



**Civil Society for  
Poverty Reduction**



## ***Voice and Accountability Project***

**Social Accountability Monitoring of Education Service Delivery in Eastern and Western Provinces of Zambia.**

**SCORECARD REPORT**

***Data collection: December 2024***

**(Nalolo, Kalabo, Senanga, Kaoma, Sesheke Districts in Western Province and Katete, Mambwe, Vubwi, Sinda Districts in Eastern Province)**

***Report Date: March 12, 2025***



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## List of Acronyms

Acronym	Meaning
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CSPR	Civil Society for Poverty Reduction
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DEBS	District Education Board Secretary
EFA	Education for All
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
FG	Focus Group
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoGE	Ministry of General Education
MoLG	Ministry of Local Government
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PTC	Parent Teacher Committee
RE	Rural Electrification
SAC	Social Accountability Committee
SSP	Safe School Plans
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
VA / V&A	Voice and Accountability
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WDC	Ward Development Committee
ZIPAR	Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research

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## **1.0 Background**

The Voice and Accountability (V&A) project objective is to improve education service delivery by building community awareness, and by providing social accountability skills to hold education authorities accountable. The Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) is implementing the V&A in 45 schools in nine districts (Katete, Sinda, Mambwe and Vubwi in Eastern Province and Kalabo, Senanga, Kaoma, Sesheke and Kalabo in Western Province of Zambia. These districts are among the poorest and most underserved in Zambia, with an estimated poverty rate exceeding 60% and limited access to quality education services. Many schools in these areas face challenges such as teacher shortages, inadequate infrastructure, and low student retention rates.

This pilot project explores the assumption that better education service provision happens when communities have more knowledge and skills to hold education officials accountable. The theory is that communities with more informed and capable members can demand and receive better quality education services. Knowing if this assumption holds—and to what extent it is true—is important at this time in Zambia as the government plans to decentralize service delivery to the district level. This devolution process should necessitate more active community involvement to provide feedback on the quality of the education in their community.

The V&A project involves considerable local training: sessions were designed to provide information to communities about their education rights, the system of education delivery, including the responsibilities of the education officers in their district and province; and, social accountability methods, including monitoring skills. At each school a social accountability committee was formed to focus efforts and report back their observations to education officials using public forums so that issues could be resolved.

Every six months CSPR initiated a scorecard activity to assess changes in attitudes, and service delivery; thereby providing data for communities to use to make claims to the district and provincial education officers. During these scorecard activities, three distinct questionnaires (scorecards) are used: a “community” scorecard was designed to capture information from a focus group of community members; a school scorecard was used to interview the headmaster; and another scorecard was used to gather data from district and provincial education officers. This report presents the findings only from the community scorecard during the last scorecard activity in December 2024; data from the headmaster, district- and provincial-education officials will be analysed in another report.

### **1.1 Executive Summary**

A community scorecard was used in December 2024 to gather data about the delivery of education services in 45 V&A project schools. This report presents the findings from this activity.

This community scorecard was administered to one focus group at each school consisting of 55 members on average. The scorecard focused on collecting data on school infrastructure; and the level of community participation in education-related processes and decision-making. In particular, questions concerned the level of infrastructure and the five focus areas on the V&A project: teacher and student absenteeism; textbook availability; participation by the community in school-budgeting decisions; construction related corruption; and creating safe school environments.

Findings concerning school-related infrastructure were consistent with expectations in a low resource environment: lack of funds leads to inadequate teacher staffing and housing; insufficient classrooms, labs and libraries; few textbooks; little to no teaching materials, inadequate water supply, toilets, and electricity; and low levels of maintenance. The recent policy of free education compounds problems related to these low levels of infrastructure, by increasing the number of pupils who are now attending

schools; a laudable policy but underfunded. Access may no longer be the foremost issue at primary school levels; improving quality is now the focus<sup>1</sup>.

Changes to infrastructure: more classrooms, more qualified teachers, more teacher housing, reliable water and electric supply, are evident in a few of the 45 schools since the project began; and some of these changes can be attributable to the V&A project. These types of infrastructure improvements were difficult: not because communities did not make requests to education leaders; but more because funds were not available.

As a result of the CSPR trainings community members demonstrated a significant increase in knowledge of their rights, the education system—including the responsibilities of provincial and district education officials, and social accountability methods. Many district education leaders reported changes in attitude in their communities: members are no longer passive; they know what they want and ask for it. Also, community members now come to meetings with evidence to support their requests; community members are using social accountability tools to actively monitor education services, and collect data, in their community<sup>2</sup>.

The question is whether this additional knowledge and skill by community members is improving the delivery of education to their communities. If we examine the five focus areas the answer is mixed. In three focus areas: reducing teacher and student absenteeism, increasing participation in school budgeting decisions; and creating safe schools—areas where the localities already have the greatest control, and there is little additional cost involved—there have been improvements. In other areas such as increasing textbook availability there has been little change, primarily because this is still such a centralized activity where decisions are made far from the communities; and purchase of additional textbooks is costly<sup>3</sup>. Unfortunately, construction monitoring was not possible in all schools due to the lack of projects<sup>4</sup>; hence evaluating the effects of citizen engagement on improving this category is still under consideration. To improve the possibility of construction, communities were informed of the process to acquire “additional” funds through the CDF, a grant facility organized by the government to facilitate local decision-making on project selection<sup>5</sup>. Finally, the establishment of Safe School environments was variable, largely due to the lack of understanding at the school level of this concept.

Overall, not surprisingly, the degree to which the community has control to make changes and to the extent the changes add no additional costs, will determine the extent of the changes: more control and little cost means greater change; less control and greater cost means indifference and little change. This finding fits well with the eventual devolution plans in the education sector. Communities, with the right training, and with sufficient budgeting, can become more involved in improving education in their community.

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<sup>1</sup> Equity issues do not seem to be a significant problem as reported by the communities; all the schools scored well on inclusivity.

<sup>2</sup> For the most part this can be described as the *walk-around-and-observe* methodology since many members are not literate. There are numerous cases of the effectiveness of this simplified method; often just knowing that someone is watching changes a person's behaviour.

<sup>3</sup> And possibly because a new curriculum is being delivered along with government provided textbooks (initially) starting with the lowest grades.

<sup>4</sup> Twenty-two schools indicated that some type of construction was happening at their school. These included: window replacement, water wells, housing for teachers, and extra classrooms.

<sup>5</sup> While almost all the schools applied for such funding, almost none received a grant so far. Still the training was useful: funds can eventually be monitored by the community as soon as the CDF process becomes better organized, and funds are more available.



## 2.0 Methodology

A community scorecard was administered at all 45 schools in the nine districts in Western and Eastern provinces during the period Dec 1<sup>st</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> Dec 2024. The purpose of the scorecard was to assess the current status of the infrastructure at each school; and to specifically report on five focus areas: reducing teacher and student absenteeism, improving textbook availability; reducing corruption related to construction; creation of safe-school environments; and participation in school budgeting.

### Community scorecard

To gather feedback from the community a questionnaire (scorecard) was created by CSPR consisting of 30 multiple choice questions and 30 follow-up open-ended questions that can be used to give reasons for a particular score. (See appendix 6.3).

Each closed-end question had three color-coded choices<sup>6</sup>:

(Green): “3” is a positive score; service delivery is satisfactory.  
 (Orange): “2” means services are available but there are challenges associated with the service  
 (Red): “1” means a negative score which is an indication of non-availability or bad service

For purposes of a computational comparison, each color has a numerical equivalent: Green is “3”; Orange is “2”; Red is “1”<sup>7</sup>. Consequently, the lower the score the better the service provision.

One focus group was created at each school to provide a single answer for each closed-end question (answers to open-ended questions were consolidated into a few thematic responses). A facilitator, chosen and trained by CSPR, posed each question to the focus group in a face-to-face meeting in the local language, then enabled a discussion among the focus group members to reach agreement on the multiple-choice answer. Focus groups averaged 55 participants at each school. Participants in the focus groups were self-selected; respondents resided in their community for at least one year. Most Social Accountability Committee members at each school participated in these focus groups.

Table 1: The following table summarizes the focus group characteristics:

District	Total Focus Group Attendance (45 FG total)	Females	Males	Below 35 Years	36 to 59 Years	Above 60 Years	Persons with Disabilities
Kalabo	257	126	131	86	125	37	29
Kaoma	300	134	160	101	113	35	28
Katete	300	160	124	98	126	24	25
Mambwe	301	152	149	123	112	40	15
Nalolo	254	128	125	83	111	43	31

<sup>6</sup> In the original design, a five-choice Likert scale was used. The extra choices were found to be confusing given the inexperience most respondents had with surveys. A simplified three-color choice began to be used in 2023; and proved more comprehensible.

<sup>7</sup> Respondents were more attuned to the color coding: green is “good”; orange is in the middle; and red is “bad”, than the number linked to the color. In some cases, the questionnaires reversed the numbers so that green was 3 and red was 1; however, the follow-up responses to elaborate on their choice indicated that respondents were attuned to the color rather than the numbering system.

Senanga	260	134	122	105	114	28	24
Sesheke	293	119	174	162	117	49	13
Sinda	273	142	131	109	134	27	23
Vubwi	260	125	135	109	103	35	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>2498</b>	<b>1220</b>	<b>1251</b>	<b>976</b>	<b>1055</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>200</b>

### Data collection and analysis

While the questions were created in English, the facilitator orally translated them into the local language during the focus group session; and then held the discussion in the local language to reach a consensus, before recording the single response in the data collection app in English. KoboCollect<sup>8</sup>, a free phone-based app, was used to collect data. All community and school scorecard data were consolidated into a database<sup>9</sup>.

Quantitative data analysis for the Voice and Accountability (V&A) Project was conducted using *Stata version 17* and *Microsoft Excel*. Qualitative data analysis was performed using thematic and content analysis methodologies, with *Microsoft Excel* utilized for organizing and categorizing qualitative responses. Thematic analysis identified recurring patterns and insights from community feedback, while content analysis systematically examined textual and visual data to interpret key governance and service delivery challenges. This comprehensive, mixed-method approach led to a deeper understanding of education service effectiveness, community engagement, and social accountability impacts.

## **2.1 Challenges and limitations**

- **Cultural Sensitivities:** Some respondents, especially in Western and Eastern Provinces, were hesitant to discuss gender-sensitive issues such as menstrual hygiene and school safety, impacting the depth of responses.
- **Geographical Inaccessibility:** Poor road infrastructure and seasonal flooding, particularly in Mambwe, Kalabo, and Sesheke, delayed data collection.
- **Data Reliability Issues:** Some schools lacked updated records on student enrollment, absenteeism, infrastructure status, and financial disclosures, making it difficult to validate claims and assess transparency.
- **Limited Parental Involvement in School Governance:** In districts such as Vubwi, Senanga, and Kaoma, community members didn't fully participate in the scorecard assessments due to that it was farming period. This resulted in weakening accountability mechanisms and community engagement in education decision-making.
- **Resistance to Financial Transparency:** Some schools failed to display budgets and grant allocations on notice boards, limiting community oversight to give feedback on these issues. Making some school authorities citing the Access to Information (ATI) Act of Zambia which does not explicitly mandate the public display of financial records, but it provides a framework for requesting such information from public institutions.
- **Focus group scoring presented issues.** On occasion it was difficult to "average" the combined input from all focus group members into one score for each question. The tendency to "average" scoring among participants leads to large grouping of scores in the middle range.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.kobotoolbox.org/>

<sup>9</sup> This database is maintained by the M&E specialist on project server and kobo humanitarian server located in Europe.

- Longer time frames are needed to determine effects on some focus areas such as textbook availability, and construction.
- Decentralization of the education sector has not begun. Devolved responsibilities to districts would have made the project efforts (communities brought issues to district level and some to province level for resolution), consistent with the government efforts; but the timing has been mismatched.
- The introduction of the new curriculum along with new textbooks has the effect of stalling requests for additional textbooks by the community. Since the communities do not know the rollout plan their request for textbooks can be minimized by government officials who respond that “the new, free textbooks are on the way”.

### 3.0 Findings

Findings are based only on the data collected from the community scorecard. Scores closer to “3” (Green) show the greatest satisfaction in the schools in each district; scores below 2.45 indicate that there are sufficient problems with the service delivery to prioritize these areas of concern<sup>10</sup>.

#### 3.1 Scores by category summarized

The findings are grouped into six categories: infrastructure problems and those that specifically relate to the effects on the five focus areas. The following chart presents the average score for each category.

Note that the two categories that show the greatest level of satisfaction are: Transparency in Budgeting (2.58) and Teacher/ Pupil absenteeism (2.46). Both are categories where the local community has the greatest control and requires the least additional expenditure to improve. This reasoning should also apply to the Safe School category; however, focus groups gave a score (2.11) for several reasons: first, there may be misunderstandings about what is required of safe school plans since this is a new concept to some communities; second, creating safe spaces can mean additional costs; third, language barriers during facilitation of scorecard as interpretation could have been different.

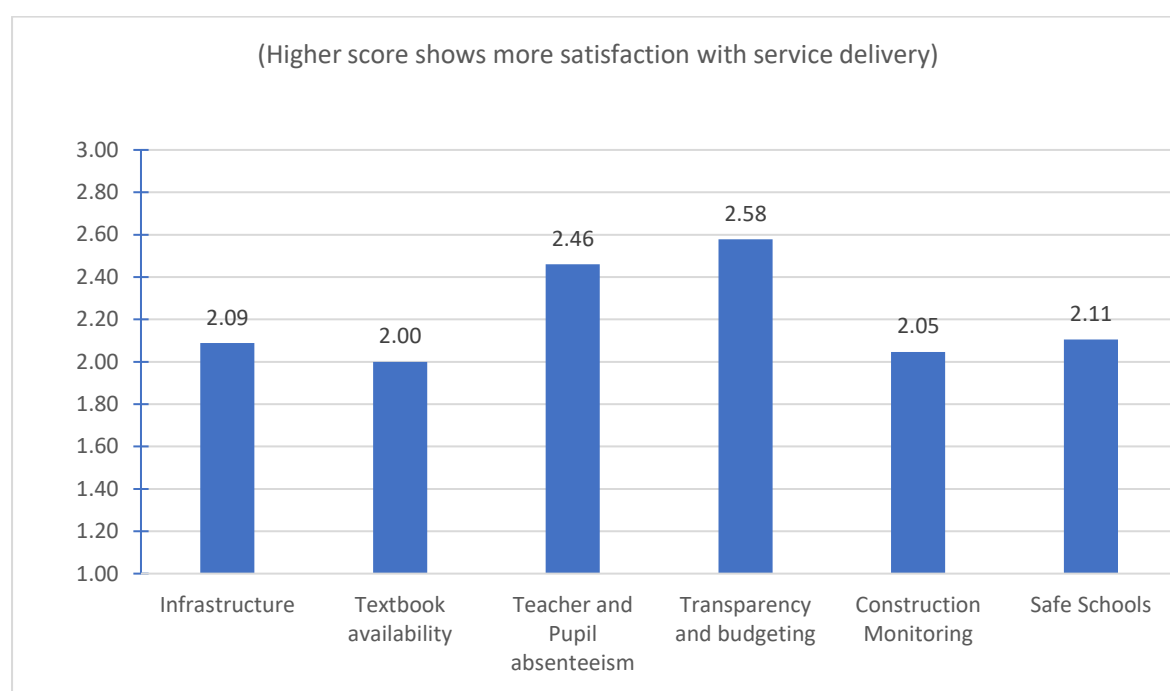
Not surprisingly, infrastructure (2.09), textbook availability (2.00), and construction (2.05) all had scores that indicate enough problems exist to prioritize these areas. Schools reported the following reasons for the low scores: The low scores in Infrastructure (2.09), Construction (2.05), and Textbook Availability (2.00) reflect overcrowded, deteriorating schools, delayed and poor-quality construction, and persistent textbook shortages. These issues stem from inadequate funding, weak oversight, and inefficiencies in resource distribution.

For more detail on the average score for individual questions see Appendice 6.3.

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<sup>10</sup> The level of 2.45 was arbitrarily chosen as a reference point. Scores below this level do not indicate complete satisfaction with service delivery—only a score of “3” indicates this level of satisfaction. If we assume that all services can be improved, i.e., they all have some level of dissatisfaction, then there is a need to prioritize. A cutoff of 2.45 represents a marker to use to prioritize those categories that need the attention first at 82% confidence level. This marker can be changed as needed.

Figure 1: Category averages for all 45 schools



### 3.2 Scores by categories by district

The following chart presents the category findings by district<sup>11</sup>. Results at the school level are also available but are not presented in this report.

Noteworthy scores include: the highest score (2.25) in Vubwi for infrastructure construction monitoring; while the lowest score (1.88) was in Sesheke in the category: Transparency in Budgeting<sup>12</sup>. Nalolo also showed a high level of satisfaction (3) in this same category with a score lowest in Katete of 2.36. Vubwi's high construction monitoring score (2.25) shows strong oversight and community involvement, while Sesheke's low budgeting transparency (1.88) suggests weak accountability and limited public access to financial data. Nalolo's top score (3.00) reflects better budget openness and governance.

<sup>11</sup> This chart is presented in six colors; however, if printed on a black and white printer each column (in each group of six columns) should be labeled from left to right as follows: Infrastructure, Textbook availability; Teacher/pupil Absenteeism; Transparency in Budgeting; Construction monitoring; Safe Schools.

<sup>12</sup> A perfect satisfaction score of 3.00 means that there is no column for this category.

**Figure 2: Category average scores by district (Presented by Project Districts)**

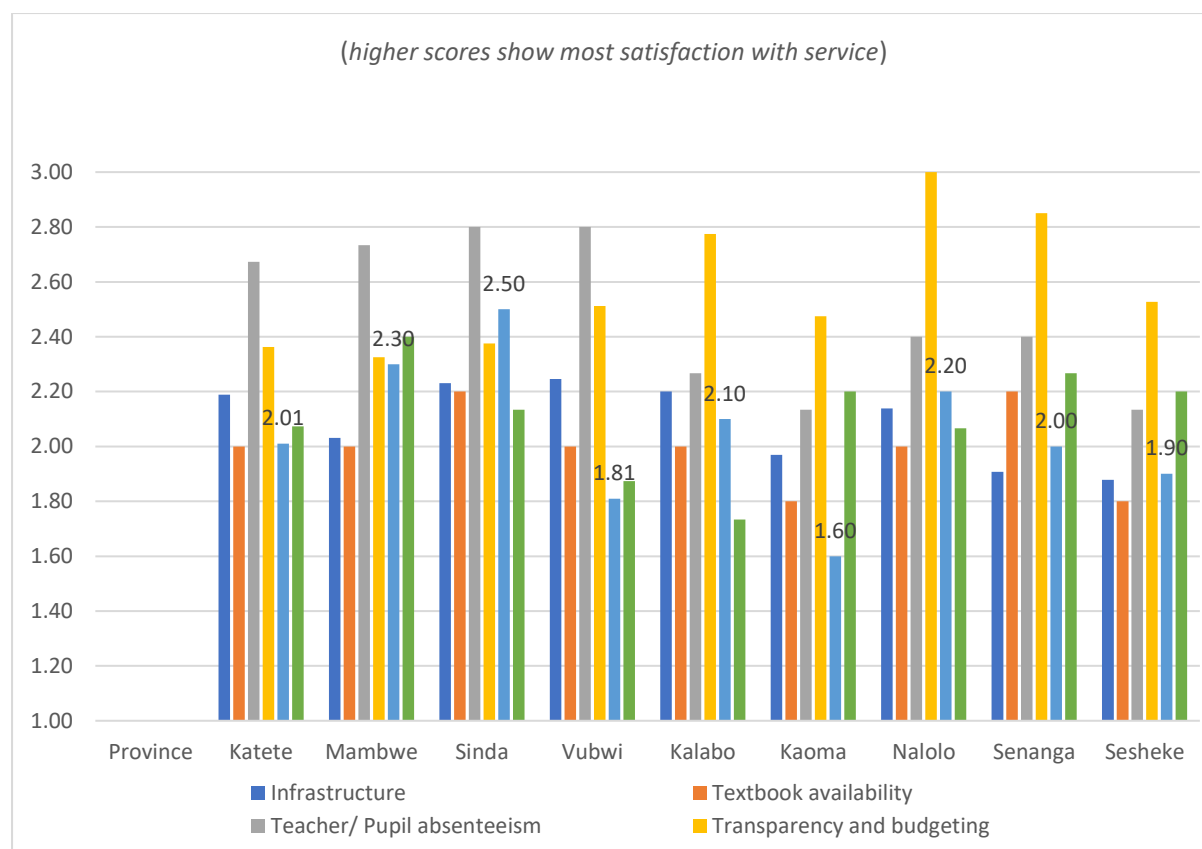
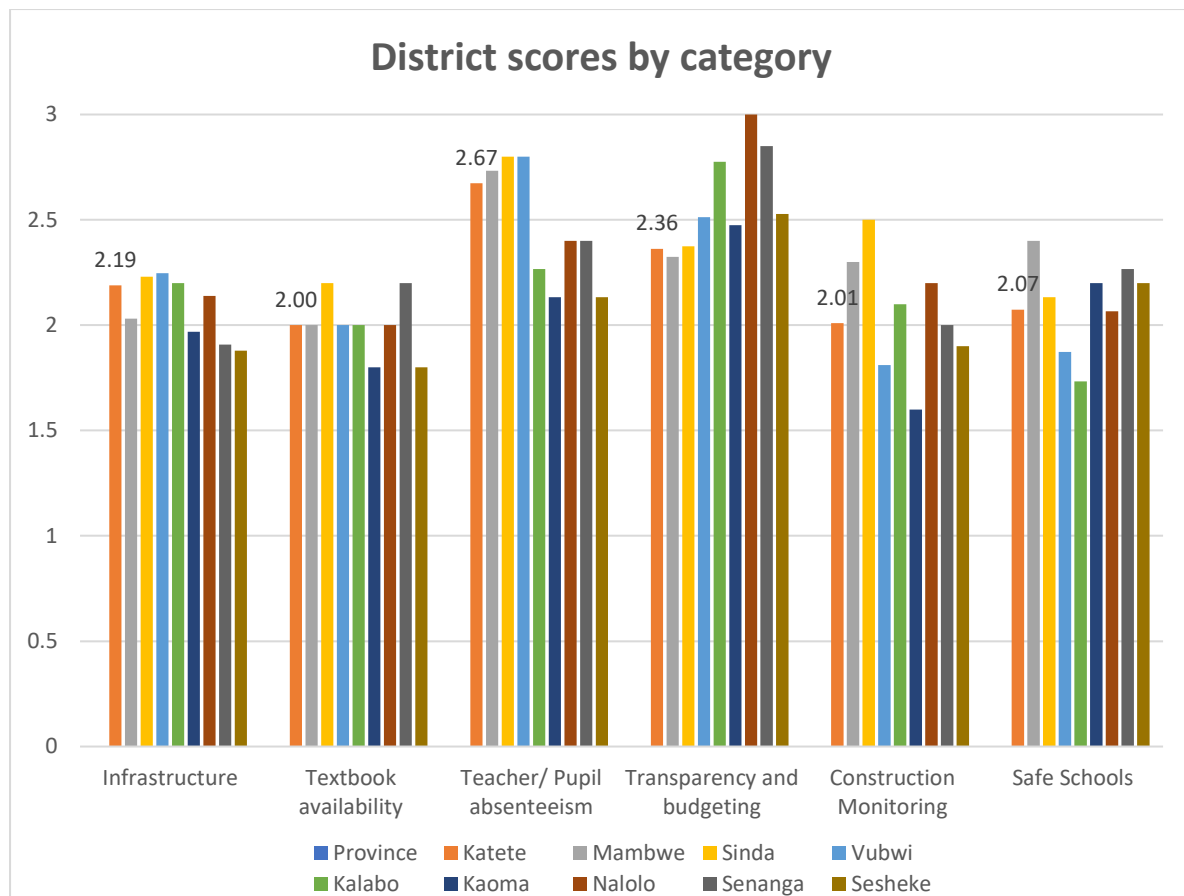


Figure 3: Presentation on Category average scores by district ( V&A focus Areas - Thematically Presented)

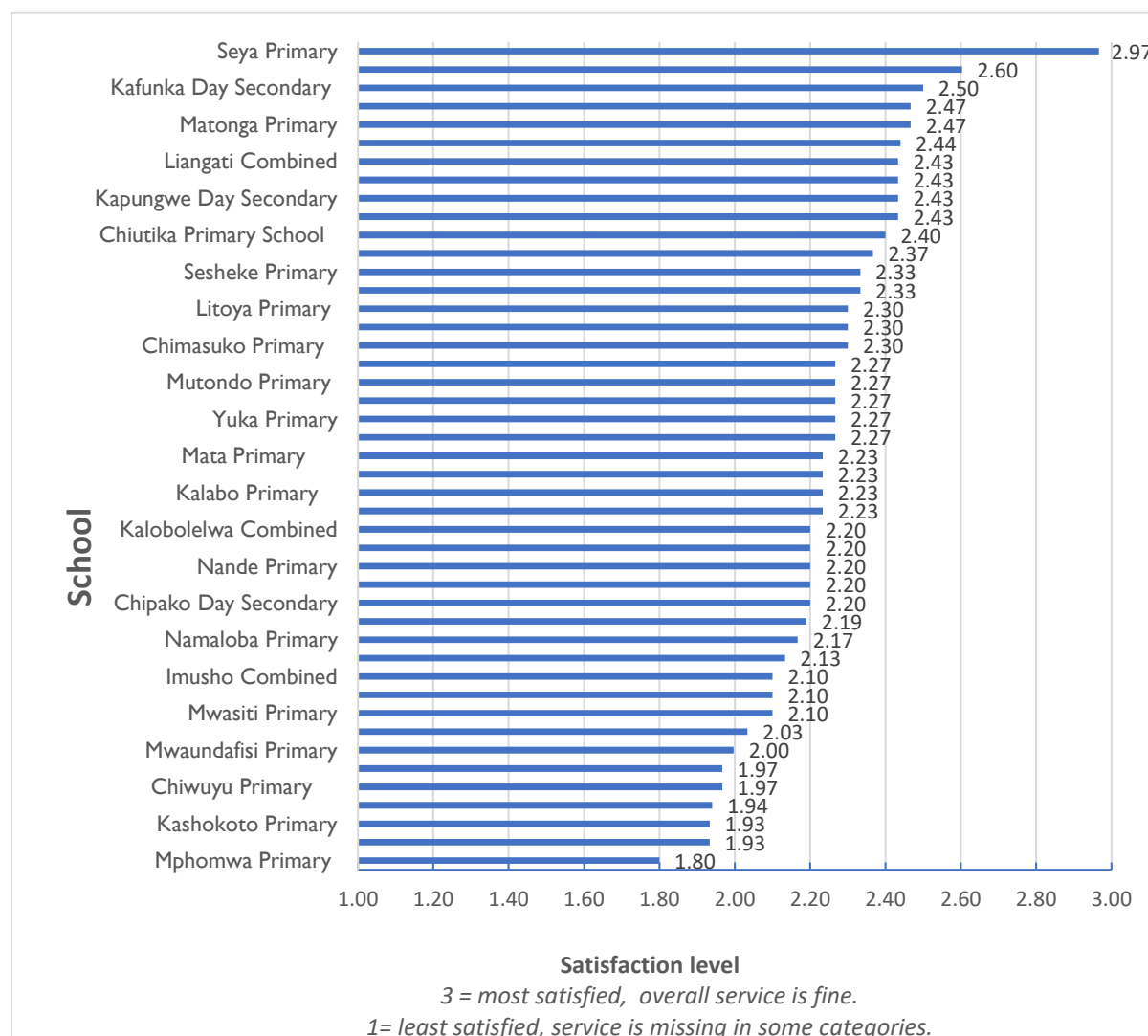


### 3.3 Overall service delivery satisfaction levels by school

This chart presents the overall score for each school from most satisfied (low score) to least satisfied (high score). The single score is an average of all 30 questions for a school. The result is an overall satisfaction level with the education services provided by school.

The schools with the lowest scores either have the most critical focus groups, or they are in most need of attention to remedy real problems.

Figure 4: Overall satisfaction with education service at their school



### 3.3 Selected findings by category

The following comments are selected to give a sense of the types of problems experienced at the schools.

#### 3.3.1 Infrastructure findings:<sup>13</sup>

##### Infrastructure Availability and Adequacy<sup>14</sup>

- Katete: Chimasuko Primary – Only 1 classroom for 2 grades.
- Kalabo: Kalabo Primary, Nalionwa Day – Classrooms overcrowded, exceeding 80 learners per class.
- Sesheke: Sesheke Primary, Sonso Secondary – No classrooms for some grades.

##### Inclusivity of School Infrastructure<sup>15</sup>

- Kaoma: Kashokoto Primary – No ramps for disabled learners.
- Vubwi: Mbande Primary – No disability-inclusive infrastructure.
- Nalolo: Lyamutinga Secondary – No gender-sensitive washrooms.

##### Availability of Trained Teachers

- Katete: Chimasuko Primary – No teachers for Science, History, and Geography.
- Mambwe: Kasamanda Day Secondary – 4 teachers covering 10 subjects.
- Kalabo: Kalobolelwa Combined – Teachers assigned outside their field.

##### Learner-Classroom Ratio

- Sinda: Chiwuyu Primary – 80 plus learners per class.
- Nalolo: Matonga Primary – 374 learners with only 3 classrooms.
- Sesheke: Kalobolelwa Combined – 65 learners per class more than the 40 recommended.

##### Sanitation and Toilets

- Kalabo: Kalabo Primary – 1 toilet for 100 learners.
- Sesheke: Sesheke Primary – No functional toilets.
- Vubwi: Mbande Primary – Community-built toilets still in use.

##### Electricity and Solar Power

- Senanga: Lui Wanyau Primary – No power source.
- Sesheke: Lusu East Combined – No electricity, no solar panels.
- Mambwe: Chiutika Primary School – Only some classrooms connected.

##### Availability of Safe Drinking Water

- Nalolo: Matonga Primary – Borehole insufficient for student population.
- Katete: Mwaundafisi Primary – No dedicated borehole, shares with clinic.
- Sinda: Kapungwe Day Secondary – Only 1 water source for the entire school.

##### Availability of Teachers' Houses

- Senanga: Ngundi Primary – 3 houses for 12 teachers.
- Kaoma: Kalukundwe Primary – No staff houses available.
- Mambwe: Kasamanda Day Secondary – 4 houses for 15 teachers.

##### Availability of Desks, Chairs, and Tables

- Mambwe: Chiutika Primary School – 20 desks received but still insufficient.
- Kalabo: Kalabo Primary – Many learners sit on the floor due to lack of desks.
- Kaoma: Kashokoto Primary – Old and damaged furniture.

<sup>13</sup> Thirteen of the 30 scorecard questions concerned infrastructure at the schools.

<sup>14</sup> This section summarizes the findings from several questions concerning: Adequate number of Secondary Schools within the community; Distance to the school (10Km Radius); Adequate number of Primary Schools within the community; Availability of adequate infrastructure (Classrooms, laboratories)

<sup>15</sup> This section summarizes the findings from the following questions: The schools are inclusive and provide equal access to education services for all the children in the community; Are schools Gender and Disability inclusive?



### 3.3.2 Textbook availability

- *Kalabo: Kalobolehwa Combined* – 1 textbook per 4 learners.
- *Mambwe: Mphomwa Primary* – Some grades lack literacy textbooks.
- *Sinda: Mng'omba Day Secondary* – Textbooks inadequate across all subjects.

### 3.3.3 Teacher and Pupil Absenteeism

#### Punctuality of Teachers

- *Kalabo: Nang'uma Primary* – Teachers commute over 10 km daily.
- *Sesheke: Sesheke Primary* – Some teachers arrive late.
- *Katete: Katete Day Secondary* – Frequent absenteeism.

#### Pupil Absenteeism

- *Nalolo: Lyamutinga Secondary* – Hunger leads to high absenteeism.
- *Katete: Chimasuko Primary* – Pupils skip school to work or visit bars.
- *Sinda: Chiwuyu Primary* – Many learners engaged in household chores.

#### Teacher Absenteeism

- *Sesheke: Sonso Secondary* – Teachers frequently absent due to alcohol use.
- *Senanga: Mata Primary* – Teachers miss school for personal reasons.
- *Sinda: Chiwuyu Primary* – Some teachers travel far to collect salaries, missing class days.

### 3.3.4 Transparency in budgeting

#### Transparency in School Funding

- *Katete: Chimasuko Primary* – Rated Orange (2). No significant concerns raised.
- *Kalabo: Naliohwa Day* – Rated Orange (2). Community members are aware of the funds received.
- *Sesheke: Sonso Secondary* – Rated Red (3). Many community members are unaware of the amount received by the school.

#### Availability of Notice Boards for Budget and Grants

- *Katete: Kafunka Day Secondary* – Rated Orange (2). Notice board placed inside admin block, not easily accessible.
- *Mambwe: Chiutika Primary School* – Rated Red (3). No school budget display on the notice board: school uses windows for notices.
- *Western Province: Sesheke Primary* – Rated Green (3). School budgets information is regularly displayed.

#### Transparency in School Fees

- *Katete: Chimbundire Primary* – Rated **Green (3)**. No additional school fees charged.
- *Kalabo: Kalabo Primary* – Rated Green (3). Free education policy enforced.
- *Vubwi: Mbande Primary* – Rated Green (3). Parents previously paid K10, but no fees currently charged.

#### Community Participation in Planning and Budgeting

- *Katete: Katete Day Secondary* – Rated Orange (2). Few community members engaged.
- *Kaoma: Mutondo Primary* – Rated Orange (2). Community members showed receipts but not fully involved in planning.
- *Mambwe: Kasamanda Day Secondary* – Rated Green (1). PTC members actively participate.

#### PTC Meetings and Community Participation

- *Katete: Mwaundafisi Primary* – Rated Red (1). No meetings held for two years.
- *Kalabo: Nq'uma Primary* – Rated Green (3). Regular PTC meetings take place.
- *Senanga: Lui Wanyau Primary* – Rated Orange (2). Meetings occur, but attendance is low.

#### Awareness of School Financial Committee Members

- *Katete: Chimasuko Primary* – Rated Red (3). Community not aware of committee members.
- *Sinda: Chiwuyu Primary* – Rated Orange (2). Some members aware, but awareness remains low.
- *Nalolo: Lyamutinga Secondary* – Rated Green (1). Community fully aware of committee members.

#### Awareness of Bursary Support Under CDF and Application Procedures

- *Katete: Kafunkha Day Secondary* – Rated Orange (2). Some community members aware, others uninformed on the CDF process and procedures.
- *Vubwi: Mbozi Day Secondary* – Rated Green (3). Training conducted on bursary support.
- *Kaoma: Kashokoto Primary* – Rated Orange (2). More sensitization is required on CDF and application procedures.

#### Feedback on Constituency Development Fund Bursary Applications

- *Mambwe: Chiutika Primary School* – Rated Orange (2). Feedback given only upon inquiry.
- *Sesheke: Kalobolelwa Combined* – Rated Red (1). No feedback given on unsuccessful applications.
- *Senanga: Mata Primary* – Rated Green (3). CDF committee provides feedback through WDCs.

### 3.3.5 Construction Monitoring

This section presents an analysis of the status of school construction and renovations in various districts, focusing on funding availability, project execution, and infrastructural challenges.

#### Status of School Construction and Renovations

- **Lack of Funding:** 11 Schools reported stalled construction projects due to insufficient funding, relying heavily on community contributions or CDF.
- **No Construction Projects:** Schools such as Mwaundafisi Primary (Katete), Kalukundwe Primary (Kaoma), and Ngundi Primary (Senanga) have no construction or renovation activities taking place.
- **Poor Planning & Execution:** Some schools, such as Sonso Secondary (Sesheke), have poorly constructed or makeshift classrooms using inadequate materials.
- **Unequal Access to Funds:** Schools such as Lyamutinga Secondary (Nalolo) and Lui Wanyau Primary (Senanga) are forced to rely on community-led efforts to support critical infrastructure needs, raising concerns over equity in funding allocation.

#### Funding Sources for Construction and Renovations

- **Limited Financial Support:** Some schools lack sufficient funding, leading to incomplete projects (Chiwuyu Primary in Sinda), Kalobolelwa Combined (in Sesheke)).
- **Unclear Allocation of Grants:** Some schools, despite receiving World Bank or CDF grants, have incomplete projects or ongoing financial shortfalls (Chipako Day Secondary (Mambwe), Mangango Secondary (Kaoma)).
- **Reliance on External Donors:** Some schools have ongoing projects funded by World Bank or well-wishers, but delays occur when local financial support is missing (Kasamanda Day Secondary (Mambwe), Liangati Combined (Senanga))

### 3.3.6 Safe Schools

#### Availability of Firefighting Equipment

- **Widespread lack of firefighting equipment:** Most schools do not have adequate firefighting equipment, with many schools reporting complete absence of fire extinguishers or other fire safety measures (Mwaundafisi Primary (Katete), Mutondo Primary (Kaoma), Ngundi Primary (Senanga)).
- **Partial availability but inadequate equipment:** Some schools have only a single fire extinguisher or basic fire safety tools, which are insufficient for large-scale emergencies (Matemba Secondary (Vubwi), Kashokoto Primary (Kaoma), Nq'uma Primary (Kalabo)).
- **Reliance on improvised fire safety measures:** A few schools have resorted to using buckets of sand as a fire safety alternative (Seya Primary (Sinda), Mbozi Day Secondary (Vubwi)), though this is not a sustainable solution.

#### Availability of Safe Spaces for Female Learners

- **Lack of dedicated safe spaces:** Many schools do not have rooms designated for female learners to report cases of gender-based violence, harassment, or sexual exploitation (Chiwuyu Primary (Sinda), Kalabo Primary (Kalabo), Mbozi Day Secondary (Vubwi)).

- Limited functionality of existing spaces: Some schools have identified spaces for female learners but lack resources or trained personnel to ensure these spaces serve their intended purpose (Katete Day Secondary (Katete), Matemba Secondary (Vubwi)).
- Community support for safe spaces is inconsistent: In certain schools, safe spaces are only functional because of external organizations, community-led initiatives, or traditional leaders (Litoya Primary (Nalolo), Liangati Combined (Senanga)), indicating a lack of institutionalized support for these critical resources.

#### Presence of Safe Clubs, Mentors, and Counselors

- Many schools lack active safe clubs: Some schools have safe clubs in name only, with little to no structured activities or guidance (Mwaundafisi Primary (Katete), Kalobolelwa Combined (Sesheke)).
- Shortage of trained mentors and counselors: While some schools have guidance teachers, most do not have dedicated mentors or trained counselors to support pupils effectively (Sonso Secondary (Sesheke), Nq'uma Primary (Kalabo)).
- Existing clubs and mentors functioning well in some areas: A small number of schools have well-established safe clubs with strong mentorship structures, but these remain in the minority (Sianda Primary (Nalolo), Seya Primary (Sinda)).

## 4.0 Discussion

This section summaries key findings and aligns the findings to policy implications and possible interventions to address the issues.

### 4.1 Infrastructure Issues: Accessibility and Quality concerns

#### 4.1.1 Accessibility

Accessibility remains a concern in Eastern and Western Provinces of Zambia, particularly in Katete, Mambwe, Senanga, Sesheke, and Kaoma Districts, where long travel distances to schools continue to hinder education access, especially for children in rural and remote areas<sup>16</sup>. Zambia's Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2021-2025) emphasize the need for universal access to education by ensuring that primary schools are within a 5km radius and secondary schools within a 10km radius of learners' homes<sup>17</sup>. However, findings reveal that many primary and secondary school learners still walk distances far beyond these thresholds, limiting school attendance, academic performance, and completion rates.

In Mambwe District, Eastern Province, children from Katemo Primary and Chiutika Primary Schools must walk over 5km to access the nearest primary school. In Western Province, learners from Ngundi Primary in Senanga and Kalabo Primary in Kalabo District also face severe accessibility barriers, with primary school pupils traveling over 5km daily to attend school. The shortage of primary schools in Western Province has placed a disproportionate burden on existing institutions. Ngundi Primary in Senanga and Kalabo Primary struggle to accommodate all eligible learners, leading to classrooms exceeding 80 pupils per teacher, well beyond the recommended 40:1 pupil-teacher ratio in Zambia.

In Eastern Province, Katete District experiences a severe shortage of secondary schools, with only one secondary school, Kafunka Day Secondary, serving the entire community. In Katete District, learners attending Kafunka Day Secondary and Kasamanda Day Secondary frequently travel beyond 10km due to the lack of secondary school facilities within their communities<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> According to the Living Conditions Monitoring Survey (LCMS 2020), over 60% of Zambians living in rural areas fall below the national poverty line, making it difficult for families to afford alternative transport options or boarding accommodations for their children

<sup>17</sup> The Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP 2021-2025) emphasizes the need for equitable school distribution, yet rural schools remain critically underdeveloped, affecting literacy rates and learning outcomes.

<sup>18</sup> Research from Kombe and Mwanza (2019) in Zambia indicates that learners who miss more than 30% of school days are twice as likely to drop out as those with consistent attendance. The Education for All (EFA) framework recognizes that school

Similarly, in Western Province, Kalabo District has only one secondary school, Matemba Secondary, which cannot accommodate the increasing number of learners from surrounding communities, leading to higher student-teacher ratios and reduced learning quality. Reports from Chimbundire Primary in Katete and Nang'uma Primary in Kalabo indicate that many female learners drop out after primary school, as secondary school is located over 15km away.

The implications of these long distances are devastating for education participation, especially for girls<sup>19</sup>, children with disabilities<sup>20</sup>, and those from economically disadvantaged households. The Education for All (EFA) framework adopted by Zambia recognizes that physical distance is one of the greatest barriers to education, yet limited investment in rural school expansion continues to widen the gap between urban and rural education access<sup>21</sup>. Long distances contribute to high absenteeism rates<sup>22</sup>, poor academic performance, and school dropouts, as children especially young learners struggle to endure long walks to school daily. Furthermore, the lack of safe and reliable transport options, coupled with the prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV) in remote areas, increases the risk of girls being harassed, assaulted, or forced into early marriages due to the burden of traveling long distances to school.

To mitigate the negative effects of long school distances on attendance and participation, the Zambian government could do the following:

- For primary schools, a school clustering approach should be adopted, where smaller satellite (community) schools are built closer to communities to serve as feeder schools for larger institutions. Katemo Primary and Ngundi Primary should be prioritized for upgrading into full primary schools to accommodate learners who currently travel excessive distances.
- The introduction of subsidized school transport services for rural learners should be explored, particularly in districts like Kaoma and Senanga, where alternative means of transport such as bicycles could be provided under community-led initiatives.
- Expanding disability-inclusive infrastructure in affected schools, particularly Katemo Primary and Sesheke Primary, would enhance education accessibility for disabled learners, in line with Zambia's Inclusive Education Policy (2017). Strengthening community-based monitoring systems and engaging traditional leaders to advocate for educational accessibility will be crucial in addressing high dropout rates linked to school distance.
- Community-led initiatives and private sector partnerships should be leveraged to provide temporary learning centers in hard-to-reach areas. Programs such as Community-Based Education Support (CBESP) and the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) should be utilized to mobilize local resources for school expansion, the construction of teacher housing, and improved accessibility for learners with disabilities.

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*attendance is a prerequisite for quality learning outcomes, yet the current school distance challenges in Eastern and Western Provinces undermine Zambia's efforts to achieve SDG 4.*

<sup>19</sup> UNESCO's Global Education Monitoring Report (2022) states that the further a girl must travel to school, the higher the likelihood of her discontinuing her education due to safety concerns. The Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS 2024) further reports that 39% of rural girls drop out before completing secondary school, with distance to school being a key factor. (According to the Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS, 2020), 39% of rural girls drop out before completing secondary school due to school inaccessibility, compared to 18% in urban areas.)

<sup>20</sup> The absence of disability-friendly transport and infrastructure forces many children with physical impairments to stay home. In Mambwe District, Katemo Primary lacks the necessary accessibility features, forcing children with disabilities to remain out of school. Likewise, in Western Province, Sesheke Primary has no disability-inclusive pathways, making it difficult for disabled students to navigate the school environment. This violates Zambia's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which mandates inclusive education.

<sup>21</sup> This trend directly contradicts Zambia's commitment to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all children by 2030.

<sup>22</sup> The Ministry of Education's Annual School Census (2023) highlights that rural schools have an average absenteeism rate of 18% compared to 7% in urban areas, underscoring the disproportionate impact of school distance on rural learners.

- Zambia must align its infrastructure expansion strategies with the Free Education Policy and 8NDP goals, ensuring that new schools are evenly distributed based on population density and demand. Without deliberate intervention and strategic investment, rural education gaps will continue to widen, preventing thousands of learners from attaining basic and secondary education, ultimately hindering Zambia's economic and social development goals.

#### **Location specific recommendations:**

- In Katete District, an additional secondary school should be constructed through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) to alleviate pressure on Kafunhka Day Secondary, ensuring that learners do not have to travel more than 10km to access secondary education. Likewise, Kasamanda Day Secondary in Mambwe should receive immediate expansion funding to cater to the growing pupil population, preventing further dropout rates.
- In Western Province, Kalabo District requires the establishment of at least two more secondary schools in underserved areas, while Nang'uma Primary should be upgraded into a full primary school to accommodate growing enrollments including grades 8 and 9. The government should also integrate community schools into the formal education system, providing funding for teacher salaries, classroom expansion, and infrastructure improvements.
- For primary education, schools such as Chiutika Primary and Ngundi Primary should be prioritized for expansion through World Bank-funded projects and donor-supported interventions. Additionally, mobile classroom initiatives or satellite schools should be piloted in extremely remote areas to bring education closer to underserved populations. The government must prioritize the construction of additional primary and secondary schools in highly affected districts, particularly in Katete, Mambwe, Senanga, Kalabo, and Sesheke, where the 5km and 10km distance thresholds for primary and secondary schools are currently unmet<sup>23</sup>.
- Establish boarding facilities at Kafunhka Day Secondary in Katete and Kasamanda Day Secondary in Mambwe, allowing pupils to reside near school premises and reduce daily travel burdens. Similarly, in Kalabo and Sesheke, local authorities should utilize Constituency Development Fund (CDF) allocations to build dormitories for learners traveling over 10km daily.
- Fast-track the conversion of community schools into fully-fledged primary schools, especially in remote areas such as Katemo, Chiutika, and Ngundi, where young learners must walk more than 5km to access education.

#### **4.1.2 Education Quality**

Ensuring quality education is fundamental to achieving Zambia's Vision 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4). Findings indicate severe disparities in education quality across Eastern and Western Provinces, characterized by a lack of trained teachers, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate learning materials, and poor infrastructure. These challenges directly impact learning outcomes and long-term student retention rates.

School infrastructure in both provinces remains substandard, particularly in rural areas. Many schools lack dedicated science laboratories, disability-friendly classrooms, and adequate sanitation facilities, violating Zambia's Education Infrastructure Development Plan (2020-2030), which prioritizes upgrading rural schools to modern learning standards.

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<sup>23</sup> The Ministry of Education's Annual School Census (2023) highlights that rural Zambia has an average of 1 secondary school per 50,000 people, compared to 1 per 12,000 in urban areas, demonstrating the disproportionate allocation of education resources. This shortage of schools perpetuates educational inequality and contradicts Zambia's National Development Plan (8NDP), which prioritizes infrastructure expansion in rural areas.

### Overcrowded classrooms:

The Ministry of General Education (MoGE) recommends a pupil-teacher ratio of 40:1, yet findings from Katete, Mambwe, and Sinda in Eastern Province, as well as Kalabo, Kaoma, and Sesheke in Western Province, show classroom ratios exceeding 80:1<sup>24</sup>. In Kasamanda Day Secondary in Mambwe and Chimasuko Primary in Katete the ratio is over 70 learners per teacher. In Chimbundire Primary and Kapungwe Day Secondary in Sinda, and Kafunhka Day Secondary in Katete, classrooms are so overcrowded that pupils sit on the floor.

### Teacher shortages:

In Eastern Province, schools such as Chimbundire Primary in Katete, Chiutika Primary in Mambwe, and Kapungwe Day Secondary in Sinda report critical shortages of trained teachers, particularly in subjects like science, mathematics, and geography. Kasamanda Day Secondary and Chiutika Primary in Mambwe report having no specialized science or geography teachers, forcing schools to rely on underqualified staff to teach these critical subjects. Sonso Secondary in Sesheke has only four trained teachers for an entire school, making it impossible to meet the competency requirements for secondary education. In Western Province, the situation is equally dire, particularly in schools such as Matemba Secondary in Kalabo, Lui Wanyau Primary in Senanga, and Nang'uma Primary in Kaoma, where teacher shortages have led to unqualified individuals stepping in to fill subject gaps. This violates the National Implementation Framework V (2022-2026), which aims to enhance the recruitment and deployment of qualified teachers in rural areas.

### Teacher Housing Shortages and Its Impact on Retention

A chronic shortage of teacher housing affects staff retention and punctuality in multiple schools. Schools such as Katemo Primary in Mambwe, Matemba Secondary in Kalabo, and Sonso Secondary in Sesheke have only a few teachers' houses, despite having teaching staff far exceeding available accommodation. The lack of housing also discourages teachers from accepting posts in rural areas, exacerbating the shortage of qualified educators in these regions. Lack of housing also forces teachers to live in distant communities, leading to frequent late arrivals and absenteeism, which directly contradicts Zambia's Teacher Deployment and Retention Policy, which emphasizes the provision of adequate teacher accommodation to enhance motivation and efficiency.

The lack of specialized teachers for children with disabilities is another major concern. In Kapungwe Day Secondary and Chimbundire Primary in Eastern Province, learners with disabilities lack access to trained special education teachers, violating the National Disability Policy (2015), which mandates inclusive education for all learners. Kalobolelwa Combined in Sesheke also lacks trained teachers to handle children with special needs.

To improve the quality of education, the Zambian government must urgently address teacher shortages by enhancing rural recruitment; offering incentives for teachers in remote areas; and expanding continuous professional development programs. DEBS offices in districts such as Katete, Mambwe, and Sinda must prioritize deploying science and mathematics teachers to understaffed schools like Chimbundire Primary, Chiutika Primary, and Kasamanda Day Secondary.

Furthermore, the MoGE should partner with teacher training institutions to introduce mandatory rural teaching service for graduates, ensuring underprivileged communities receive adequate instructional support. In Western Province, targeted recruitment should be implemented at Matemba Secondary in Kalabo and Nang'uma Primary in Kaoma to address chronic teacher shortages.

### Learning materials shortages:

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<sup>24</sup> Sonso Secondary in Sesheke and Nang'uma Primary in Kaoma, have ratios exceeding 90 learners to one teacher

Learning materials such as textbooks and laboratory equipment, remain insufficient in both provinces. In Katete District, Katete Day Secondary faces a severe shortage of textbooks, with four pupils sharing a single book. In Katemo Primary and Chiwuyu Primary, pupils lack basic learning materials, forcing teachers to rely on verbal instruction rather than guided reading or structured lessons.

The situation in Western Province is similar, with Lui Wanyau Primary in Senanga, in Mbande Primary in Vubwi, and Nande Primary in Kalabo reporting extreme shortages of textbooks. The absence of adequate books not only affects literacy development but also hinders independent study, reinforcing Zambia's poor literacy rates at the primary level. The 2018 Zambia National Assessment Survey found that only 30% of Grade 3 learners could read with comprehension, a problem exacerbated by the continued shortage of reading materials in rural schools.

Regarding learning materials, school grants and CDF allocations must be directed toward purchasing textbooks and laboratory equipment in severely affected schools like Katete Day Secondary, Mbande Primary, and Lui Wanyau Primary.

#### Laboratory Shortages

A severe shortage of laboratories continues to plague many schools in both Eastern and Western Provinces, leading to overcrowded learning conditions and a lack of practical science education. The absence of laboratories in several secondary schools, such as Nang'uma Primary in Kaoma and Mangango Secondary in Western Province, significantly hampers science education, limiting students' ability to conduct practical experiments. This violates the Ministry of Education's 2021 freed education that focuses STEM as well, and which emphasizes the need for laboratory-equipped schools to improve science learning outcomes. The lack of infrastructure also contributes to lower performance in national examinations, particularly in science subjects, as pupils are unable to practice laboratory techniques before sitting for practical assessments.

#### Inclusive education:

To strengthen inclusive education, the National Disability Policy should be fully implemented by increasing the number of special education teachers and improving infrastructure accessibility in schools such as Kapungwe Day Secondary, Kalobolelwa Combined, and Chimbundire Primary. The Zambia Inclusive Education Strategy (2022-2026) must be reinforced through targeted investments in disability-friendly learning spaces, ensuring that no child is left behind due to physical or cognitive impairments.

Despite the government's commitment to inclusive education under the Persons with Disabilities Act (2012) and the National Disability Policy (2015), many schools lack the necessary infrastructure to accommodate learners with disabilities. Schools such as Katemo Primary in Mambwe, Lui Wanyau Primary in Senanga, and Kalukundwe Primary in Kaoma have no ramps, braille-friendly resources, or designated classrooms for special-needs learners, forcing pupils with disabilities to either drop out or endure learning environments that are not suited to their needs.

#### Sanitation Hygiene at the schools

Sanitation remains a major concern in many schools. Chiutika Primary in Mambwe and Kasamanda Day Secondary in Mambwe report that their toilets are inadequate for the student population, forcing pupils to share limited facilities, leading to hygiene-related diseases and absenteeism. In schools such as Kalobolelwa Combined in Sesheke and Nang'uma Primary in Kaoma, toilets remain inadequate for the number of learners, with many lacking gender-segregated or disability-friendly washrooms. This issue is particularly severe for female learners, who often miss school due to a lack of menstrual hygiene facilities, violating the Menstrual Hygiene Management Policy under the Ministry of Health.

Furthermore, the absence of gender-sensitive sanitation facilities in schools such as Kalobolelwa Combined in Sesheke and Sonso Secondary in Western Province contributes to high absenteeism among girls, especially during menstruation. The absence of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) facilities in schools such as Sonso Secondary in Sesheke and Lui Wanyau Primary in Senanga has resulted in high absenteeism among adolescent girls, affecting their educational progression. Without separate and private washrooms, many female pupils miss classes, affecting their overall academic performance. This contradicts the Gender Equity and Equality Act (2015), which mandates that all public institutions, including schools, provide facilities that cater to both male and female users equitably.

Furthermore, the lack of health preparedness plans in some schools limits their ability to respond to disease outbreaks such as cholera and respiratory infections. Schools without handwashing stations or soap, such as Ngundi Primary and Kapungwe Day Secondary, remain vulnerable to hygiene-related illnesses, violating Zambia's School Health and Nutrition Policy, which mandates safe sanitary conditions in learning institutions.

#### Access to Electricity and Clean Water

Access to electricity and clean water remains inconsistent in many schools, further undermining learning conditions. Schools such as Mbozi Day Secondary in Vubwi, Nang'uma Primary in Kaoma, and Imusho Combined in Sesheke rely on solar power, which is often insufficient to meet their energy needs, resulting in poor lighting, ineffective laboratory sessions, and disrupted ICT-based learning. Some schools, such as Ngundi Primary in Senanga, have no electricity at all, limiting opportunities for e-learning and evening study programs.

Schools such as Lui Wanyau Primary in Senanga and Kalukundwe Primary in Kaoma face persistent water shortages, with some relying on boreholes that produce iron-heavy, undrinkable water. This raises health concerns, particularly in preventing waterborne diseases such as cholera, and contradicts Zambia's Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Policy, which mandates that all schools must have access to clean and safe drinking water.

The absence of electricity and water facilities in some schools further degrades the learning environment. Katemo Primary and Nang'uma Primary in Kaoma lack a reliable electricity supply, affecting lessons in computer studies and science. At Lui Wanyau Primary and Nande Primary in Senanga, borehole water is unsafe due to high iron content, forcing pupils to rely on untreated water sources. This contradicts the Water and Sanitation Strategy (2022) that aims to ensure all learning institutions have access to safe drinking water.

While some schools have adopted solar power solutions, such as Mbozi Day Secondary in Vubwi, many others, including Kalukundwe Primary in Kaoma, remain without reliable electricity, limiting access to digital learning tools. This contradicts Zambia's National Energy Policy (2019), which prioritizes the electrification of schools, particularly in rural areas, to support ICT education.

#### Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability

Zambia's Climate Change Response Strategy (2012) emphasizes the need for climate-resilient school infrastructure, yet many schools are not adequately prepared to mitigate climate-related risks. Schools such as Kasamanda Day Secondary in Eastern Province and Matemba Secondary in Western Province lack tree cover, making classrooms unbearably hot during peak temperatures. Additionally, many schools still rely on outdated energy sources such as firewood for cooking school meals, exacerbating deforestation and environmental degradation.



## Disaster Preparedness and Infrastructure Safety

Many schools in Western Province and Eastern Province remain vulnerable to natural disasters, particularly flooding, strong winds, and extreme temperatures, yet disaster preparedness remains inadequate. Schools such as Kalobolelwa Combined in Sesheke and Nang'uma Primary in Kaoma experience seasonal flooding, affecting attendance and exposing learners to health hazards such as waterborne diseases. Several schools, including Lui Wanyau Primary in Senanga and Matemba Secondary in Kalabo, have structures that are not built to withstand extreme weather conditions, increasing the risk of structural failures.

Despite the National Contingency Plan's emphasis on risk reduction in schools, many schools lack early warning systems, disaster preparedness training, and emergency response measures. This increases the likelihood of school closures and learning disruptions during emergencies, particularly in flood-prone areas. The lack of reinforced classrooms, proper drainage systems, and emergency evacuation protocols contradicts Zambia's Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy, which prioritizes climate adaptation in the education sector.

### **4.2 Five focus areas: transparency and participation**

This discussion section reviews the findings from the five focus areas in the V&A project.

#### Textbook availability

Textbook availability had the lowest score (1.8) in Kaoma and Sesheke districts than any other districts. The reasons for this were due to:

- Very centralized creation and distribution system
- Very limited budget allocation for book purchase in the government school grants
- High expense of individual books, especially science textbooks.
- Limited textbook availability in local languages (for younger grades)
- Roll-out of new curriculum with promise of free textbooks (initially) means that old textbooks will be obsolete; therefore, wait for new textbook deliveries.

#### Teacher and Pupil Absenteeism

These issues do not appear to be a system-wide problem in most of the schools, judging by the relatively high score (2.80) in Sinda and Vubwi Districts. There are issues in individual schools in Kaoma and Sesheke districts; however, monitoring by SAC members has made this former problem less so by monitoring attendance of teachers and learners using the education service monitoring tool on KoboCollect system.

#### Transparency in Budgeting

There were eight questions raised to ascertain the consolidated score for this category. This group of questions had the highest combined satisfaction score (2.57); and a corresponding highest number of "Green" scores. Consequently, while several individual schools had issues (*see Red scores*) there does not appear to be any systematic problem that can't be addressed with more training on the project.

	Community members are aware of how much money the schools received from the Ministry of Finance (Grants)?	The school have a notice board to share information related to school budgets and grants?	There are other fees you pay for your children to go to school?	Communities are involved in the planning and budgeting for the school?	PTC meetings take place and community members participate	Community members are aware of who sits and often in the School financial Committee	Community members are aware of the bursary support under CDF and Application procedure.	Community members have applied for this bursary? Have you got feedback on the status of the application?
# Green scores	29.00	25.00	41.00	29.00	24.00	29.00	30.00	24.00
# Orange scores	13.00	12.00	1.00	14.00	17.00	11.00	13.00	17.00
# Red scores	3.00	8.00	3.00	2.00	4.00	5.00	2.00	4.00

Transparency and community participation are fundamental pillars for ensuring an equitable and efficient education system. These challenges hinder effective resource allocation and contradict Zambia's Education Act (2011) and the National Decentralization Policy, which emphasize community engagement in school governance and fiscal transparency. Furthermore, they conflict with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16, which calls for accountable institutions at all levels, including education management.

#### Financial Transparency and Budget Accountability

Access to school budget information is critical for ensuring financial transparency and preventing mismanagement. However, about 26% of schools in Eastern and Western Provinces fail to publicly display financial records or disclose how school grants and Constituency Development Funds (CDF) are utilized. In Kasamanda Day Secondary and Chiutika Primary in Mambwe, as well as Nang'uma Primary and Matamba Secondary in Kalabo, community members reported that they are not aware of how much funding the schools receive. Some schools, such as Mbozi Day Secondary in Vubwi and Katemo Primary in Mambwe, have no public notice boards for displaying financial information, making it difficult for parents and stakeholders to monitor school expenditures.

The absence of financial disclosures directly violates the Ministry of Education's School Grants Guidelines, which require all public schools to display budgets and expenditure reports in visible areas. The lack of financial transparency fosters misuse of funds and inefficiencies in resource allocation, leading to delays in school improvements. Research conducted by the Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research (ZIPAR) confirms that schools with low financial transparency tend to experience infrastructure development stagnation and delays in textbook procurement.

In contrast, some schools, such as Seya Primary in Sinda and Sesheke Primary in Western Province, actively display grant information on their notice boards and update parents on financial allocations during community meetings, demonstrating best practices in fiscal transparency. Expanding this practice to all schools will enhance public trust and promote financial accountability in education financing.

#### Parent-Teacher Committees (PTCs)

The role of PTCs in ensuring school accountability and governance is severely undermined in many schools. The Education Act (2011) mandates that every school must have a functioning Parent-Teacher Committee (PTC) that meets regularly to discuss school challenges and financial matters. However,

findings from the Community Scorecard indicate that PTCs in several schools are either inactive or meet infrequently, limiting parental oversight over school administration.

For instance, Katemo Primary and Chiutika Primary in Mambwe, and Sonso Secondary in Sesheke, have not held PTC meetings for over a year, resulting in a relatively low parental engagement in school affairs just below 5% of the project sites. In some cases, such as at Kapungwe Day Secondary in Sinda and Nang'uma Primary in Kaoma, PTC members reported that they are only called when fees or financial contributions are required, rather than for participatory decision-making. The lack of regular engagement creates a disconnect between schools and the communities they serve, reducing collective responsibility in school management.

Conversely, Seya Primary in Sinda and Lui Wanyau Primary in Senanga are among the schools where Parents and Teachers Committee (PTC) meetings occur regularly, allowing for greater parental involvement in monitoring school performance and budgeting. This aligns with Zambia's decentralization policy, which aims to strengthen community participation in education governance.

### Community Participation in School Planning and Decision-Making

At Kasamanda Day Secondary and Mbozi Day Secondary in Western Province, community members are rarely consulted on how school funds are used, while in Chimbundire Primary in Sinda and Matemba Secondary in Kalabo, community members stated that they only hear about financial allocations after projects are already decided upon. This exclusion from decision-making processes weakens accountability and limits opportunities for community-driven school improvements.

However, some schools, such as Seya Primary in Sinda and Kalobolelwa Combined School in Sesheke District, involve the community in planning infrastructure projects, ensuring that local needs are considered. The active participation of community members in these schools demonstrates that project activities can be effectively implemented when schools embrace inclusive governance structures.

### Construction Monitoring

This category had the worst reported satisfaction level at 1.60. The reasons for the low score are:

- *Funding Constraints:* Many schools report stalled or non-existent construction due to lack of funding, as seen in Mwaundafisi Primary (Katete), Nang'uma Primary (Kalabo), and Namaloba Primary (Kaoma) where no construction has taken place.
- *Delays in Project Completion:* Schools like Matemba Secondary (Vubwi) and Chiutika Primary (Mambwe) have construction projects on hold due to financial shortages, causing prolonged disruptions.
- *Reliance on Community Contributions:* Several schools, such as Taferadziko Primary (Vubwi) and Sonso Secondary (Sesheke), depend entirely on community fundraising, leading to inconsistent progress and poor-quality structures.
- *Inadequate School Grants:* Schools relying on government funding, such as Mbande Primary (Vubwi) and Lui Wanyau Primary (Senanga), report that grants are too small to complete planned renovations or new constructions.
- *Lack of Awareness on Funding Sources:* Some schools, such as Nalionwa Day (Kalabo) and Sesheke Primary (Sesheke), indicate uncertainty regarding the sources of construction funding, making it difficult to plan and advocate for resources.

### Safe School Plans

- Respondents may not have been clear about the meaning of Safe Schools—a concept that was supposed to be introduced by the ZEEP project but was not evident.

The following are the reasons why:

- *Lack of Fire Safety Equipment:* Many schools, such as Kasamanda Day Secondary (Mambwe), Chimbundire Primary (Katete), and Kalabo Primary (Kalabo), lack fire extinguishers or firefighting measures, posing a safety risk. Some rely only on sand buckets, which are insufficient in emergencies.
- *Inadequate Safe Spaces for Female Learners:* Schools like Matemba Secondary (Vubwi), Katemo Primary (Mambwe), and Kalobolelwa Combined (Sesheke) report no designated safe spaces for female students, making them vulnerable to harassment and limiting their access to support.
- *Limited Awareness and Implementation of Safe School Concepts:* Some schools, such as Kapungwe Day Secondary (Sinda) and Sianda Primary (Nalolo), have structures in place, while others, like Nalionwa Day (Kalabo) and Chiwuyu Primary (Sinda), lack dedicated safe spaces and awareness about the importance of such facilities.
- *Reliance on External Funding for Safety Improvements:* Several schools, including Litoya Primary (Nalolo) and Nande Primary (Senanga), depend on Constituency Development Fund(CDF) and school grants to fund fire safety and safe space initiatives, leading to delays in implementation.

Safe School Plans (SSPs) foster a secure, inclusive, and resilient learning environment, encompassing: infrastructure safety, disaster preparedness, hygiene and sanitation, protection from violence, and climate resilience measures. The findings reveal significant gaps in SSP execution across Eastern and Western Provinces, affecting students' physical safety, health, and psychological well-being. These gaps contradict Zambia's Education Sector Policy, the Disaster Management Act (2010), and the National Strategy on Child Protection, which collectively aim to ensure that schools are physically safe and promote child welfare. Additionally, the failure to fully implement SSPs hinders Zambia's progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, which emphasizes safe and effective learning environments for all learners.

The findings highlight continued challenges in addressing violence, bullying, and other forms of abuse within schools, despite national efforts to strengthen child protection policies. Schools such as Sonso Secondary in Sesheke, Katemo Primary in Mambwe, and Lui Wanyau Primary in Senanga report cases of bullying and peer violence, which negatively impact student well-being and learning performance. The lack of structured reporting mechanisms and enforcement of child safeguarding policies discourages victims from coming forward, further exacerbating the issue.

Additionally, in some rural schools, teachers still resort to corporal punishment despite its prohibition under the Education Act (2011) and the National Child Policy. This creates a hostile learning environment and violates children's rights to protection from violence, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Zambia ratified. The absence of functional guidance and counseling services in schools such as Kalabo Primary and Kapungwe Day Secondary further limits students' access to psychological support and intervention measures.

## 5.0 Recommendations

- a. Prioritize classroom construction, teacher recruitment, and the provision of teaching materials in underprivileged schools. The National Implementation Framework V (2022-2026) already includes measures to expand school infrastructure through Constituency Development Funds (CDF), which should be directed toward schools in Katete, Mambwe, Sinda, Kalabo, Kaoma, and Sesheke.
  - Immediate construction of additional classroom blocks should be undertaken at Sonso Secondary, Matemba Secondary, and Kasamanda Day Secondary, which are among the most overcrowded schools. The double-session model (morning and afternoon shifts) should also be introduced in these schools to manage classroom congestion until new infrastructure is in place.
  - To address teacher shortages, the Ministry of Education must deploy more trained teachers to remote areas and provide incentives such as rural hardship allowances, subsidized teacher housing, and career advancement programs to encourage teacher retention. Special attention should be given to Kasamanda Day Secondary, Kafunka Day Secondary, and Lui Wanyau Primary, where specialized subject teachers are in short supply.
  - The shortage of textbooks in most schools must be tackled through a multi-stakeholder approach. The government should accelerate the procurement of textbooks under the Free Education Policy and leverage partnerships with organizations like World Vision, Plan International and Caritas Zambia to provide additional learning materials. Schools such as Katemo Primary, Nang'uma Primary, and Chiwuyu Primary should be prioritized for these interventions.
- b. To enhance sanitation and hygiene, the Ministry of Education should work with the Ministry of Health and NGOs to provide menstrual hygiene facilities in schools like Kasamanda Day Secondary and Chiutika Primary, ensuring that female students do not miss classes due to lack of access to sanitary products. Additionally, the Rural Electrification Authority should expedite school connections to the national grid, prioritizing Katemo Primary and Nang'uma Primary, where electricity shortages disrupt learning.
- c. To improve transparency, accountability, and community participation, Zambia's Ministry of Education, in collaboration with local authorities, must enforce financial disclosure regulations, strengthen PTCs, and institutionalize community engagement in school planning.
- d. A mandatory financial reporting system should be introduced at all schools, requiring heads of institutions to publicly display and update financial records on notice boards every term. This should be enforced at Kasamanda Day Secondary, Chiutika Primary, and Katemo Primary, and Mngomba which currently lack financial transparency mechanisms. The Ministry of Education should also consider digital financial reporting tools to improve real-time monitoring of school budgets, particularly in rural districts.
- e. To strengthen PTC effectiveness, school administrators should ensure that PTCs meet at least once per term and that community members are actively involved in discussions on budget allocations. The Ministry of Education should work with District Education Boards (DEBs) to provide training for PTC members on their roles and responsibilities, particularly in schools such as Kapungwe Day Secondary and Nang'uma Primary, where PTCs are inactive.
- f. Community involvement in school planning should be institutionalized through participatory budgeting approaches, ensuring that local stakeholders contribute to decision-making processes. Schools such as Mbozi Day Secondary and Matemba Secondary should establish community forums where parents, teachers, and local leaders

discuss school priorities. The Ministry of Local Government should also integrate school governance into existing Ward Development Committees (WDCs), reinforcing accountability at the grassroots level.

- g. To address classroom and laboratory shortages, the Ministry of Education should prioritize the construction of additional classroom blocks and laboratories in the most overcrowded schools, particularly Chiutika Primary, Kapungwe Day Secondary, and Matemba Secondary. Constituency Development Funds (CDF) and public-private partnerships should be leveraged to accelerate construction projects. Schools such as Kasamanda Day Secondary and Nang'uma Primary should also be included in infrastructure improvement plans to meet STEM education requirements.
- h. For disability and gender inclusivity, schools such as Kalobolelwa Combined and Lui Wanyau Primary should receive funding to build ramps, accessible toilets, and specialized classrooms for students with disabilities. The Ministry of Education must enforce compliance with the Gender Equity and Equality Act by ensuring that all schools provide adequate washroom facilities for female students, particularly in schools like Sonso Secondary in Sesheke.
- i. To improve teacher retention, the government should integrate teacher housing construction into its rural education strategy, ensuring that schools such as Matemba Secondary, Katemo Primary, and Sonso Secondary receive additional staff accommodation. This can be supported through World Bank funding for rural teacher incentives and CDF allocations for community-led housing projects.
- j. Addressing power and water challenges requires investments in off-grid solar energy solutions, particularly for schools such as Ngundi Primary in Senanga and Imusho Combined in Sesheke, which lack reliable power access. The Rural Electrification Authority (REA) should be engaged to connect rural schools to the national grid where possible. Similarly, schools facing severe water shortages, such as Lui Wanyau Primary and Kalukundwe Primary, should receive borehole upgrades through the Ministry of Water Development to ensure safe drinking water for pupils and staff.
- k. To enhance disaster preparedness, the Ministry of Education should prioritize infrastructure reinforcement in flood-prone schools such as Kalobolelwa Combined and Nang'uma Primary, ensuring classrooms are built with durable materials resistant to extreme weather conditions. Drainage systems and early warning mechanisms should be integrated into school management plans to minimize learning disruptions during disasters.
- l. To address school violence, the government should strengthen child safeguarding structures by ensuring that every school, particularly Sonso Secondary, Lui Wanyau Primary, and Katemo Primary, establishes functional reporting mechanisms for bullying and abuse. The Child Protection Unit (CPU) under the Zambia Police Service should also conduct regular school monitoring to ensure compliance with the Education Act's prohibition of corporal punishment.
- m. For hygiene and sanitation, the Ministry of Water Development should prioritize borehole drilling and water purification projects in schools such as Ngundi Primary and Imusho Combined, where water supply remains a critical challenge. Schools lacking gender-sensitive sanitation facilities, such as Kalobolelwa Combined and Nang'uma Primary, should receive targeted support to construct menstrual hygiene management (MHM) facilities to improve female student attendance rates.

## **6.0 Appendices.**

### **6.1 Project Beneficiaries**

The Voice and Accountability: Community Empowerment for Improved Local Service Delivery in Zambia project aims to enhance community participation and oversight in education service delivery. The primary beneficiaries are approximately 86,000 citizens in nine districts across Western and Eastern Provinces of Zambia. These districts include Kalabo, Kaoma, Nalolo, Senanga, Sesheke, Katete, Mambwe, Sinda, and Vubwi. The project prioritizes rural and marginalized communities, where education service delivery is often limited.

Among the total beneficiaries, approximately 51,000 are women. The project aims to increase the engagement of underrepresented groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities in education decision-making processes. These groups will be empowered with social accountability tools to monitor education service delivery.

The project specifically targets 45 schools (four primary schools and one secondary school per district). Selection criteria include poverty levels, educational achievements, school completion rates, and community willingness to participate. School-based structures such as Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and Ward Development Committees (WDCs) will be strengthened to enhance education accountability.

Education officers at the district level, school management teams, head teachers, and local authorities will benefit from training programs aimed at improving their capacity to engage with communities and implement social accountability mechanisms. The project will facilitate interface meetings between communities and education service providers to ensure better responsiveness to citizen concerns.

The project will collaborate with local CSOs to implement training sessions, facilitate community dialogue, and oversee education service monitoring activities. Organizations like the Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) and the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) will provide technical and implementation support.

The Ministry of General Education (MoGE), the Ministry of Local Government (MoLG), and district education boards will benefit from improved feedback loops between communities and decision-makers. The project seeks to inform national policies on decentralization and education governance by providing evidence-based insights from social accountability initiatives.

This multi-level approach ensures that both service providers and service users are actively engaged in improving education delivery through community-driven monitoring and accountability structures.

## **6.2 Purpose of Service Delivery Monitoring in Education Sector**

The Service Delivery Monitoring process within the Voice and Accountability (V&A) Project is a critical tool for assessing the effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of education service delivery in targeted rural communities. The initiative is designed to strengthen community engagement, transparency, and accountability by enabling citizens to evaluate education services, identify gaps, and advocate for improvements in alignment with the Project Implementation Manual (PIM).

The primary objectives of the service delivery monitoring process are to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of education service delivery by measuring accessibility, quality, and responsiveness in targeted districts.
- Enhance community participation in education governance by equipping citizens with social accountability tools, such as community scorecards and public expenditure tracking mechanisms.
- Strengthen transparency and accountability by facilitating structured dialogue between community members, school management, and local authorities regarding education service provision.
- Identify and address service delivery challenges, ensuring timely interventions to improve school infrastructure, Safe School Plan implementation, and learning outcomes.
- Empower marginalized groups, including women, youth, and persons with disabilities, to actively participate in decision-making processes related to education service improvements.

By leveraging community-driven monitoring tools, this process generates real-time data that informs policy decisions, resource allocation, and education service enhancements. The findings from community scorecards, stakeholder consultations, and interface meetings contribute to evidence-based can influence policy reforms while ensuring that local authorities and education service providers are held accountable to the communities they serve. This participatory approach fosters a culture of accountability and continuous learning, ensuring that education services in Zambia are inclusive, responsive, and sustainable.



### 6.3 Community scorecard

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

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

#### 6.4 Average score for each question

Question	Average Score
There are other fees you pay for your children to go to school?	1.16
Punctuality of the Teachers	1.34
Community members are aware of the bursary support under CDF and Application procedure.	1.38
Communities are involved in the planning and budgeting for the school?	1.40
The schools are inclusive and provide equal access to education services for all the children in the community	1.42
Community members are aware of how much money the schools receives from the Ministry of Finance (**Grants**)?	1.43
Community members are aware of who sits and often in the School financial Committee	1.47
Teacher Absenteeism	1.49
There are safe clubs' mentors and counsellor	1.51
PTC meetings take place and community members participate	1.52
Community members have applied for this bursary? Have you got feedback on the status of the application?	1.56
The school have a notice board to share information related to school budgets and grants?	1.61
Availability of adequate desks, chairs and tables for learners	1.67
Availability of adequate trained teachers	1.69
Availability of Safe spaces for female learners (GBV, Sexual exploitation and Harassment)	1.76
Adequate number of Primary Schools within the community	1.79
Availability of safe and clean drinking water	1.79
Pupil Absenteeism	1.81
Source of funding for construction	1.94
Adequate infrastructure: (Gender and Disability inclusive)	1.96
Conducive number of learners per classroom	1.99
There are construction(s) or renovation going at the school? (Classroom, laboratory, etc)	1.99
Availability of adequate textbooks.	2.00
Sanitation (Toilets)	2.03
Distance to the school (10Km Radius)	2.04
Availability of electricity or solar	2.07
Availability of adequate infrastructure (Classrooms, laboratory) etc.)	2.18
Availability of teachers houses	2.19
Adequate number of Secondary Schools within the community	2.23
The School has firefighting equipment	2.58

**6.5**     **Scorecard Dataset and Analysis** (*copy and paste and then click enter in any browser*): **googledrive**  
**link:**  
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1bqLdyMjLXoDjl7e8u7ejdWgD3fu4NEV1/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100954384025798615973&rtpof=true&sd=true>