassing the 95 percent target. Participation by underrepresented groups, which includes women, youth, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities, rose to 87 percent, well above the 85 percent benchmark. In addition, 63 percent of education service issues raised by communities were addressed by duty bearers, compared to the target of 50 percent.

In terms of capacity-building, the project delivered training to 1,345 community members, exceeding the initial target of 900, and successfully activated 135 SACs across all targeted schools. Moreover, 1,856 individuals participated in structured consultative meetings with education authorities, and all 45 school communities completed monitoring of at least three education service delivery functions. Peer-to-peer learning was also actively promoted, with 13 community knowledge-sharing events conducted, surpassing the original target of 9.

Nonetheless, not all targets were achieved. The number of recorded consultative meetings fell short, with only 141 conducted against a target of 250. Likewise, only 141 meeting minutes documenting community-raised issues were formally recorded, compared to the expected 333. These shortfalls were primarily attributed to disruptions caused by the 2024 cholera outbreak, limited documentation practices in remote schools, and the variable adoption of formal reporting formats.

Importantly, the project's accountability model did not rely on quantitative metrics alone. Through iterative use of community scorecards, interface meetings, and validation forums, the V&A Project fostered a culture of civic monitoring and responsive engagement. The Outcome Harvesting Report confirmed that 91 percent of recorded changes in actor behavior and institutional responsiveness were attributable to project interventions. These included increased attention by education officers to absenteeism, and in several instances, reallocation of local resources to address textbook shortages though the latter remained outside community control in most districts.

## **6.5 Implementation of Project Activities and Budget Performance by Component**

The implementation of the V&A Project was anchored on three interrelated components, each designed to progressively build community capacity, strengthen interface mechanisms, and institutionalize local accountability systems within Zambia's education sector. Activities under these components were delivered across a three-year period from January 2022 to March 2025. By the end of Q1 2025, cumulative project expenditure stood at US\$1,750,733.88, out of a total grant allocation of US\$2,750,000, representing a burn rate of 63.7 percent. This section outlines both the operational execution of component activities and their corresponding budget performance relative to original allocations.

**Component 1: Increasing Community Awareness of the Delivery of Education Services** focused on the development and dissemination of social accountability tools, training manuals, and capacity-building interventions for community actors and school governance bodies. Cumulative expenditure under this component amounted to US\$540,269.04, against an original allocation of US\$968,901.00, resulting in a component utilization rate of 55.7 percent. While activities such as manual development and community sensitization were completed, some savings arose due to reduced printing costs and a shift toward digital platforms, particularly for awareness-building tools. Additionally, the training cascade model minimized facilitation expenses by empowering local trainers, thereby lowering operational costs.

**Component 2: Enhancing Community Engagement and Participation in the Delivery of Education Services** absorbed US\$853,767.99, against an allocation of US\$1,378,826.00,

yielding a component utilization of 61.9 percent. Expenditure under this component was driven by the implementation of over 90 community scorecard sessions, facilitation of more than 250 interface meetings, and support for 13 peer-learning exchange events. While most sub-components were implemented as planned, delays in interface meetings and community exchanges in some districts led to partial execution in the early stages, later rectified through acceleration plans. Notably, expenditure for Sub-component 2.2 (Effective Community Engagement) reached 128.4 percent of its allocation due to intensified engagements in the final year, while Sub-component 2.1 (Monitoring Local Services) recorded modest under-execution despite being a key pillar of the project.

**Component 3: Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Knowledge Dissemination** posted cumulative spending of US\$356,696.84, out of a total allocation of US\$402,273.00, representing a budget absorption rate of 88.7 percent. The strong performance in this component reflected sustained investments in the Project Management Unit (PMU), quarterly data collection, financial audits, and the final outcome harvesting and impact surveys. Notably, the sub-component on Knowledge Dissemination slightly exceeded its budget (119.5 percent), largely due to additional costs incurred in designing and producing locally adapted comic-style manuals and documentation materials for sustainability and scaling.

When disaggregated by cost category, the largest share of project spending was on Trainings (US\$946,196.57 or 58.4 percent of the US\$1.62 million allocation), reflecting the centrality of capacity building throughout the project's lifecycle. Consulting Services absorbed US\$438,975.33, representing 81.0 percent of their allocated budget, largely attributed to technical support from PTF and external evaluations. Goods accounted for US\$83,093.17 (47.6 percent of allocation), while Operating Costs amounted to US\$282,468.81, translating to 68.3 percent utilization.

All in all, the project demonstrated prudent financial management, with budget variances primarily resulting from adaptive implementation strategies, cost-effective localization of training resources, and postponed procurements of non-essential goods. There were no instances of financial misappropriation, and all expenditures were subject to periodic audits and World Bank review. While the overall burn rate was below the 100 percent threshold, this was partly strategic, as it ensured that resources were focused on activities with the highest

demonstrated impact on community empowerment and accountability in the education sector.

**Table 4: Budget Performance by Project Component (Jan 2022 – Mar 2025)**

Project Component	Original Allocation (US\$)	Cumulative Expenditure (US\$)	% Spent	Remarks
<b>Component 1: Increasing Community Awareness of Education Services</b>	968,901.00	540,269.04	55.7%	Underutilization due to digital training adaptations and efficient cascade models
Development of Training Materials and Tools	222,360.00	125,239.12	56.3%	Manuals and illustrations finalized in final year
Capacity Development for Community Members	336,725.00	177,824.20	52.8%	Savings due to community-level training localization
Awareness Building for Local Authorities	409,816.00	237,205.72	57.9%	Delivered as planned with minor cost adjustments
<b>Component 2: Enhancing Community Engagement and Participation</b>	1,378,826.00	853,767.99	61.9%	High activity volume; intensified interface meetings in final year
Monitoring Local Education Services	866,400.00	391,737.84	45.2%	Slight underperformance; some planned activities delayed
Community Engagement with School Management	158,250.00	203,187.89	128.4%	Overutilized due to final year intensification
Community Exchanges and Learning	354,176.00	258,842.26	73.1%	Implemented across all districts as peer-learning events
<b>Component 3: Project Management, M&amp;E, and Knowledge Dissemination</b>	402,273.00	356,696.84	88.7%	Strong execution; all reporting and evaluations completed

Project Management and Administration	284,240.00	243,141.90	85.5%	Regular PMU operations and coordination
Monitoring and Evaluation	72,708.00	59,375.00	81.7%	All M&E deliverables completed including outcome harvesting
Knowledge Dissemination	45,325.00	54,179.94	119.5%	Slight overspend due to innovative communication products
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,750,000.00</b>	<b>1,750,733.88</b>	<b>63.7%</b>	Overall burn rate within acceptable range; no audit or financial integrity issues noted

### Annual Disbursement Trends and Performance (2021–2025)

Disbursement began slowly, but the pace of fund absorption picked up significantly in the later years, especially throughout 2023 and 2024. This trend was mainly due to delays in project effectiveness, the extended planning phase, and early-stage capacity constraints. Although the grant agreement was signed in late 2021, effective project implementation only commenced in early 2022 following World Bank no-objection to the PIM and procurement plans. As such, no expenditures were incurred in 2021, and the first disbursement to the Designated Account occurred only in the first quarter of 2022.

Disbursement performance improved significantly over time. By the end of 2022, total disbursements stood at US\$279,294, accounting for roughly 10 percent of the total grant envelope. The year 2023 saw an uptick in activity, with approximately US\$745,712 disbursed, driven by a scale-up of scorecard sessions, interface meetings, and extensive training programs. Disbursement peaked in 2024, reaching US\$575,823, as the project implemented core activities across all nine districts and finalized multiple learning products. By the end of Q1 2025, a final tranche of US\$150,304 was released, bringing cumulative disbursements to US\$1,998,994.11, representing approximately 72.7 percent of the total grant allocation of US\$2.75 million. The unutilized balance as of March 2025 stood at US\$751,006, primarily attributed to exchange rate fluctuations, cost efficiencies in training delivery, and unspent funds reserved for goods and operating costs that were ultimately not required.

The actual performance stayed within approved thresholds and adhered to World Bank financial management protocols. The PIU coordinated closely with the Bank’s task team to align cash flow projections with quarterly activity plans, ensuring that disbursement requests were timely and justified by verified expenditures.

**Table 5: Annual Disbursement Performance (2021–2025)**

Year	Planned Disbursement (US\$)	Actual Disbursement (US\$)	Cumulative Disbursement (US\$)	Cumulative % of Grant Disbursed
2021	0	0	0	0.0%
2022		279,294	279,294	10.2%
2023		745,712	1,025,006	37.3%
2024		575,823	1,600,829	58.2%
2025 (Q1)		150,304	1,998,994	72.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,750,000</b>	<b>1,998,994</b>	<b>1,998,994</b>	<b>72.7%</b>

### 6.6 Monitoring and Evaluation and Reports

M&E under the V&A Project was not a standalone exercise but an embedded function that informed activity design, implementation fidelity, adaptive learning, and evidence-based decision-making. The project’s M&E architecture was designed from inception to provide continuous, field-based feedback on the performance of activities, the achievement of outcomes, and the responsiveness of institutional actors. It relied on both qualitative and quantitative approaches, integrating traditional monitoring methods with participatory tools and outcome-oriented techniques. Over the life of the project, M&E functions evolved in response to technical recommendations, financial constraints, and operational realities in the field.

At the design stage, the PIM, informed by technical inputs from PTF, outlined a layered M&E model anchored at three levels: community facilitators, Provincial Program Management Teams (PPMTs), and the national-level M&E unit at CSPR. This structure was operationalized

through detailed role matrices, data collection flowcharts, and reporting calendars that ensured regular and disaggregated data collection.

In the early stages of implementation, M&E efforts were constrained by the JSDF guideline that limited the proportion of project funds that could be used to cover CSPR staff costs to a maximum of five percent. While this restriction did not directly cap M&E activities, it effectively curtailed the project's ability to recruit and retain technical personnel for core functions such as monitoring and evaluation and communications, thereby delaying initial investments in these areas. The limitation was later addressed through a mutually agreed amendment to the Partnership Agreement in February 2023, which allowed for the partial funding of local consultants to support M&E and communication functions.

One of the defining features of the M&E system was its hybrid approach. KOBO Collect was adopted as the primary digital platform for field data capture, enabling near-real-time uploading of indicators, scorecard results, and meeting records. However, paper-based templates were retained in hard-to-reach areas, ensuring data continuity even in settings with poor internet connectivity. These tools were complemented by printed manuals, service charters in local languages, suggestion box reports, and community-generated monitoring guides.

The quality of project implementation improved markedly in the second year following the recruitment of a full-time M&E officer and the deliberate inclusion of district education officials in data validation and feedback processes. The integration of SACs and WDCs into routine monitoring activities fostered a strong sense of local data ownership. Furthermore, the strategic use of community-generated data during interface meetings helped to restore the credibility of grassroots voices in education sector dialogue. It also contributed to shifting the perception among education authorities, who increasingly came to regard community feedback as both legitimate and grounded in verifiable evidence.

Throughout the project, the Results Framework served as the core reference for performance measurement. It was revised in January 2023 to enhance clarity of definitions, adjust targets in light of emerging implementation realities, and introduce more realistic tracking frequencies. The indicators were consistently reported through semi-annual progress reports, quarterly summaries, and learning reflection meetings, all of which were submitted to the World Bank. The framework included both PDO indicators and intermediate outcome

indicators, some of which were disaggregated by gender, age, and special groups to allow analysis of equity in participation and voice.

The utilization of M&E data was not limited to reporting. Project data informed a wide range of operational decisions: the restructuring of training modules, refinement of social accountability tools, reallocation of budgets to high-performing districts, and timing of interface meetings to align with the agricultural calendar. Three core learning products emerged from this process: (i) the Final Outcome Harvesting Report (2025), which documented 91 percent attribution of reported changes to project interventions; (ii) the Final Scorecard Report, which compiled qualitative and quantitative findings across all nine districts; and (iii) the Impact Survey, which captured evidence of community awareness, leadership roles among underrepresented groups, and shifts in duty-bearer responsiveness.

Despite these achievements, challenges persisted. Data delays were reported from Kalabo, Sesheke, and Chadiza due to network instability, and some inconsistencies were noted in data completeness, especially in the first year. These were addressed through retraining, simplified formats, and the appointment of school Social Accountability (SA) M&E focal points.

## 7.0 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

### 7.1 Financial Management

As of March 31, 2025, the V&A Project had cumulatively expended US\$1,750,733.88 out of the total JSDF grant allocation of US\$2,750,000, translating to an overall budget execution rate of 63.66 percent. While this utilization rate may initially appear modest relative to total project duration, it masks important variations across expenditure categories and time periods. Notably, financial disbursements accelerated significantly in the final three quarters of implementation, particularly after the midterm review in 2023, which prompted an adaptive acceleration strategy jointly endorsed by CSPR and the World Bank. This strategy allowed for the realignment of funds toward interventions that were demonstrating the strongest uptake and community impact, especially within Components 1 and 2.

#### 7.1.1 Budget Execution Analysis by Cost Category

A disaggregated review of budget execution by cost category reveals differentiated spending patterns reflective of both project design and operational adjustments:

- **Consulting Services (81.04%)** registered the highest execution rate among all categories. This was largely attributable to the strategic reliance on external technical expertise for outcome harvesting, midterm and final evaluations, training-of-trainers (ToT) facilitation, and capacity-building of SACs and WDCs. The prolonged engagement of consultants in advisory, monitoring, and documentation roles reflected a calculated trade-off to ensure high-quality delivery in a technically complex project.
- **Operating Costs (68.27%)** reached a moderate execution level, consistent with the demands of a multi-site, district-level intervention. The costs covered a broad range of implementation support including travel, communication, logistical support, and field allowances. This moderate level of burn rate suggests reasonable operational efficiency and discipline in administrative cost containment.
- **Trainings (58.41%)**, the largest cost driver in absolute terms, consumed nearly US\$950,000 cumulatively. While vital to the project's objectives, several training events were implemented at lower-than-anticipated unit costs due to economies of scale and the use of local facilitators among others. The substitution of printed manuals

with digital resources in some areas, and the successful use of a cascade training model, further contributed to the observed cost savings.

- **Goods (47.59%)** exhibited the lowest execution level. Planned procurements such as ICT kits, additional visibility materials, and printed toolkits were either reduced, delayed, or replaced with more context-appropriate alternatives such as community comic manuals and re-used training content. This strategic de-emphasis on goods was driven by the realization that community engagement and behavior change could be sustained through low-cost, high-touch methods rather than equipment-intensive inputs.

From a macro perspective, over 63 percent of total project expenditures were directed toward Consulting Services and Trainings, stressing the project's orientation toward human capital development, capacity building, and participatory engagement rather than capital-heavy investments. The variance in expenditure patterns across categories reflects a degree of financial flexibility and evidence-informed reprioritization in response to emerging needs, implementation lessons, and community feedback.

### **7.1.2 Financial Compliance, Audit, and Accountability Measures**

The financial management system deployed by CSPR adhered to internationally accepted standards, reinforced by its internal Financial Management Manual and regular oversight mechanisms. Funds were transferred through a Designated USD Account and then converted into local currency for use at the district level. Transactions at the community level, including transport reimbursements and workshop stipends, were primarily executed via mobile money platforms, as this enhanced traceability and minimizing leakage.

CSPR's internal control system remained functional throughout the implementation period. It included monthly bank reconciliations, expenditure validation at both national and provincial levels, and reviews by an internal Compliance Officer. Quarterly financial reports and Interim Financial Reports (IFRs) were submitted on time, with templates refined following World Bank feedback. Notably, the April 2025 IFR confirmed full alignment between financial records and actual bank reconciliations, with a closing balance of US\$248,281.07 and no unreconciled variances.

Independent audits conducted for fiscal years 2022 and 2023 produced unqualified (clean) opinions, affirming the reliability of the accounting systems and expenditure records. Issues raised in early audit rounds, such as delayed advance retirements from remote districts and inconsistent IFR labels, were systematically addressed by mid-2024 through compliance trainings, updated labelling protocols, and improved district-level supervision. Audit trails were complete, and all transactions were fully documented and aligned with approved budget lines.

### **7.1.3 Performance Against Financial Objectives**

The project met key financial performance objectives across all six pillars of good financial management, namely: (i) strategic resource allocation; (ii) effective budget execution; (iii) strong internal controls; (iv) transparent reporting; (v) independent oversight; and (vi) accountability at the last mile. In addition, there is evidence that financial decision-making was not merely reactive, but aligned with programmatic learning and adaptive management principles. The capacity to reallocate underutilized funds, scale back non-essential procurements, and reinvest in high-performing components shows sound stewardship of public resources.

## 8.0 Procurement

Procurement activities under the V&A project were implemented in accordance with World Bank procurement regulations as set out in the Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers (2016, revised in 2020). The project applied appropriate selection methods, including National Request for Quotations (RFQ), Consultant Qualification Selection (CQS), and Individual Consultant Selection (INDV), depending on the nature and value of the procurement. All activities were managed via the World Bank's STEP system and coordinated by CSPR's finance and procurement team.

Throughout the implementation period, procurement performance progressively improved despite early challenges. Initial delays in 2022 and early 2023 were primarily attributed to limited local supplier capacity, under-budgeting, and poor scheduling of activities, which were compounded by the absence of a dedicated procurement specialist during the project's early phase. Furthermore, the lack of an in-house IT department delayed finalization of technical Terms of Reference for the dashboard, necessitating support from PTF and World Bank technical advisors.

The cumulative procurement portfolio included the acquisition of ICT equipment, office furniture, social accountability phones, printing services, and third-party consultancy services across all components. Specifically, contracts were awarded for:

- Procurement of social accountability phones and data bundles;
- Development and partial operationalization of a web-based information dashboard;
- Printing of IEC materials, banners, and billboards for awareness campaigns;
- Recruitment of Provincial and Assistant Provincial Coordinators in both Western and Eastern Provinces;
- Engagement of consultants for Social Accountability and Political Economy Analysis (PEA);
- Consultancy for service charter development with MoE and facilitation of the final independent audit.
- Consultancy for Project Final Evaluation

A total of 19 procurement items were fully processed and delivered. These included both goods and consulting services, with contract values ranging from approximately USD 1,100 to USD 136,000. An additional set of items, particularly the dashboard maintenance and final service charter validation, were completed in late 2024, following schedule adjustments outlined in the Procurement Plan revision dated August 2023.

A 2023 post-procurement review by CSPR and the PMU confirmed that procedures remained compliant with applicable fiduciary standards. No procurement-related grievances, irregularities, or breaches were recorded. Documentation for all procurements was properly filed and uploaded to STEP.

Notably, the only outstanding activity by the close of 2024 pertained to final service charter endorsements, which were shifted to the fourth quarter in agreement with MoE timelines.

Procurement training was also undertaken: the Finance Officer participated in a World Bank-facilitated course in FY2023, enhancing institutional compliance capacity. Budget realignments and cancellation/reuploads in STEP were used as corrective measures to address market response issues and under-costed line items.

## 9.0 Environmental and Social Safeguards

The V&A Project was implemented under the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework (ESF), with an environmental classification of Category C, which indicates minimal to no adverse environmental or social risks due to the non-infrastructure, community-driven nature of the interventions. No civil works or land acquisition was envisaged under the project, and the risk profile remained low throughout implementation. All safeguard responsibilities were embedded within the PIM, which included the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP), the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), and the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP).

The project ensured that all sub-activities were screened using the ESMF to assess potential risks and apply mitigation measures where needed. CSPR, in collaboration with the PPMTs, recorded compliance data through quarterly implementation updates and beneficiary engagement reports. These tools enabled early identification of any social issues and ensured that mitigation actions were documented and followed through.

The SEP was operationalized in all nine districts and included proactive engagement mechanisms such as community noticeboards, grievance redress forms, community feedback sessions, and continuous updates shared during interface meetings. Monitoring reports and feedback from district outreach officers showed that stakeholder communication channels remained active and accessible, particularly for vulnerable groups. Notably, suggestions from interface meetings were recorded and addressed in subsequent planning sessions, underscoring the responsiveness of the SEP framework.

An integral component of the project's social risk management framework was the establishment of a functional Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), operational at school, district, and national levels. SACs and PTCs served as primary entry points for grievances, which were recorded using simple tools and tracked by district officers. Community members could raise concerns through drop-boxes, verbal reports, or written forms collected during outreach visits. Over the course of implementation, 86 grievances were documented, with 92 percent successfully resolved at the local level. The most common issues included delays in organizing interface meetings, concerns over committee selection, and dissatisfaction with follow-through on school-level action plans.

Although no formal complaints were submitted via the World Bank's GRS portal, district-level documentation confirmed that complaints were actively managed and escalated where necessary. The Mid-Term Review affirmed that the GRM was functional across all nine districts, though follow-up documentation and reporting consistency remained areas for improvement. The decentralization of complaint handling and integration with broader stakeholder engagement systems contributed to enhanced transparency and community trust in the project's responsiveness mechanisms.

In terms of social inclusion, the project maintained gender parity across all community structures, including the SACs and Scorecard facilitation teams. Participation records from scorecard exercises in 2023 and 2024 confirmed that more than 50% of attendees were women, many of whom took on facilitative and leadership roles during dialogue sessions. The project also sought to include marginalized populations, including persons with disabilities and the elderly, although some participation gaps remained in these categories, as noted in the final monitoring review.

COVID-19 prevention protocols were mainstreamed into all community engagements from 2022 to 2024. The project adopted World Bank and Ministry of Health guidelines, including the provision of face masks, use of handwashing stations, and spacing arrangements during public gatherings. These measures were verified through field reports and compliance checklists submitted by PPMTs.

## 10.0 Communication and Dissemination (including the status of the communication strategy implementation)

Throughout its life, the V&A Project implemented a multi-pronged communication and dissemination strategy designed to enhance transparency, mobilize grassroots participation, and ensure the accessibility of information among stakeholders at all levels. The Communication Strategy, initially drafted in 2021 and updated in 2022, outlined key principles of inclusive outreach, participatory feedback loops, and timely dissemination of project milestones. However, the strategy's implementation faced several bottlenecks in its early phases, largely owing to staffing constraints, technical capacity gaps, and limited funding allocations. These deficits were gradually mitigated through targeted technical assistance from PTF and the engagement of local media consultants in 2023 and 2024.

The project's external communications were coordinated centrally by the C SPR Executive Director, with strategic inputs from the PPMTs. Various channels were employed to share updates and outcomes, including project reports, quarterly activity summaries, policy briefs, and other documentation. In addition, two provincial dissemination workshops were successfully conducted in Chipata and Mongu in late 2024, bringing together local education authorities, traditional leaders, civil society partners, and school management representatives to reflect on project achievements and scalability options.

A total of twelve distinct communication products were documented between 2021 and 2025. These included training guides, social accountability briefs, simplified community scorecards, citizen feedback templates, policy notes, and a summary cartoon-based training manual developed for low-literacy audiences. Notably, these materials were translated into local languages and distributed across the nine project districts during interface meetings and school engagement events.

Community-facing communication was further strengthened through a deliberate media outreach campaign in the two focal provinces. Radio programs aired on partner stations in Eastern and Western Provinces covered key themes including Safe Schools, absenteeism monitoring, budget transparency, and the role of SACs. C SPR's estimates indicate that these programs cumulatively reached approximately 45,000 listeners over the life of the project. In parallel, community facilitators maintained active engagement via WhatsApp, SMS, and

voice calls, particularly for M&E data sharing through KOBO Collect. However, it was acknowledged that poor mobile coverage in parts of Western Province limited real-time reporting in some remote catchment areas.

The V&A Dashboard, a digital interface created for real-time visualization of project outputs, played a central role in tracking and documenting ‘stories of change.’ This tool consolidated inputs from community scorecards, field reports, and grievance redress records. While primarily an internal resource, the dashboard allowed CSPR staff to monitor activity density across districts and triangulate feedback from schools, community members, and district education offices.

Despite its eventual gains, the communication strategy was only partially implemented as originally envisioned. The production of new Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials slowed in the project’s mid-phase, and the envisioned interactive website component was not fully developed. Nevertheless, community advocacy capacities improved significantly. Trained SAC members and facilitators used communication tools to organize advocacy campaigns, participate confidently in interface meetings, and deliver evidence-based demands to school heads and education officers. Several districts reported the use of scorecard evidence to push for more transparent budgeting processes and improved sanitation in schools.

## 11. Fraud and Corruption

The V&A Project operated under the World Bank's Anti-Corruption Guidelines and incorporated a series of preventive and response mechanisms to mitigate fraud and corruption risks throughout the project lifecycle. From the outset, CSPR established internal protocols aligned with its institutional Code of Conduct and the World Bank's fiduciary standards. All project staff, both at national and district levels, underwent mandatory annual orientation sessions on anti-corruption and fraud prevention. These sessions were conducted by the project's compliance unit and reinforced through the dissemination of a formal Declaration of Compliance form, which every staff member was required to read, understand, and sign. The form acknowledged receipt of the Anti-Corruption Policy and affirmed individual commitment to adhere to its provisions.

In addition to internal orientation, CSPR embedded accountability checks within its operational workflows. Fund disbursements were governed by a dual-authorization system, with payments routed through the Lusaka-based Project Finance Unit and subjected to periodic scrutiny by an internal Compliance Officer. All payment requests (whether for trainings, community grants, or consultancy services), were cross-referenced against approved budgets, requisition forms, and service delivery confirmations. Furthermore, the deployment of mobile money for field-level transactions enhanced traceability and minimized cash handling risks at the community level.

No cases of fraud or corruption were identified over the implementation period. While early implementation stages saw administrative challenges such as delays in advance retirements and inconsistencies in financial reporting from some districts, these issues were attributed to logistical bottlenecks and local capacity gaps rather than financial misconduct. The MTR specifically noted that delays in advance liquidation and financial documentation were procedural in nature and did not result in material deviations from fiduciary standards.

## **12.0 LESSONS LEARNT**

The V&A Project yielded several valuable lessons on community-led monitoring, inclusive governance, and local service delivery. These lessons have implications not only for the continuity of similar interventions within Zambia but also for the design of future demand-side governance projects across comparable low-resource contexts. Key lessons are thematically discussed below, followed by actionable recommendations.

### **12.1 Institutional preparedness is key for timely project start-up**

Implementation was delayed during the initial months due to the time it took for the CSPR to establish the requisite systems for World Bank-financed operations. The Project Implementation Manual, financial reporting tools, and bank accounts had to be developed before disbursement could begin. As a result, the first transfer of funds was only made in March 2022, several months after project approval. This experience points to the need for robust institutional readiness in cases where the implementing agency is engaging with the World Bank for the first time.

### **12.2 Existing community structures can be revitalized with adequate support**

The project successfully reactivated over 40 SACs across nine districts. These committees became functional platforms for citizen oversight, but their effectiveness depended on more than initial training. Ongoing accompaniment from district facilitators, repeated coaching, and localized adaptation of materials were necessary to sustain their engagement. In areas where this support was inconsistent, committee performance remained weak. Similarly, expecting low-income community members to consistently participate in activities outside their local areas without transport or meal allowances is impractical. Effective citizen participation must be incentivized either through reimbursements or tangible support. Moreover, sustained community engagement in monitoring and accountability hinges on having well-structured and resourced local groups such as the SACs. These committees require ongoing mentorship, clear reporting lines, and operational autonomy.

### **12.3 Locally anchored tools promote stronger community engagement**

Scorecards and interface meetings were most effective when they addressed concerns identified by the communities themselves, such as school infrastructure gaps, textbook shortages, or irregular staff attendance. Conversely, in sites where tools were not well

contextualized, community interest was more limited. The lesson here is that social accountability instruments must be co-designed with communities and remain flexible enough to accommodate local realities.

#### **12.4 Communication and M&E require dedicated expertise from the outset**

In the early stages, the PMU did not have dedicated staff for communication and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), resulting in missed opportunities for documentation and learning. These functions were eventually strengthened through the recruitment of specialized staff and the support of the PTF. Going forward, small and medium-sized projects of this nature should treat M&E and communication as core functions requiring specialized input throughout the project lifecycle.

#### **12.5 Collaboration with local CSOs strengthens reach, but needs continuous coordination**

Partnering with local civil society organizations deepened the project's reach and enhanced contextual relevance. However, differences in institutional capacity and communication styles created coordination challenges. Over time, the use of regular joint planning meetings and feedback sessions helped to improve alignment. The experience affirms that partnership management should go beyond contract administration and include capacity support and relationship building.

#### **12.6 Community attitudes can shift, but the process is gradual**

Data from the Outcome Harvesting Report and feedback from district-level review meetings showed that parent participation in school governance improved in many locations. SAC members also gained confidence in engaging with District Education Board Secretaries (DEBS) and head teachers. However, such behavioral changes required ongoing encouragement and did not occur uniformly across districts. Sustaining these gains will require continued support from education authorities and integration of community feedback mechanisms into routine governance processes.

#### **12.7 Digital tools are useful, but not a substitute for ground-level support**

The introduction of KOBO Toolbox for field data collection helped reduce delays and improved the efficiency of monitoring. Nonetheless, its effectiveness was limited, especially in remote areas with limited network coverage and lower digital literacy. The project learned

that while digital tools are valuable, they must be backed up by offline methods, in-person coaching, and regular quality control.

### **12.8 Adaptive management should be proactively built into project design**

Several modifications were made during the project period, such as reallocating resources from Component 1 to Component 2 in response to increased demand for interface meetings. These adjustments enabled the project to remain responsive to local conditions. However, they were often implemented on an ad hoc basis rather than through pre-established protocols. The experience points to the importance of embedding flexibility into project governance structures from the beginning to facilitate timely and transparent adaptation.

### **12.9 Planning for sustainability must start early**

Although most outputs were delivered, the project struggled to document, package, and disseminate success stories before closure. This was due to both time constraints and a lack of dedicated resources for communications and knowledge management. Future projects must earmark dedicated budgets and timelines for reflection, storytelling, and policy influencing toward the end of implementation. Additionally, the project's sustainability and exit strategy was only finalized as activities were winding down, limiting opportunities to socialize it with district stakeholders and community structures. Future projects should integrate sustainability planning as a standing agenda item from inception, with clearly defined institutional, financial, and community-led transition mechanisms. Additionally, the absence of formal handover protocols between SACs and local governance structures may compromise continuity.

## 13. KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

While the project exceeded most of its planned output targets and intermediate results indicators, the transition beyond the current grant period presents both risks and strategic opportunities. This section reflects on five interrelated areas that warrant deliberate attention from government counterparts, civil society partners, and potential funders in the post-project period.

### **a) Institutionalization of Social Accountability Instruments**

A key concern emerging from the project is the institutional sustainability of core tools and methodologies introduced across districts. These include the Community Social Accountability Manual, the Scorecard methodology, Safe School Plans, and Local Service Charters, all of which played a critical role in stimulating dialogue, empowering communities, and catalyzing response from education authorities. Despite strong uptake by SACs and community groups, there is currently no formal mechanism for embedding these tools within the Ministry of Education's operational protocols or local government planning processes. The project made notable efforts to address this by involving ministry representatives in co-design and validation workshops and by aligning tool content with Zambia's decentralization policy. However, formal adoption at policy level remains incomplete. Without targeted advocacy, there is a risk that these innovations may not endure beyond the project's closure.

### **b) Local Capacity and Inclusive Participation**

While the project successfully supported the establishment of 45 SACs and enhanced community capacity for education oversight, sustainability at grassroots level remains unclear. Outcome harvesting reports and facilitator logs indicate that several SACs, particularly in remote Western Province districts, remain dependent on external mobilization due to logistical constraints, high attrition rates among volunteers, and intermittent access to resources. Furthermore, entrenched gender hierarchies in some communities inhibited effective participation by women and youth. In some districts, field notes revealed that although women were physically present in scorecard meetings, their voices were not consistently represented in deliberations or decision-making processes. To safeguard the gains made, future programming should prioritize gender-responsive facilitation strategies, embed

SAC support within WDCs, and provide refresher training linked to local elections and leadership turnover.

### **c) Data Utilization and Technology Gaps**

The integration of KOBO Toolbox and a custom M&E dashboard significantly improved the project's ability to capture, analyze, and visualize community-generated data. Nevertheless, operational gaps were recorded in districts with low digital fluency or poor mobile connectivity. Delays in form submission and difficulties in dashboard interpretation limited the real-time use of evidence for adaptive decision-making at the local level. While training efforts were scaled up in 2023 and 2024, capacity gaps persist. Looking forward, a pragmatic approach would include a blended model of combining low-tech data capture tools (such as simplified templates and visual forms) with digital dashboards, and linking this ecosystem with the Ministry of Education's EMIS. Such an approach would foster alignment and strengthen evidence-based policy feedback loops.

### **d) Sectoral Integration and Policy Coherence**

Despite strong engagement with District Education Boards and involvement of MoE officials in several project activities, vertical linkages with central policy processes remained limited. The PAC served as a periodic platform for multi-stakeholder coordination, but stronger mechanisms are required to institutionalize feedback into national sector reviews and planning cycles. In particular, tools such as the SAC Scorecard methodology have potential for national rollout if integrated into frameworks such as ZEEP, or the Ministry of Local Government's decentralization operational plan.

### **e) Financing and Sustainability Risks**

The single most pressing constraint to continuity is the lack of secured funding for sustaining project-initiated structures and processes beyond June 2025. Field reports show that many SACs already face operational hurdles due to the absence of basic logistical support, such as transportation, airtime, and stationery. In response, the project encouraged integration of SAC activities into local Ward Development Plans (WDPs) to enable funding through CDF allocations. This pathway remains promising but requires policy advocacy and formal recognition from local authorities. Other avenues for sustainability include formal endorsement of SACs by MoE District Education Boards and efforts by CSPR and partners to

mobilize external resources through bilateral donors, education CSO networks, or philanthropic initiatives. Without such investments, there is a real risk of attrition and fragmentation in the community accountability ecosystem that the project helped establish.

## 14. RECOMMENDATIONS

Building on the project's outcomes, challenges, and implementation experience, the following recommendations are proposed to inform future programming, government action, and stakeholder engagement. These recommendations are aimed at safeguarding the gains of the V&A Project, and ensure continuity, and promoting institutional sustainability at both national and subnational levels.

### **i. Institutionalize SACs within National Education Policy and Governance Structures**

The Ministry of education, working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and the Decentralisation Secretariat under Cabinet Office, should formally recognize SACs as part of Zambia's school governance ecosystem. This should include the development of official policy guidelines, operational role descriptions, and defined linkage mechanisms between SACs, PTCs, school management, and Ward Development Committees. The existing collaboration frameworks developed under the V&A Project offer a starting point for integration.

### **ii. Allocate Domestic Resources to Sustain Community Monitoring**

To reduce dependency on donor funding and promote long-term sustainability, it is recommended that district education offices and local councils systematically budget for key social accountability activities. This includes costs related to community scorecard exercises, interface meetings, refresher trainings, and dissemination of scorecard findings. Where possible, these should be integrated into the CDF processes and other local development plans. A targeted resource mapping exercise, involving MoFNP, MoE, and key development partners, could help identify viable co-financing options.

### **iii. Finalize and Disseminate Social Accountability Tools for National Use**

The V&A Project co-developed a Community Social Accountability Manual and template Service Charters through an inclusive and participatory process. These tools have been piloted and validated in nine districts. As a next step, the Ministry of Education should support the finalization, printing, and nationwide dissemination of these tools, in partnership with civil society actors such as CSPR. These resources should be tailored into user-friendly formats (including comic versions and local language translations) and distributed to schools, WDCs, and DEBS offices to encourage localized use.

#### **iv. Integrate SAC Reporting into National EMIS and Planning Frameworks**

Efforts should be made to align SAC-generated data with the EMIS and district education planning processes. The KOBO-based dashboard developed under the V&A Project demonstrated how community data can enrich traditional performance monitoring tools. Transferring dashboard rights and training responsibilities to district education planners would support institutional uptake. In addition, SAC findings could be periodically incorporated into Joint Sector Reviews (JSRs), thereby enhancing the relevance of citizen-generated data in shaping education policies.

#### **v. Strengthen Gender and Youth Engagement in Local Accountability**

Although female and youth participation improved during project implementation, targeted interventions are still required to deepen their involvement in leadership roles and community decision-making. The MoE, in partnership with CSOs and community leaders, should develop and implement district-specific strategies to boost gender-inclusive participation. This includes adopting minimum quotas for women and youth in SAC leadership positions, offering mentorship programs, and investing in capacity-building initiatives that challenge restrictive gender norms.

#### **vi. Support Peer Learning and Capacity Development Platforms**

Sustained learning and mentorship among SACs and other school governance actors will be critical to consolidating gains. Peer exchange visits, simplified training modules, mentorship arrangements, and periodic refresher sessions should be encouraged. Partner organizations such as CSPR and PTF can serve as resource hubs, while ownership and coordination should rest with district and provincial education authorities. These approaches will also help mitigate knowledge attrition due to leadership turnover at community level.

#### **vii. Maintain the Role of the PAC as an Advisory Mechanism**

Given the value added by the PAC in promoting coordination across government, civil society, and donor representatives, it is recommended that the PAC continue in an advisory capacity for at least 12–18 months post-project. The PAC could provide oversight on tool uptake, monitor institutional integration efforts, and support cross-district learning.

#### **viii. Promote Civic Space and Safe Engagement for Local Oversight Structures**

The effectiveness of social accountability hinges on an enabling civic environment. To this end, national and local authorities should protect the rights of SACs, PTCs, and community-based organizations (CBOs) to operate without interference. This includes safeguarding freedom of expression, reinforcing non-partisan engagement spaces, and aligning with Zambia's decentralisation and civic participation frameworks. Training for civil servants and sensitization for local political leaders are essential in this regard.

#### **ix. Convene a Policy Dialogue on Sustainability and Scale-Up**

A high-level dissemination forum should be convened to present project tools, outcomes, and pathways for national scale-up. The forum should involve senior officials from the Ministry of Education, MoLGRD, Ministry of Finance, ZANEC, and cooperating partners. Such a forum would help situate the V&A model within Zambia's broader sector reform agenda and galvanize support for institutionalizing participatory approaches in education planning and monitoring.

##### **i. Institutionalise SACs in national policy**

The Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, and the Cabinet Office's decentralisation unit, should formally recognise SACs as part of the school governance ecosystem. This should be supported by policy guidelines, role descriptions, and linkage frameworks between SACs and PTCs, school management, and ward-level planning mechanisms.

##### **ii. Allocate domestic resources for community monitoring**

To sustain gains beyond the donor-supported period, district education offices and councils should budget for community scorecard exercises, SAC refresher trainings, and dissemination meetings. These costs could be partially absorbed under existing education grants or integrated into the CDF planning processes.

##### **iii. Strengthen government feedback mechanisms**

Local authorities and education offices must institutionalise mechanisms for responding to SAC reports, including timelines for action, documentation of responses, and periodic joint reviews. Embedding these mechanisms into performance assessment tools used by headteachers and district planners would help ensure follow-through and incentivise accountability.

#### **iv. Link community monitoring with EMIS and policy dialogue**

The Ministry of Education and its partners should explore ways to systematically integrate SAC findings into EMIS reporting cycles and district planning reviews. Aggregated insights from SAC scorecards could help triangulate national performance data and enrich sector reviews with citizen-driven evidence. This includes adoption of the V&A web-based dashboard. This is anticipated to be the best way due to the MoU signed by CSPR and Ministry of Education.

#### **iv. Prioritise capacity support and peer learning**

SACs and school governance actors would benefit from ongoing learning opportunities, including peer exchange visits, mentorship schemes, and simplified user manuals. Partner organisations like CSPR and PTF can play a coordinating role, but ultimate responsibility should lie with district and provincial education authorities.

#### **v. Protect civic space at the local level**

To foster an environment conducive to community oversight, both national and local authorities must actively protect the civic space for SACs, PTCs, and CBOs to operate without political interference or fear of reprisal. This requires clear messaging from political leaders, training of civil servants, and alignment with Zambia's decentralisation and civic engagement policies.

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## Annex A: V&A Project - Status of the Results Framework as of June 2025

Indicator Definition	Baseline (May 2022)	Original End Target (June 2025)	Revised End Target (June 2025)	Results status as at June 2023 <sup>1</sup> MTR Value	Results as at June 2024	Results as of June 2025 (CSPR)	Results as of June 2025 (External Evaluation)
1. Percentage of trained community members reporting enhanced knowledge about their entitlements and education service delivery.	0 <sup>2</sup>	85%	95%	92%	93%	96%	98%
2. Percentage of underrepresented community members (females, disabled, Youth and minorities) in the targeted areas participating and reporting their views about education service delivery.	58%	55%	85%	68%	78%	87%	86.6%
3. Percentage of education issues identified by communities that are addressed by school management or local authorities.	23%	50%	50%	36%	61%	63%	64.2%
4. Number of community members trained in social accountability in	0	13,420	900	1546	5842	1345	1345

<sup>1</sup> Results are presented against the June 2022 to June 2023 Targets as shown in the results framework.

<sup>2</sup> The suggested starting single value for some of the indicators in the Results Framework is 0 as these were not benchmarked at baseline level.

the education service delivery (of which are female)							
5. Number of active community groups that have clear mandates, are attended by key community members and hold meetings on a regular basis.	0	144	135	135	135	135	135
6. Number of community members participating in consultative meetings with school management and local authorities.	0	5,160	600	1546	4730	1856	1856
7. Number of consultative meetings held between communities, school management and local authorities with full representation.	0	148	250	135	268	141	141
8. Percentage of communities that have completed the monitoring of more than 3 education service activities.	0	85%	100%	100%	100%	100%	90.8%
9. Number of school management and local authority meeting minutes that recorded community concerns and requests.	0	148	333	135	338	141	141
10. Number of peer-to-peer community learning events held.	0	72	9	9	9	13	13

## Annex B: List of Schools Supported by the V&A Project

District	School
<b>Mambwe</b>	Chiutika Primary School
	Katemo Primary
	Kasamanda Day Secondary
	Mphomwa Primary
	Chipako Day Secondary
<b>Vubwi</b>	Matemba Secondary
	Mbande Primary
	Mbozi Day Secondary
	Mlawe Primary
	Taferadziko Primary
<b>Katete</b>	Chimasuko Primary
	Chiubundire Primary
	Kasunka Day Secondary
	Katate Day Secondary
	Mwaundafisi Primary
<b>Sinda</b>	Chiwuyu Primary
	Kapungwe Day Secondary
	Mng'omba Day Secondary
	Mwasiti Primary
	Seya Primary
<b>Senanga</b>	Mata Primary
	Liangati Combined

	Lui Wanyau Primary
	Nande Primary
	Ngundi Primary
<b>Sesheke</b>	Lusu East Combined
	Imusho Combined
	Kalobolelwa Combined
	Sesheke Primary
	Sonso Secondary
<b>Nalolo</b>	Kataba Primary
	Litoya Primary
	Lyamutinga Secondary
	Matonga Primary
<b>Kaoma</b>	Kalukundwe Primary
	Kashokoto Primary
	Mangango Secondary
	Mutondo Primary
	Namaloba Primary
<b>Kalabo</b>	Kalabo Primary
	Nq'uma Primary
	Nalionwa Day
	Yuka Primary
	Nang'uma Primary

## Annex C: List of Key Project Partners

Partner	Role
Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR)	Lead implementing agency
Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF)	Technical and financial support; capacity building
District Education Boards	Coordination and supervision at district level
Ward Development Committees (WDCs)	Community-level interface with local government
School Management Committees and PTCs	Operational partners in local implementation
Traditional Leaders	Gatekeepers and community mobilisers
Ministry of Education	Oversight and potential scale-up of SAC model

## Annex D: Project Advisory Committee Members

Name	Organization	Position
1. Pumulo Kalaluka	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development	Provincial Local Government Officer
2. Besnart Simuchembu	Ministry of Education	Planner
3. Linda N. Chonya	Ministry of Finance and National Planning	Acting Assistant Director Evaluation and Monitoring
4. Debora Mushilingwe	FAWEZA	Project Officer
5. Griceria M. Mpondela	ZANEC (Zambia National Education Coalition)	Programmes Manager

6. James Malanji	NAQEZ (National Alliance for Quality Education in Zambia)	Programmes Manager
7. Lynnety Mukonde	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development	Planner
8. Tizah Katuwa	Ministry of Finance and National Planning	Principle Planner
9. Francis Zulu	World Bank – Governance	Financial Consultant
10. Madube Pasi Siyauya	CSPR	Communication Specialist
11. Boyd Simpungwe	CSPR	Social Accountability Expert
12. Mbuyoti Mwitha	CSPR	Acting Finance Manager
13. Kawana Lipalile	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development	Principal Planner Monitoring and Evaluation
14. Brainley Malambo	Ministry of Education	Provincial Education Officer (Eastern province)
15. Peggy B. Chilema	Ministry of Education	Provincial Education Officer (Western province)

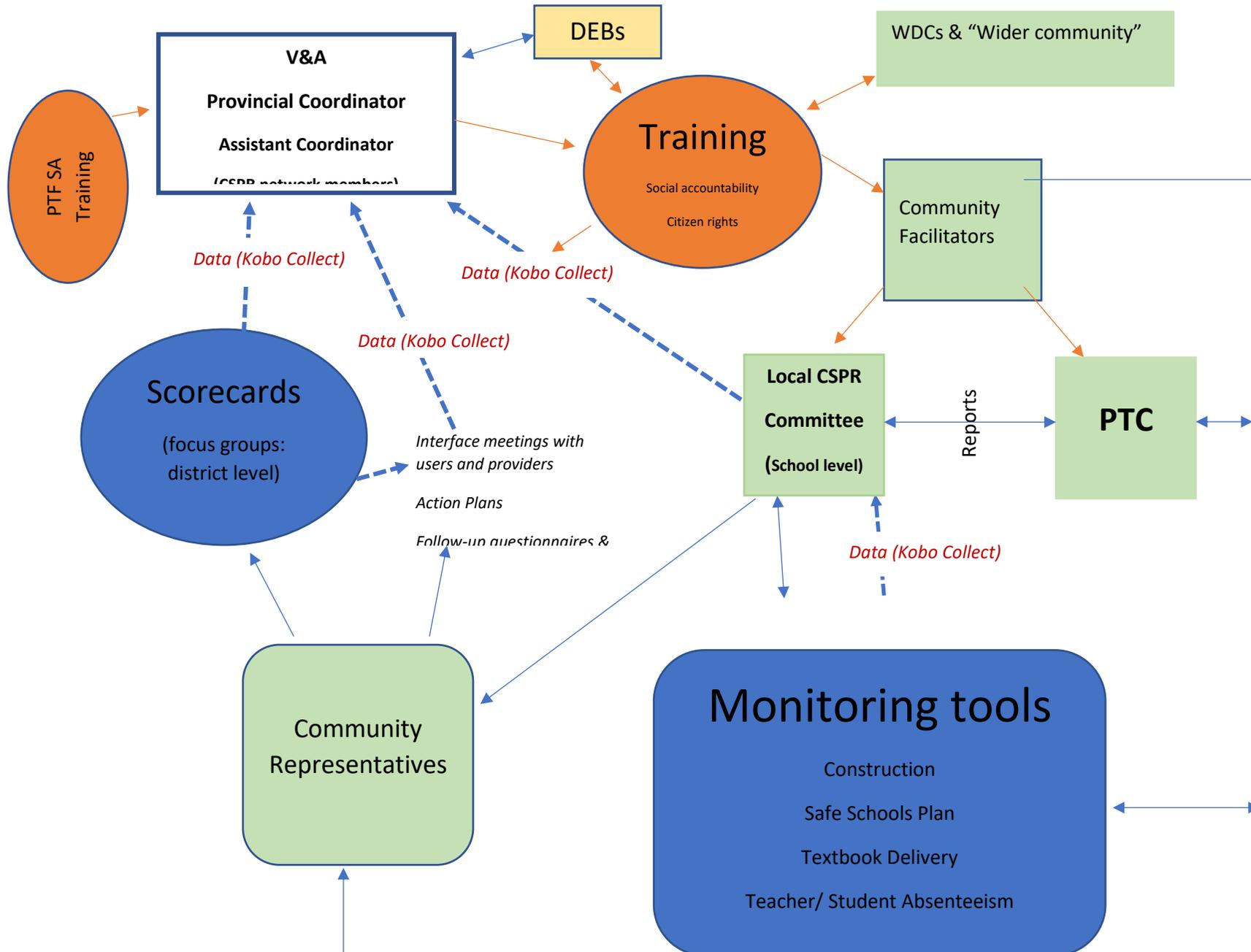
## Annex E: Sample Community Scorecard Tool

A simplified version of the scorecard tool used by SACs to assess education service delivery to be shown below.

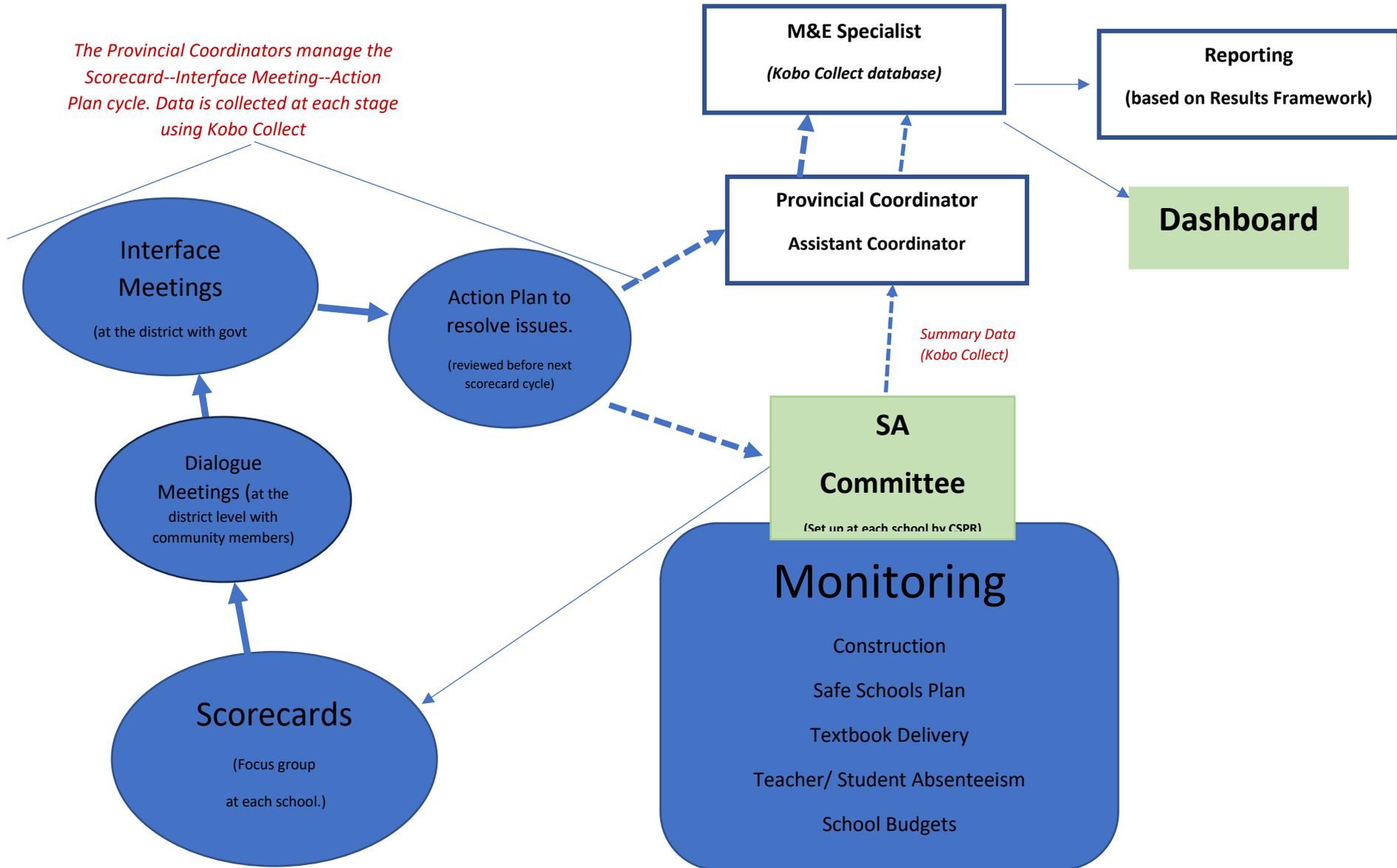
Access to Kobo questionnaire (copy and paste the link to any browser then click enter):

<https://ee-eu.kobotoolbox.org/x/fhWnJkEW>

# Monitoring, Training, and Dataflow.



## Annex : M&E Data Flow



## **Annex X: List of Project Documents Reviewed**

1. **Aide Memoire – April 2025** (Final Implementation Support Mission)
2. **Aide Memoire – July 2024** (Mid-Term Implementation Support Mission)
3. **Baseline Report – Voice and Accountability Project** (May 2022)
4. **Stakeholder Engagement Plan – Revised with World Bank Comments** (May 2021)
5. **CSPR 2023 Annual Work Plan** (Excel, dated 28 November 2022)
6. **Draft Aide Memoire – May 2022** (with CSPR Feedback)
7. **Environmental and Social Reporting – 2024** (Narrative Report)
8. **Environmental and Social Safeguards Mission Update** (2024–2025)
9. **Semi-Annual Report – July to December 2024** (dated 15 February 2025)
10. **Final Impact Survey Report** (March 2025)
11. **Final Outcome Harvesting Report** (March 2025)
12. **Semi-Annual Report – January to June 2024** (dated 15 August 2024)
13. **Final VA Scorecard Report** (dated 17 March 2025)
14. **World Bank Semi-Annual Progress Report – July to December 2022** (dated 14 February 2023)
15. **Mid-Term Review Report** (dated 30 November 2023)
16. **Environmental and Social Framework Report – P173472 VA Project** (CSPR)
17. **Political Economy Analysis and Stakeholder Mapping** (2023)
18. **Revised Baseline Survey Data Report** (dated 17 November 2022)
19. **Stakeholder Engagement Plan – Voice and Accountability Project (P173472)**
20. **Summary of Planned vs. Actual Activities Implemented** (Narrative Table)
21. **Final Progress Report – July to December 2023** (dated 15 February 2024)
22. **PCR Annotated Outline** (May 2025)
23. **VA Results Framework – Revised Version** (dated 19 June 2023)

24. **Project Implementation Manual – Final Clean Copy** (dated 24 November 2021)
25. **Invitation Letter for MOU Signing Ceremony** – between MoE and CSPR (5 August 2022)
26. **Interim Financial Report – Q2 2023** for Grant TFOB6347 (Excel)
27. **Interim Financial Report – Q4 2024** for Grant TFOB6347 (Excel)