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# STRENGTHENING EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN ZAMBIA

FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT OF THE STRENGTHENING  
EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE-UP (STEP-UP) ZAMBIA PROJECT  
DECEMBER 2011 – DECEMBER 2016



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**Cover photo:** In five years, USAID's STEP-Up project supported country-led efforts to improve education for all of Zambia's children. (Credit: STEP-Up Zambia)

#### DISCLAIMER

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# ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ATLAS	Active Teaching and Learning
CSEN	Children with Special Education Needs
EMIS	Education Management Information System
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LEMIS	Local Education Management Information System
LLPT	Local Learner Performance Tracker
LPIS	Learner Performance Improvement Strategy
LPISP	Learner Performance Improvement Strategic Plan
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
METC	Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Committee
MOGE	Ministry of General Education
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PEPFAR	U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PLWHIV	Persons Living with HIV
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
RTS	Read to Succeed
SPLASH	Schools Promoting Learning Achievements through Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
STEP-Up	Strengthening Educational Performance-Up
TTL	Time to Learn
UNZA	University of Zambia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZAMISE	Zambia Institute of Special Education

# MEETING ZAMBIA'S EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE

Zambia has made important strides in education, especially in providing access to schooling, but the country has underperformed on learning achievement, nationally and regionally, in the past decade. The 2014 Zambia Grade 5 National Assessment Survey reported a national mean performance of 32.05 percent for reading in English, which was a 1 percent drop from the 2012 survey report. In the same period, performance in Zambian languages fell by 1.66 percent, with mathematics and life skills each recording a 2.76 percent drop. These figures indicate a stagnation in pupils' performance since 1999, when the Examination Council of Zambia first implemented the Grade 5 National Assessment.

A primary challenge for Zambia has been to strengthen oversight and accountability throughout the decentralized provincial, district, and school-level structures of the Ministry of General Education (MOGE). In 2011, to assist the MOGE in reversing the trend of poor performance, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) launched the Strengthening Educational Performance-Up (STEP-Up) Zambia Project.

## OVERALL PROJECT APPROACH

STEP-Up Zambia was uniquely conceived to address the root causes of learner underperformance. The project worked through the education system to produce a shift in knowledge, attitudes, and practices that would contribute to improving learning outcomes, especially reading achievement at the primary education level.

Rather than prescribing actions, STEP-Up supported education stakeholders to develop and undertake reforms by promoting a decentralized accountability model that put the learner at the center of public discussion. The goal was to create an environment conducive to making reforms operational in the short and medium terms, thereby producing measurable increases in learner performance. In so doing, the project raised awareness of the importance of early grade reading achievement as a gateway to improved student retention and performance in subsequent years of schooling.

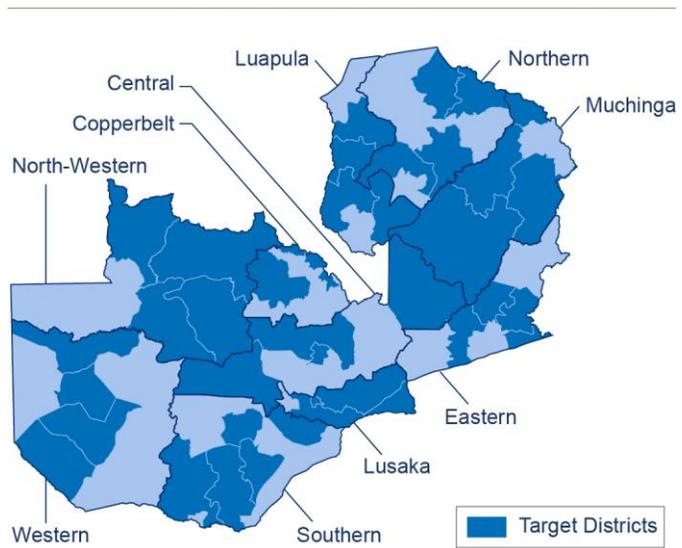
## THEORY OF CHANGE

STEP-Up's development hypothesis was grounded in global evidence from other school systems that had demonstrated significant improvements in learning. Project activities were built on the premise that achieving sustained reading improvement is contingent on ministry officials' taking leadership roles in the design and implementation of education interventions. As owners of the entire process, MOGE staff and development practitioners were inspired to take successful interventions to scale to provide Zambia's citizens with equal access to high-quality education in the long term.

STEP-Up aligned with USAID’s Country Development Cooperation Strategy 2011–2015, emphasizing Development Objective 3, “Human Capital Improved.” Based on USAID/Zambia’s Intermediate Result 3.1, “Education Achievement in Reading and Mathematics Improved by 2017,” the project’s work contributed to the strengthening of MOGE systems, increased public and community school performance, increased equitable access to education, and helped mitigate the impacts of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), which has been an important barrier to teaching and learning in Zambia’s schools. Annex A presents the project results framework.

To achieve its goals, STEP-Up supported the MOGE to strengthen oversight and accountability for the effective delivery of educational services, particularly in reading, at the primary school level. Boosting learner performance — the ultimate measure of success — required systemic reform and keen attention to results-based management. The heart of STEP-Up’s work was assisting the MOGE, through collaborative partnerships, to undertake a structured, problem-solving approach to identifying and

**EXHIBIT I. ZAMBIA’S PROVINCES**



applying practical interventions to drive systemic reform. The five-year project operated with a \$23.8 million budget, supported by USAID and the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), working in 40 targeted districts in all 10 of Zambia’s provinces. Over time, STEP-Up’s work reached many more districts as the MOGE contributed its own funds to push some interventions across provinces.

STEP-Up was an important part of USAID’s broader education portfolio in Zambia, which consisted of several activities that contribute to the overall MOGE goal of improving reading achievement in reading for 1 million Zambian students by 2017. This work contributed directly to “Goal One” of USAID’s Global Education Strategy, which aimed to improve reading skills for 100 million children in primary grades by 2015. STEP-Up’s focus on systems strengthening and management meant that it acted as an “umbrella” project and facilitator with the MOGE, supporting the classroom-

**STEP-UP BY THE NUMBERS**

94 districts and provincial offices created targets and tools to track reading performance

126 new MOGE management units now use reading tracking tools to develop and disseminate reading improvement plans

13 policies now exist on higher education research

72 individuals completed internships in research, data capture, and data entry

focused interventions of three other USAID projects, Schools Promoting Learning Achievements through Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene, known as “SPLASH”; Read to Succeed (RTS); and Time to Learn (TTL).

## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In five years, STEP-Up Zambia facilitated a significant change in the mindsets and practices of individual education officers, overcoming the management norms that were undermining performance in the education system. STEP-Up guided all 10 provinces and eventually 94 of Zambia’s 106 districts through a strategic planning process that empowered ministry officials at multiple levels to lead the effort. The MOGE set its own reading goals, targets, and practical steps for tracking progress. Through this process, education officials at all levels were able to improve their focus on the learners.

By *working with* the MOGE instead of *working for* it, STEP-Up gradually shaped a new paradigm for Zambia’s education system. Some counterparts in the ministry’s directorates initially had the impression that STEP-Up had come with a predetermined agenda, but they quickly discovered that constructing that agenda would be a collaborative process. The result was a ministry-driven focus on three types of activities to strengthen systems and improve decision-making: strategic planning focused on learner performance, adaptable performance tracking for evidence-based decision-making, and locally responsive policymaking.

## OPERATIONAL APPROACH

STEP-Up Zambia operated nationally, partially embedded in MOGE offices at central and provincial levels, and worked in collaboration with education partners at all levels of the system, from the central ministry to the schools. The goal was to increase the ministry’s capacity to implement institutional reforms that would ultimately support improved learner achievement at the school level. STEP-Up collaborated with the MOGE to improve institutional performance by supporting practical interventions that drove systemic reform. The key was strengthening the functions of operational units at all levels of the system to engage in problem-solving, emphasize learner performance, and maintain clear lines of oversight and accountability for results.

EXHIBIT 2. STEP-UP’S APPROACH



As a national program, STEP-UP worked with the central ministry, provincial education offices, district education boards, and several higher education institutions — the University of Zambia (UNZA), Charles Lwanga College of Education, and the Zambia Institute of Special Education (ZAMISE) — to transfer skills, strengthen institutional capacity, and promote sustained improvements in educational performance. STEP-Up

also assisted the MOGE to leverage contributions from nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and school communities.

To achieve its goals, STEP-Up worked in five task areas:

- Integrating and strengthening systems for improved decision-making
- Promoting equity as a central theme in policy development and education management reform
- Institutionalizing the MOGE's management of HIV and AIDS workplace programs
- Strengthening decentralization for improved learner performance
- Engaging Zambian higher education institutions in research related to school effectiveness and learning achievement

Each task represented a different aspect of systems strengthening and the many linkages and interrelationships among the tasks, with crosscutting activities addressing monitoring and evaluation (M&E), gender, and equity.

Focusing on its five tasks, STEP-Up effectively used existing institutional capacity and promoted management practices that enhanced educational performance. Central to its strategic approach, the project worked side by side with the MOGE to strengthen diagnostic capacity horizontally (across directorates) and vertically (from headquarters to the school level) to institutionalize performance management.

The implementation approach was informed by two key principles that guide all of USAID's support to the Zambian education sector: sustainable learning outcomes through strengthened education management and enhanced gender equality in educational reform to promote institutional effectiveness.

## TASK AREA I

# INTEGRATING AND STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS FOR DECISION-MAKING

STEP-Up assisted the MOGE to strengthen information management systems in response to the ministry's emphasis on the need for evidence to inform planning, budgeting, and other aspects of education management. To gather this evidence, it was necessary to collect and analyze high-quality data about enrollment, teachers, infrastructure, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), and children with special education needs (CSEN).

At the central level, STEP-Up supported data quality through improvements to the annual school census and the MOGE's Education Management Information System (EMIS). With project support, the ministry updated the data entry modules in the EMIS to produce accurate census data for planning and monitoring.

STEP-Up provided technical support for the annual Education Statistical Bulletin, but it was soon apparent that additional data were needed to track learner performance in the short to medium term, particularly for early grade reading. The team determined that effectively tracking and using learner performance data required intensive commitment from all angles, from school-level data collection to analysis at district, provincial, and central levels. Thus, the project helped the MOGE institutionalize best data management practices through a Microsoft Excel-based tool, the Local Learner Performance Tracker (LLPT), and by resuscitating the Data Management Committee structure to strengthen the ministry's information management systems.

## KEY ACTIVITIES UNDER TASK AREA I

### SUPPORTING THE EMIS AND THE EDUCATION STATISTICAL BULLETIN

Early on, the STEP-Up team found that despite irregular updates and a challenging storage and retrieval system, the EMIS was capable of providing the MOGE with data for planning. Assessing the EMIS was therefore a top priority. A major challenge was the time lag between data collection and publication. There was a need for real-time information to be available to districts and schools long before the start of the ministry's annual planning and budgeting process. To provide more frequent information, STEP-Up focused on developing local systems, such as the LLPT, with cycles corresponding more closely to planning and budgeting periods.

STEP-Up's support to the central EMIS department generated efficiencies in the annual production of the Education Statistical Bulletin. Cooperating partners and other stakeholders in the education sector intensified pressure on the ministry to deliver

timely information on Zambia’s education system. To meet this and other information needs, STEP-Up provided technical support to the MOGE’s Directorate of Planning. Interfacing with the EMIS technical team, the project collaboratively developed internal procedures and standards that enabled the ministry to respond to the information needs of district, provincial, and other education sector stakeholders, including cooperating partners.

As a part of this assistance, STEP-Up trained eight key EMIS personnel at the central level on data quality control principles and internal cross-checking of school data tables. As a result, the MOGE finalized the Education Statistical Bulletin for 2010 through 2015 and managed the data entry process for each year. Throughout its five-year life, STEP-Up provided ongoing support, mentoring, and coaching to enhance the EMIS team’s capacity for data collection, cleaning, analysis, and dissemination.

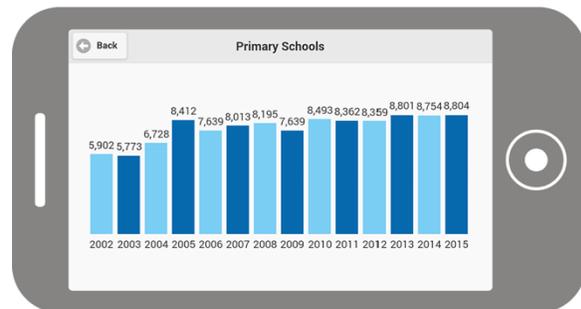
#### KEEPING PACE WITH CHANGE

Zambia created 30 new districts during STEP-Up’s five-year lifespan, and the EMIS had to be updated to incorporate these new geographic units. With STEP-Up’s continuous technical support in database management, the MOGE was able to house the new districts and schools and can now facilitate equitable and accurate tracking, national averages, and trends in learner performance for all of the country’s districts.

To upgrade the production of the Education Statistical Bulletin, STEP-Up customized the data entry software to align with annual school census forms. In addition, the project conducted data quality checks to ensure that EMIS reports were usable and aligned with published statistics in the Educational Statistical Bulletin.

Toward the end of the project, STEP-Up rolled out a mobile app, EDSTAT, for provincial and district use. The app includes data and metrics from the 2001–2013 Education Statistical Bulletins and 2013, 2014, and 2015 data collected through the LLPT. This tool has numerous benefits, including the ability to store and retrieve educational statistics and indicators such as enrollment, numbers of teachers, numbers of schools, schools by agency, teacher qualifications, number of classrooms, teacher-to-pupil ratios, and other indicators. Users can disseminate the data and analyze trends in real time to support and sustain strategic planning in the education system.

#### EXHIBIT 3. TRACKING EDUCATION DATA WITH EDSTAT MOBILE



#### INSTITUTIONALIZING THE LOCAL LEARNER PERFORMANCE TRACKER

With the 2014 launch of the revised National Curriculum, tracking learner performance through high-quality indicators (such as the number of learners reading at grade level) became a top priority for the MOGE. Based on a national survey of information needs, the ministry established the need to track learning in early grade reading as a key gap in the national EMIS. Provincial and district authorities required a tool that would track improved school management through learner performance, especially in grades 1–7.

The Learner Performance Improvement Strategic Plans (LPISP) set annual literacy targets, which required a tool for tracking progress. STEP-Up collaborated with the MOGE and other education partners to conceptualize a more cost-effective data management solution, to be managed at the district level, that would collect performance data in real time. The concept became the ministry's LLPT. To create it, STEP-Up adapted an existing, locally developed tool — Luapula and Lusaka provinces' Local Performance Tracker — into a robust, Microsoft-Excel-based data system.

The tracker was developed organically, based on local data needs and initiatives. STEP-Up and the ministry deployed the tool through a series of workshops in the fifth year of the project, with follow-up coaching and mentoring in each province to strengthen technical skills at provincial and district levels. The skills-based training workshops use hands-on demonstrations of how to use the tracker, analyze the data, and interpret the graphs and color-coded reports. To ensure sustainability and long-term support, STEP-Up established a technical support platform through an email address and a WhatsApp group (accessible via mobile phone at +260 966879727), allowing users to transparently share experiences, questions, and troubleshooting requests.



PHOTO: STEP-Up Zambia

Teachers from Chibombo, Central Province, discuss how the strategic plan should be applied in their district. Learner-centered strategic planning involves input from everyone who is engaged in educating Zambia's young people.

The LLPT complements and improves on the EMIS and is closely linked to the Education Automated Statistical Information Systems Toolkit, known as Ed\*Assist, which connects with the EMIS through standard school ID numbers. The longer-term vision is that data from the LLPT will automatically link to EMIS data to enable increasingly effective management, given the many commonalities in the data collected by the two systems. For example, the tracker gathers complementary information on real-time pass rates, ratios of pupils to teachers and pupils to textbooks, available curriculum books per term, and pregnancies and re-entries of female learners. These data about learner performance enable MOGE officials at central and decentralized levels to track the impact of management decisions on key education indicators. Above all, the LLPT does not require additional investments in software or hardware.

MOGE officials have heralded the LLPT as the best tool for economical, paperless, and real-time data collection. The tracker also demonstrates STEP-Up's emphasis on local ownership. Using a collaborative process, the project replicated a proven, locally created tool that met a real need, rather than imposing an idea from elsewhere. Today, the tracker is a ministry-led and ministry-owned initiative that complements national EMIS data on enrollment, dropouts, and repetition with qualitative data on learner

performance, focusing on early grade literacy. The LLPT provides the ministry with a solid foundation for collecting data and offers the possibility for future improvements to the tool, some of which are already taking place as the MOGE pilots real-time data collection.

### **TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR DATA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES**

To support the MOGE in managing learner performance data from all levels of the system, STEP-Up initiated the idea of establishing data management committees. The ministry endorsed the idea and the Permanent Secretary instructed all provincial education officers to set up the committees at district and provincial levels. Working through an established sector coordinating mechanism, the Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Committee (METC), STEP-Up helped the MOGE develop terms of reference for the committees and trained their members on the interdependence of the Learner Performance Improvement Strategic Plan, the LLPT, the annual work plan and budget, and the EMIS.

There are now 52 active data management committees (10 at provincial level, 40 at district level, and 2 central committees), which meet quarterly. The committees have become hubs for data analysis and dissemination in Zambia's education system. Their work has improved data quality (accuracy, consistency, timeliness, relevance, and coverage), and project-supported training and coaching have equipped committee members with essential data management knowledge and skills. The committees have helped provinces and districts produce up-to-date statistical data on a number of important indicators:

- Staff establishment per district
- Early grade reading levels (grades 1–4)
- Master school directory for the districts
- Pupil attendance, by gender, for the districts
- Status of teaching and learning materials
- Status of school facilities, especially furniture and toilets
- Planning for continuous professional development programs

With support from the data management committees, education managers at district and provincial levels are using data more effectively to guide planning and decision-making. Ministry officials are planning to offer schools and teachers incentives for improvements in learner performance, teacher training support, lesson planning based on the revised curriculum targets, timely submission of data, and other management criteria.

## EXHIBIT 4. TASK AREA I RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

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**380**

*MOGE officials* from 40 districts and 10 provincial offices have been trained to use the LLPT (with 10 provincial officials trained as system administrators). With enough officials trained, use of the tracker is expected to be sustained and expanded to districts that did not participate in STEP-Up's interventions.

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**52**

*active data management committees* have been instituted in provincial and district offices. The committees meet at least once per quarter to discuss data management issues. Their activity demonstrates that the organizational structures to sustain data management best practices are taking root in the MOGE.

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**35**

*policies, guidelines, and advisory memos* were generated by data management committees following analysis of data from the LLPT. A combination of organizational structures and technology tools, orchestrated by the MOGE with technical support from STEP-Up, indicate that the MOGE is moving steadily toward its vision of evidence-based decision-making.

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**24**

*districts (of 40)* are able to generate quarterly reports on learner performance with data from the LLPT. This type of practical and regular usage of the system will strengthen its institutionalization.

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**11**

*districts outside STEP-Up's intervention area* held training sessions on the LLPT for head teachers in the last half of Year 5. STEP-Up used data from the WhatsApp group to confirm this information.

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**6**

*editions of the Education Statistical Bulletin* were produced. STEP-Up helped the ministry clear the backlog and produce the 2010 and 2011 bulletins and supported full production of the bulletin for 2012–2015. STEP-Up also contributed to the 2016 report, which is still in progress. As a result of this support, including technical skills transferred to the EMIS team, the MOGE is up-to-date on producing this bulletin.

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**2**

*provinces (Muchinga and North-Western)* have rolled out the LLPT to all districts — a step beyond the four districts STEP-Up targeted in each province. This self-initiated response from the MOGE is an important indicator of sustainability.

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## SNAPSHOT

# Good Data, Better Decisions

## Put to good use, data can boost education outcomes



PHOTO: STEP-Up Zambia

With increased access to high-quality data from Zambia's schools, education managers are providing more effective school-based and zonal continuing professional development and supervision. More classrooms now look like this one, in which the teacher and her students are fully engaged in the learning process.

*"This data is helping us make critical decisions ... we are looking for ways to enhance data collection so we can understand the things that play into the general performance of learners."*

— Stephen Katuta, District Education Standards Officer, Lusaka

The Lusaka District Education Office has built a culture of using data to improve student literacy. In 2012, supported by STEP-Up Zambia, district staff drafted their first strategic plan. A primary performance goal in the plan was to substantially increase the proportion of grade 1–7 students who could read, from 44 percent to 70 percent.

Data collection and analysis are fundamental tools for implementing the district's strategic plans (Lusaka created its second one in 2016) and deciding where to direct district support.

"We learned a lot from STEP-Up on data management, specifically the tracking of learner performance," said Stephen Katuta, district education standards officer. "There were powerful tools introduced to track learner performance. Now, we can see where the learner is not performing adequately."

A data management committee reviews the data on student performance, student attendance, teacher qualifications, and availability of textbooks so the district can plan interventions to address problem areas. For example, recent grade 1 results indicated that Lusaka's students were not gaining foundational reading skills. With this knowledge, the district retrained all of its grade 1–4 teachers, focusing on literacy lesson planning.

"We found they [the teachers] were not all aware of the five components [phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension]," said Innocent Hugo Mulenga, district resource center coordinator. "We were only able to identify these problems because we are tracking the reading levels."

District education officers are following up to see if training has had the desired impact on reading scores. They are also considering whether to track students longitudinally to make sure they continue building literacy skills from grade to grade.

## TASK AREA 2

# PROMOTING EQUITY IN POLICY AND EDUCATION REFORM

STEP-Up Zambia promoted equity as a central theme in policy development and education management reform. The project worked with the MOGE to improve equity for all learners, especially girls, rural people, poor CSEN, and OVC. The goals were to ensure that all learners could access relevant, high-quality education, progress at even rates through the Zambian education system, and achieve comparable outcomes.

STEP-Up worked with the MOGE to analyze available equity-focused data and use the analysis to clarify policy positions, regulations, educational programs, and resourcing arrangements. The project supported institutionalization of the broader equity focus by tying it into the ministry's strategic planning and budgeting processes.

### KEY ACTIVITIES UNDER TASK AREA 2

Activities under Task Area 2 cut across all of STEP-Up's work, integrating with the other four task areas.

#### DEVELOPING A GENDER AND EQUITY STRATEGY

In 2012, STEP-Up collaborated with MOGE administrators to develop a strategy for addressing gender and equity throughout the life of the project. The strategy helped the MOGE revise and streamline its process of allocating resources to schools, and helped the ministry and STEP-Up identify gender and equity as an important area of study. Although the ministry is still using a common formula, based on school population, there is new and continuing discussion on the need to deepen the criteria. The ministry recognizes the need to move from *equal* distribution of resources based on the number of students to more *equitable* distribution, aligned to the particular needs of each school.

#### DEVELOPING AN EQUITY MONITORING STRATEGY

To promote equity as a central theme in education management and reform, STEP-Up undertook a study to assess equity in the delivery of education in Zambia. The team looked at investments and outcomes and analyzed the distribution of and relationships between education investments and outcomes. STEP-Up then drafted benchmarks and indicators for monitoring progress on equity at national, provincial, and especially district levels, using existing data sources, and recommended priority actions to improve equity in the system.

## TRACKING DISADVANTAGED POPULATIONS FOR MORE EQUITABLE RESOURCE ALLOCATION

In collaboration with the MOGE, STEP-Up developed a module in the LLPT to allow ministry staff at all levels to track resource allocations for equity activities. The module enables management units to collect and analyze data on disadvantaged populations and better manage educational resource allocations for disadvantaged groups, such as pregnancies and re-entry to school, rural and poor children, OVC, and CSEN.

### EXHIBIT 5. TASK AREA 2 RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

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40

*districts* where STEP-Up supported institutionalized equity activities as a core area in their strategic plans.

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10

*provinces* where STEP-Up supported institutionalized equity activities as a core area in their strategic plans.

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1

*Equity and Gender Strategy* outlining how the MOGE will address these issues in all of its directorates.

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1

*M&E Strategy* focused on how the MOGE will track equity measures for management units.

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## SNAPSHOT

# All Eyes on Equity

**By understanding and removing barriers to success, education managers become champions for equity**



PHOTO: STEP-Up Zambia

**MOGE officials discuss findings and next steps during a national presentation on equity in Zambia. STEP-Up's collaboration with the ministry has promoted equity as a central theme in policy development and education management reform.**

*“MOGE and STEP-Up have been dealing with equity initiatives to improve access to education for all. The project worked in close collaboration with the MOGE to carry out a study to help seek ways to address immediate equity and gender issues in each of the provinces and districts.”*

— Director of Information and Planning, MOGE

In an equitable education system, innate capacity is what determines how much education a child completes and what skills that child develops. And even though innate capacity differs from child to child, an equitable system enables more learners to reach their full capacity through strategies and investments that break down the barriers to success.

In Zambia, despite a national policy that prioritizes rights and fairness in education, the traditional approach was to balance the “costs” of fairness against a desire for efficiency across the system. This was necessitated by increasing financial constraints and erratic funding flows from the Ministry of Finance to different educational units. Today, after five years of systems strengthening and capacity building support from USAID’s STEP-Up Zambia project, the MOGE has taken significant steps to change that tradition.

To promote equity as a central theme, STEP-Up and the MOGE analyzed the system, looking at equity in the delivery of education and the relationship between investments and outcomes. Then they drafted benchmarks and indicators for national, provincial, and especially district levels (using existing data sources and drawing on international best practice) and recommended high-priority actions to improve equity.

Strengthening subnational planning and decision-making systems was a strategic focus for STEP-Up. The goal was to create an actionable framework for change. At the district level, the project created a set of indicators, the District Equity Tracking Index, to help education authorities plan equity improvements and monitor their progress.

Equity Index indicators supplement other types of education reporting by capturing the distribution of resources in a district, which is important for targeting interventions and investments to improve equity. This is just one of the tools education decision-makers now have for thinking equitably as they respond to specific challenges in Zambia’s district and their schools.

### TASK AREA 3

# INSTITUTIONALIZING MANAGEMENT OF HIV AND AIDS WORKPLACE PROGRAMS

STEP-Up worked with the MOGE to address the negative impact of HIV and AIDS on access to high-quality education. According to the 2013–2014 Demographic and Health Survey, Zambia has seen a statistically significant decline in HIV prevalence since 2001, from 15.6 percent to 13.3 percent. Across the country, however, HIV still has a strong influence, especially in causing some of the absenteeism that affects educational outcomes, when teachers and pupils are absent from school to manage their illness or that of a family member.

#### DESPITE PROGRESS, HIV STILL LEAVES A MARK IN ZAMBIA

Even with an overall reduction in HIV prevalence, Zambia's citizens still struggle. HIV prevalence is higher for females, although urban areas report higher rates for both sexes. According to UNAIDS, there were 31,000 deaths related to HIV and AIDS in 2011.

Through a combination of workplace policy support and jointly implemented activities, STEP-Up helped the MOGE mitigate the impact of HIV and AIDS on teachers and pupils and promote healthier choices.

### KEY ACTIVITIES UNDER TASK AREA 3

#### DISSEMINATING HIV AND AIDS POLICY DOCUMENTS

STEP-Up collaborated with the MOGE to finalize the National HIV and AIDS Education Sector Policy through a two-day policy review meeting with representatives from two the ministry's Curriculum and Standards Directorate and Human Resource and Administration Directorate, three teachers' unions, the Anti-AIDS Association of Zambia, the United Nations Children's Fund, and USAID's RTS and TTL projects. Participants finalized the sector policy and updated the HIV and AIDS strategic plan and implementation guidelines, which the MOGE had developed to ensure consistency with the policy. In collaboration with other partners, STEP-Up provided technical and financial support to review and print these three important HIV and AIDS workplace policy documents:

- National Policy for HIV and AIDS and Wellness in the Education Sector: 2015–2020
- HIV and AIDS and Wellness Strategic Plan: 2015–2020
- National Policy for HIV and AIDS and Wellness in the Education and Skills Sector (2015): Implementation Guidelines

These materials provide essential guidelines for coordinating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating HIV and AIDS programs in the education sector. Once the Cabinet approved the final policy, STEP-Up and the MOGE distributed it, along with the implementation plan and guidelines to all 10 provinces, which in turn distributed them to districts and schools. When STEP-Up’s joint monitoring found that some schools did not receive the documents, provincial education officers took the initiative to distribute them to all of the schools in their provinces.

### PROMOTING HEALTH THROUGH COMMUNITY FAIRS

At a more grassroots level, STEP-Up collaborated with the MOGE and USAID’s RTS and TTL projects to raise awareness about the positive implications of good health for educators. This is especially important in Zambia, where the average life expectancy is just 52 years. One aspect of this work was holding awareness-raising events. In August 2012, STEP-Up and the MOGE piloted a teachers’ health fair, the *Umoyo Market* in Lusaka Province’s Mumuni Zone. (*Umoyo* means “health” in Nyanja.) This fun, educational event targeted teachers and their families, offering HIV and AIDS services and promoting health-seeking behaviors and self-care to create healthy communities where learner performance can thrive.



HIV and AIDS policy stations like this one were a feature of Zambia’s health market fairs. These community events were the result of STEP-Up’s collaboration with the MOGE, with funding from PEPFAR.

STEP-Up held 50 health market fairs between 2013 and 2015, reaching across all 10 of Zambia’s provinces, in partnership with district MOGE staff and other education and health partners. The fairs provided mobile health service provision points and brought together teachers and learners, their families, and the wider community around HIV, non-communicable diseases, and other health challenges.

### EXHIBIT 6. HIV COUNSELING AND TESTING AT THE HEALTH MARKET FAIRS

PEOPLE ACCESSING COUNSELING AND TESTING WHO RECEIVED RESULTS	TESTED
Females	31,594
Males	26,541
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,135</b>

## ORGANIZING TEACHERS AROUND HEALTH

Working through local subcontractors, STEP-Up facilitated the formation (and, in some cases, the strengthening) of 21 HIV and AIDS support groups in 10 provinces. The groups provided safe spaces for teachers living with HIV to cope with their status (post-counseling) by sharing experiences and enhancing mutual support. STEP-Up and its partners selected and trained 23 motivational speakers from among the support group members to lead health talks. They raised the visibility of community members living with HIV to reduce stigma and encourage others to access care and support services.

“[We meet] to help others, because we all know someone who is infected or affected by HIV/AIDS. This group is my family, and they provide a sense of [belonging] and support. We are able to share ideas and learn how to help others. A problem shared is a problem solved.”

— GUIDANCE TEACHER, NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCE

STEP-Up also trained para-social and community health workers. These community-level partners enhanced the MOGE’s social outreach and capacity to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. They connected people to services and created community-level systems to identify and meet the urgent needs of people living with and affected by HIV (PLWHIV).

### EXHIBIT 7. TASK AREA 3 RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

**30,000**

*copies of the three HIV and AIDS workplace policy documents printed and distributed to all 10 provinces: 10,000 each of the National Policy for HIV and AIDS and Wellness in the Education Sector, the HIV and AIDS and Wellness Strategic Plan, and the National Policy for HIV and AIDS and Wellness in the Education and Skills Sector Implementation Guidelines.*

**58,135**

*individuals accessing HIV counseling and testing and receiving their results at 50 health market fairs: 108,389 people across Zambia’s 10 provinces were reached through small group preventive interventions. Teachers, learners, and their families also had access to eye screening, diabetes testing, malaria testing and treatment, sexual and reproductive health services, dental checks, and cancer sensitization.*

## SNAPSHOT

# A Bold Step Toward Health

**When people get tested for HIV, they are taking a positive step to improve their lives**



PHOTO: STEP-Up Zambia

Health market fairs give teachers and their families access to health services they might not seek on their own. Events such as these promote self-care and help combat stigma, contributing to education outcomes by reducing absenteeism due to illness and other health stressors.

*“The Health Market Fair saved my life.”*

— Health Market Fair participant

Mary, whose husband died six years ago, is the primary support for her mother and her children. When she learned that STEP-Up Zambia was sponsoring a health market fair at a primary school near her home, she took the opportunity to go and get tested for HIV.

“When I saw the poster,” Mary said, “I took the step. I was surprised at the number of people that were queuing to get tested. I took the courage and encouraged myself. The counselor took me through the process, and there it happened that my results were positive. The counselor then encouraged me and gave me a referral slip to go to the clinic.”

Mary received the antiretroviral treatment she needed at the clinic, and is continuing to take her medication. “My CD4\* was actually at 300,” she said, “I have started the medication hoping that it will improve. And I believe it will. The health market fair saved my life and now I am on treatment.”

HIV testing is just one of several services available to teachers and their communities at the health market fairs. Providers provide safe and accessible spaces for diabetes screening, malaria screening and treatment, mental health counseling, and many other services. The fairs also combat stigma by encouraging community members to come together and acknowledge that everyone shares the desire for lasting health.

Mary commended these efforts to bring health services close to those who need them and hoped these kinds of fairs would be held more frequently. She said many lives could be saved, just like hers.

\* A CD4 count measures the number of CD4 T lymphocytes (a type of white blood cell that helps protect the body from infection). A count of 300 is well below the normal range of 500–1,600). Visit [www.AIDS.gov](http://www.AIDS.gov) for more information.

## TASK AREA 4

# STRENGTHENING DECENTRALIZATION FOR IMPROVED LEARNER PERFORMANCE

STEP-Up’s goal in strengthening decentralization was to support improved learner performance. An entry point was to increase authority and decision-making at provincial, district, and school levels through the Directorate of Curriculum and Standards. The specific approach was to support the MOGE to effectively implement its LPISPs and make resource and policy decisions that would have the greatest impact on learning outcomes.

STEP-Up also helped the MOGE build public and private sector awareness of education issues through private-public partnership training, leveraging that awareness into actionable steps and meaningful partnerships.

## KEY ACTIVITIES UNDER TASK AREA 4

### UNDERSTANDING THE SYSTEM

The process of changing knowledge, attitudes, and practices cannot be instructed; it must be experienced through collaborative learning. STEP-Up’s institutional strengthening methodology began with targeted efforts to understand the education system as it was. The project team undertook a series of “ground-truthing” visits with central, provincial, and district officials to schools across Zambia.

### THESE WALLS REALLY TALK

Many schools STEP-Up visited featured “talking walls,” covered with posters displaying information about the school’s progress. Talking walls informed the STEP-Up team about performance indicators, exam results, the proportions of male and female teachers and students, and more.

A foundational assumption in this approach was that improving reading performance required not only developing appropriate technical interventions (methodologies and materials), but also assessing and preparing the conditions in the system that would make the application of the new approaches feasible.

Based on the ground-truthing exercise, STEP-Up identified five overarching themes:

- Learner performance (attitudes toward learner performance)
- Decentralization
- Use of information and communication and data

- Social aspects (HIV, gender and equity, OVC, absenteeism, and pregnancy)
- Central ministry and the policy environment

Drawn from real-world information gleaned during the school visits, these themes assisted STEP-Up and the MOGE to jointly determine a path forward.

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR LEARNER PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT**

An essential STEP-Up intervention was the Learner Performance Improvement Strategic Plan, for which the project collaborated with the USAID RTS team to harmonize development and rollout. After the team rolled out the strategic planning process, all 10 provinces developed and contextualized their plans, placing learner performance at the core. By Fiscal Year 2016, every province had revised its plan based on lessons from implementing the initial plan. Some provinces, districts, and schools took the process a step further, inviting participation from community stakeholders.

STEP-Up’s primary role in strategic planning was to assure the quality of the process and the final products. Project advisors offered their support, but the MOGE’s provincial and district education officers led the effort. They identified interventions to improve learner performance, set reading targets, and devised practical steps to meet their goals. Throughout the third and fourth years of the project, STEP-Up’s provincial advisors guided all 10 provinces and 40 districts through the process. As an

indication of sustainability, some provincial education offices extended strategic planning to all of their districts, using the MOGE’s resources rather than USAID’s.

#### **STRATEGIC SUPPORT TO BOOST READING ACHIEVEMENT**

To monitor progress under the “Attaining High Reading Levels” theme, teachers at Mulfulira Primary School hold grade-level meetings to talk through cases of students who are not progressing with their peers. The school offers remedial support to different grades on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, according to a school policy developed with STEP-Up’s support.

STEP-Up developed a quality assurance rubric (see Annex B for an excerpt) for the provinces and districts to use in assessing the quality of their strategic plans. The rubric outlines minimum standards for each Learner Performance Improvement Strategic Plan:

- Inclusion of learner performance baselines (early grade reading levels and examination mass rates)
- Learner performance targets
- Strategies to engage private sector entities in improving learner performance
- A clear mechanism for monitoring the plan
- Strategies for using the provincial and district resource centers, which are forums for teachers’ continuous professional development

After applying the rubric, districts that found they did not meet the quality standards took it upon themselves to review and revise their plans. The rubric has continued to serve as a guide for Zambia’s provincial and district education offices as they develop, review, and finalize of the LPISPs.

In Year 5, STEP-Up provided coaching and mentoring to institutionalize strategic planning across the 10 provinces, 40 districts, and their schools. This included a review and harmonization of the provincial, district, and selected school LPISPs. Provincial coaching and mentoring meetings included sessions to align the strategies with the government's annual work plans and budgets.



PHOTO: STEP-Up Zambia

The strategic planning process involves a wide range of stakeholders, including MOGE representatives, parent/teacher association members, teachers, representatives from local companies, and even students.

### **ENFORCING MOGE POLICIES ON LEARNER PERFORMANCE**

STEP-Up trained provincial and district education officials to develop local policies in support of the LPISPs. The project worked with the MOGE at these levels to monitor the implementation of policies in different areas, such as homework, remedial work, reading policy, and use of Zambian languages for instruction. The policies have become important tools for provincial, district, and school administrators as they monitor and assess the progress of their strategic plans.

### **FOSTERING COORDINATED SECTOR COMMUNICATION**

To improve communication across MOGE's decentralized structures and boost public understanding of the importance of early grade education, STEP-UP and the MOGE developed and implemented a ministry communication strategy. The strategy outlines systematic interventions and coordination mechanisms to maximize the use of resources and improve the quality of education through stronger partnerships with the media, civil society, the private sector, and school communities. It focuses on four areas:

- Improving coordination and information flows at all levels in the ministry
- Enhancing communication with the public
- Enhancing communication with the broader education community
- Improving ministry engagement with communities, especially parents and businesses

Communication activities directly addressed the need to build public awareness of challenges affecting learner performance and generate demand for high-quality education. Development of the communication strategy also shaped the functionality of the MOGE's data management committees, whose revised terms of reference now include internal and external communications. The process of developing the communication strategy brought together all six MOGE directorates to begin sharing

their plans and activities. The cooperating partners have welcomed the idea of having a well-coordinated internal and external communication system within the MOGE.

### PRIVATE-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIPS

STEP-Up conducted numerous training and capacity building activities related to partnerships for education, including sensitization for MOGE senior managers, district-level engagement, the creation of nine public-private partnership (PPP) committees in nine provinces, and development of a social enterprise model for the education resource centers. STEP-Up worked with the MOGE focal point and the Ministry of Finance PPP Unit to operationalize the PPP Act.

In Year 5, to ascertain the impact of these efforts on the education system, STEP-Up documented best practices from a sample of five provinces (Lusaka, Central, Copperbelt, North-Western, and Southern), 13 District Education Board offices, 5 schools, and 17 other education stakeholders that had successfully leveraged substantial contributions from the private sector to improve learner performance. The five best-practice provinces leveraged more than \$3.4 million through PPPs.

#### EXHIBIT 8. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM FIVE PROVINCES

CATEGORY	ZAMBIAN KWACHA	U.S. DOLLARS
Educational materials and equipment	ZMK 5,683,553.15	\$953,241.72
Infrastructure rehabilitation and development	ZMK 10,907,842.42	\$1,779,968.49
Office space	ZMK 843,971.00	\$158,877.54
Other (MOGE staff time)	ZMK 2,895,993.36	\$535,324.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>ZMK 20,331,359.93</b>	<b>\$3,427,411.75</b>

The combination of improved internal and external communication and links with nongovernmental and private sector partners was a strong step toward sustainable improvements in the MOGE's capacity to engage Zambian organizations and citizens in boosting their children's chances of success in school.

#### EXHIBIT 9. TASK AREA 4 RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

<b>126</b>	<i>MOGE management units (provinces and districts) using tracking tools to develop and disseminate reading improvement plans. The monitoring rubric for the LPISPs has proven to be an important feedback mechanism.</i>
<b>53</b>	<i>districts/provinces have developed high-quality LPISPs, according to the monitoring rubric. At the 2016 Joint Annual Review Meeting and in other forums, the MOGE and other stakeholders acknowledged strategic planning as a key to improving education quality.</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>provinces demonstrated substantial private sector contributions through PPPs, which have helped alleviate some of the MOGE's financial burden.</i>
<b>1</b>	<i>MOGE communication strategy implemented, improving internal communication for the ministry and raising public awareness about the need for high-quality education.</i>

## SNAPSHOT

# A Gateway to Lifelong Learning

## A strategic focus on reading outcomes boosts learners' success



PHOTO: STEP-Up Zambia

Children across Zambia are reaping the benefits of a learner-centered strategic planning process that generates locally appropriate solutions to education challenges.

*“[Our teacher] is tough. She helps each one of us, one by one, until we all learn how to read. The teacher also tells us to borrow books from the school library so that we can read at home.”*

— Grade 2 pupil, Kasenje Primary School

Joyce (not her real name) is a second-grade student at Kasenje Primary School in Kafue District, part of Lusaka Province. Lately, the school has begun to focus on “reading to learn” — that is, making sure students like Joyce learn to read now so they will succeed as they progress to higher grades and more complex texts.

To help all students reach this goal, education officials in the district worked with STEP-Up and developed learner performance improvement plans to support reading. These plans help schools create locally appropriate policies targeting specific barriers to achievement. As a result, Kasenje Primary School has instituted some important strategies and policies:

- All teachers for grades 1-4 are trained in the MOGE’s Primary Reading Program, which helps them learn new instructional techniques.
- Early grade teachers “follow” their pupils to higher grades (this year’s grade 1 teacher is next year’s grade 2 teacher). This builds teacher-student relationships over time, which can help children focus on learning, and holds teachers accountable, because they cannot blame poor performance on last year’s teacher.
- All early grade teachers are trained in “ATLAS” (active teaching and learning) to make sure they keep the learning process interesting for children.
- As early as grade 1, students can borrow books from the school library to practice at home.
- Senior teachers and administrators monitor instruction to confirm that policies are carried out.

With changes like these, the grade 2 teacher has gained strong skills in reading instruction, and she knows the school is serious about results. Joyce knows this, too.

Kasenje Primary is just one school whose results have improved, thanks to support from USAID and STEP-Up. Having mastered a foundational skill, reading, this generation is looking at a brighter future.

## TASK AREA 5

# ENGAGING ZAMBIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN POLICY RESEARCH

A key achievement for STEP-Up was its joint work with the MOGE and higher education institutions to develop a policy research agenda for education management reform. This collaboration was designed to bring educators in higher education institutions closer to the general education delivery system and to support policy formulation, content, and practice in the promotion of reading. Higher education institutions and the MOGE do not typically connect on issues of policy and research. By engaging provincial and district education bodies and higher education institutions to collaboratively identify ways to improve reading achievement, the project used research related to oversight, management, and accountability as a tool for systemic improvement. This work fostered wider engagement of educators and created change agents throughout the system.

### STEP-UP'S RESEARCH PARTNERS

The University of Zambia  
Charles Lwanga College of Education  
Zambia Institute of Special Education  
The University of Minnesota

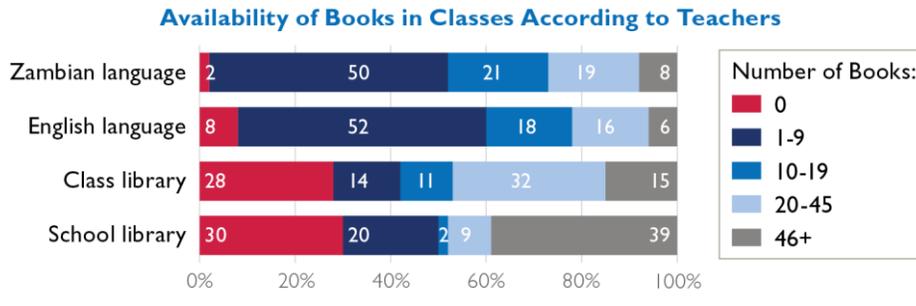
STEP-Up and the MOGE selected four research partners — three Zambian institutions, plus the U.S.-based University of Minnesota for capacity building support — based on their demonstrated ability to strengthen policy research in line with the objective of improving reading achievement.

## KEY ACTIVITIES UNDER TASK AREA 5

### CREATING A RESEARCH AGENDA AROUND LEARNER PERFORMANCE

To develop the research agenda and prioritize key questions around learner performance, STEP-Up began by convening stakeholder groups and visiting Zambian higher education institutions, district and provincial education offices, and MOGE headquarters. The project reviewed MOGE policies and analyzed strategic plans to identify elements that aligned with higher education institutions' research priorities. This simple analysis — cross-checking plans with policies and identifying problems for researchers to investigate — demonstrated to STEP-Up's counterparts how research and policy can become more responsive to real-world needs.

**EXHIBIT 10. STEP-UP-SUPPORTED RESEARCH FINDING:  
WHERE TO FIND TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS**



**DEVELOPING RESEARCH SKILLS**

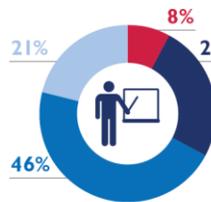
STEP-Up’s policy and research process supported skills development for participants from the three Zambian partner universities. The process involved research design, focusing on important issues and developing instruments and protocols for data collection, processing, and analysis; documenting the results in accessible formats; and using varied methods to share results with stakeholders, such as national roundtable meetings, provincial and district policy engagement meetings, policy briefs (see Annex D), and ongoing conversations.

As part of its research capacity building process, STEP-Up created applied education research opportunities for 72 interns, including lecturers engaged in research, who saw it as a professional development opportunity, and MOGE officers, who saw the research as a way to increase focus on learner performance.

**EXHIBIT 11. STEP-UP-SUPPORTED RESEARCH FINDING:  
USE ZAMBIAN LANGUAGES IN THE CLASSROOM**

**Lecturer perception of how effective using English is when teaching Zambian languages**

- Very effective
- Effective
- Somewhat effective
- Not at all effective



- The two languages are incompatible
- Using English limits exposure to local languages
- All students understand English so can grasp concepts

**INTEGRATING GENDER CONSIDERATIONS IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH**

Differences between the educational experiences of Zambian boys and girls was an important focus of project-supported research. For instance, gender disaggregation of pupil focus groups can lead to crucial conversations about differences in behavior toward boys’ and girls’ learning, in schools and at home. A few simple acts — requesting gender-disaggregated groups at data collection and explaining why, and allowing pupils (and teachers) to voice their concerns about gender — were part of the change process. Considering gender in the research process and asking questions about it sparked thinking among researchers, teachers, and school administrators and challenged assumptions about whether pupils were receiving equal treatment.

## EXHIBIT 12. TASK AREA 5 RESULTS AND OUTCOMES

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**469**

*central, provincial, and district MOGE officials* gained skills and knowledge in applied research and policy engagement. They implemented policy actions arising from the research, disseminated the results, and took individualized and institutional action to solve pressing challenges in their localities.

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**72**

*interns (10 pre-service and 62 in-service teachers and lecturers)* received training in policy research and analysis. Participants commented that the biggest challenge in writing policy briefs was creating “a well arranged, logical brief summary.” They saw themselves as a part of the change process and used their positions and their experiences to discuss key issues in their work.

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**13**

*policy briefs* enabled STEP-Up and the MOGE to demonstrate the link between policy and practice by discussing how strategic plans addressed policy guidelines and priorities. Internalizing research results from the briefs empowered district and provincial teams to strategically revisit work plans as evidence or new information emerged.

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## SNAPSHOT

# Yes, Research Can!

### Appreciative approaches help researchers build on what is already working in Zambian education



PHOTO: STEP-Up Zambia

STEP-Up's research collaboration with higher education institutions has helped support learner-centered policy change, resulting in practical solutions that Zambia's schools are using to make sure their learners succeed.

*"People can see that we aren't just pushing paperwork, but helping them solve problems ... It's really making universities relevant."*

— Dennis Banda, assistant dean for research, UNZA

In Zambia, the typical direction for policy flows is from the center, where it is created, to the regions, where it is implemented. The University of Zambia (UNZA) is helping to reverse this process.

Working with the MOGE and STEP-Up, UNZA organized its student researchers to administer a questionnaire to education sector actors at national, provincial, district, and school levels. The aim was to find out what was already working in early grade reading instruction and use that as the basis for local policymaking. STEP-Up, the university, and the ministry then held provincial and district roundtables to share the findings and ask local education managers what the results could mean for them.

This was an important shift away from standard practice, according to Dennis Banda, UNZA's assistant dean for research. Quite often, centrally developed policies are not clear to those who must implement them. "This time," he said, "we took the study results to the regions and asked them what similar local policies they could generate to address their highlighted problematic areas. The study created a bottom-up approach and people identified policies they could implement."

When education managers in Chipata District identified students' falling behind in reading as a main challenge, the research team identified a solution that had worked in another part of Zambia: use local stories to develop reading materials and engage retired teachers to work with students who are lagging behind their peers.

"Those ideas are not very expensive and can have very positive results," Banda said. "'One size fits all' has not worked." UNZA's study identified a range of these kinds of solutions for education managers to consider.

A key result is stronger collaboration with academic institutions, as ministry staff see the benefits of their research.

# LESSONS, IMPACT, AND THE ROAD AHEAD

The continuing evolution of Zambia’s education system as a result of STEP-Up’s support and the MOGE’s commitment to change is evident in the increasing number of ministry-driven actions that will continue to decentralize knowledge and sustain learner performance improvement interventions long after this project has closed.

During its final months, STEP-Up dedicated time to consolidating lessons learned and understanding its broader impact. Through a final joint annual review, STEP-Up, the MOGE, and USAID looked at provincial, district, and school-level interventions from across Zambia. The culmination event — held on September 28, 2016, at Chainda Primary School in Lusaka — offered other opportunities for learning by convening those who had implemented project-supported interventions across Zambia.

## INTEGRATING AND STRENGTHENING SYSTEMS

Although the MOGE has heralded the LLPT as an effective tool for data collection, its late rollout during the project period means its true impact has yet to be measured. Observations indicate that levels of utilization and data sharing vary widely, from being an integral part of the education system to being not yet operational. Even without specific impact details, STEP-Up has gleaned the following important lessons:

- In coaching and mentoring workshops during the final months of the project, district and provincial MOGE officials cited a number of challenges, including a lack of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment at schools; low levels of ICT literacy; lack of transport to remote schools, and poor school-level attitudes toward data submission.
- Some provinces, such as Muchinga, which reported at 50 percent, have mitigated low submission rates by setting a specific day for school representatives to gather in a central location and complete the data entry. This has proven to be an effective strategy, because it gives participants the support they need to troubleshoot challenges as they arise.

STEP-Up also guided the MOGE to improve the management of LLPT, focusing on the following areas:

- *Data flow and scheduling for data submission.* The system will allow the use of software and paper-based forms. Schools will gather in a central location to complete data entry at the zonal level during Week 1 of the next term.
- *Data managers to support data.* Statisticians and resource center coordinators will be the custodians of data from the LLPT.

- *Dissemination of LLPT software and forms.* Initially, the provincial office will communicate updates to the districts. Eventually, with assistance from the central ministry, the MOGE website will house this information.
- *Communication following data analysis* will include information on performance in literacy and other subjects, pupil-to-book ratios, teacher availability, and pupil absenteeism.

Transparency of information, through sharing platforms and peer education, has strengthened collaboration toward a common goal. Champions from within the MOGE have institutionalized technical support for the LLPT, playing key troubleshooting roles as users share their experiences on open platforms such as the WhatsApp group (accessible via mobile phone at +260 966879727). Understanding of how to use data from the tracker is expanding, as users see how it can influence resource planning for increased learner performance.

As these sorts of data are collected and shared throughout Zambia’s education system, the dialogue is changing within the ministry. There has been a push for new initiatives and training to build on the work that STEP-Up has supported. Seeing the true benefits of decentralized data, the ministry asked STEP-Up to roll out the EDSTAT app to 40 targeted districts and has indicated its intention to include all of Zambia’s districts in the future.

The data management committees have proved to be an effective mechanism for sharing information and institutionalizing data management best practices within the MOGE. However, the lack of data analysis and general operational performance skills among data management committee members — as well as the lack of computers and internet connectivity — remains as a major challenge to making the committees fully functional in most provinces. In collaboration with the Education Sector Budget Support Programme (funded by the U.K. Department for International Development), the ministry has planned a variety of training programs for the coming months to continue building on these STEP-Up-supported platforms, acknowledging them as effective tools for the education system in Zambia.

## **PROMOTING EQUITY IN POLICY AND EDUCATION REFORM**

Equity continues to be an implementation challenge at all levels of Zambia’s education system. Because it is based on population, the MOGE’s resource allocation is the same for each learner, regardless of any variance in need and in spite of the learning that schools serving CSEN require more resources. Based on the Gender and Equity Study Report, STEP-Up made the following policy recommendations to the ministry and its partners to address some of the challenges associated with equity:

- *Physical accessibility of schools.* Accelerate the completion of primary schools (to grade 7) to improve equity and overall grade 4 and grade 7 survival rates.
- *Raising survival rates to grade 4 in community schools.* Raise community school performance to parity with public schools through well-targeted additional

support and investments, which could improve not only equity, but also overall rates of educational attainment in the district.

- *Distribution of opportunities for post-primary schooling.* Improve geographical access to and distribution of post-primary grades to enhance equity in educational attainment, rather than focusing on aggregate numbers of places. Distribution is also important.
- *Overage pupils.* Promote entry into grade 1 at the official age of 7 years and identify schools with high levels of repetition or poor grade-to-grade transition rates in early grades.
- *Teacher deployment.* Improve the equity of teacher allocation across schools comprehensively (quality and quantity), rather than basing allocations on student-to-teacher ratios.
- *Early childhood education.* Expand access to high-quality public preschool education, particularly in areas where private options are scarce.
- *School facilities.* Pupils in schools with adequate toilets have higher survival rates. Improve the provision of water and sanitation facilities in schools.
- *Gender.* Through much of education system, girls and boys are nearly as likely to stay in school and have relative parity in learning outcomes. Many factors other than gender, such as poverty and geographical differences, play an important role in determining the amount of schooling an individual boy or girl is able to complete, as well as individual learning outcomes. Gender remains an important equity concern, however, because the consequences of low levels of education are likely more serious for girls, in terms of reproductive health choices, HIV and AIDS, and poverty. In particular, early pregnancy and early marriage can have serious, life-long consequences that are transmitted across generations.
- *Supplemental support for learners.* Direct support to pupils and households for the most vulnerable promotes equity and improves overall outcomes. However, little is known about the effectiveness of funding schemes. Existing schemes may not be efficiently targeted to reach the most vulnerable. Unless these schemes are effective and reasonably well-targeted, they represent a loss of efficiency in the system (significant costs for little or no improvement in outcomes).

As the LLPT evolves, it has the potential to be an effective tool for addressing the challenges of equity resource planning. In using the tracker, several schools and districts have taken it upon themselves to incorporate indicators related to CSEN, OVC, and pregnancies to understand their communities' needs and reallocate resources to meet those needs. STEP-Up recommends that the MOGE consolidate these sorts of efforts to facilitate management and resource planning and ensure that resource needs are met.

## **INSTITUTIONALIZING HIV AND AIDS WORKPLACE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT**

Although broad dissemination of HIV and AIDS policies proved to be an important organizing framework for discussions with teachers, STEP-Up and its partners observed that many schools and districts did not know how to apply the policies. Often, the

materials stood unused and unopened in a head teacher’s office. Provincial and district education offices need to thoroughly orient their schools on how to apply the guidance.

The teacher support groups are an effective resource in this regard, because the teachers work together to support children and each other in school and in the wider community. To institutionalize management of HIV and AIDS workplace programs, the MOGE needs to first ensure that all schools have the three policy documents, and then seek avenues to continue the health market fairs, especially for hard-to-reach communities. This will ensure that HIV and AIDS information is available so teachers can gain a better personal understanding of the epidemic and be better prepared to discuss these issues with their pupils and the communities at large.

## **STRENGTHENING DECENTRALIZATION TO BOOST LEARNER PERFORMANCE**

Through STEP-Up’s support, provinces, districts, and schools developed LPISPs. The most successful plans were those that involved a variety of stakeholders from the start — officials from different levels of the MOGE, head teachers and classroom teachers, parents, community members, and the ultimate beneficiaries, the students. In such cases, there was more support for planned interventions and the tools were based on demand, addressing the real needs of the community. The strategic plans were also more successful when a sense of ownership flowed through the district or the school, with everyone understanding that they were accountable for meeting objectives for learner performance.

*“Of the 10 themes, the most pertinent is improving learner performance and reading levels and teachers’ attitudes towards work. If you can’t motivate them, then you are fighting a losing battle, so we needed them to embrace the plans as their own.”*

**— HEAD TEACHER,  
MULFULIRA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

*To build ownership for the strategic plan, the head teacher at Mulfulira Primary organized classroom teachers into committees aligned with the themes and drew on their ideas for how to make the themes work.*

## **ENGAGING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN POLICY RESEARCH**

STEP-Up and the MOGE’s collaboration with higher education institutions helped set a research agenda that not only contributed to an evidence base for policy reform, but also helped demystify research as a practical tool to address challenges in the education system. Many participants remarked that working together with MOGE and the universities strengthened their understanding of what could be done in research and implementation. The key challenge is to make policy research into an integral part of the MOGE and the sector as a whole. Without deliberate efforts to sustain policy research with the higher education institutions and the ministry to continue providing leadership around the policy research agenda, the effort will stagnate.

Project-supported research created a dialogue around the mismatch between the teacher training curriculum in institutions of higher learning and actual teaching practice

in the schools. Through this collaboration, STEP-Up and its partners revealed a need to better align teacher education in the MOGE, higher education institutions, and the schools.

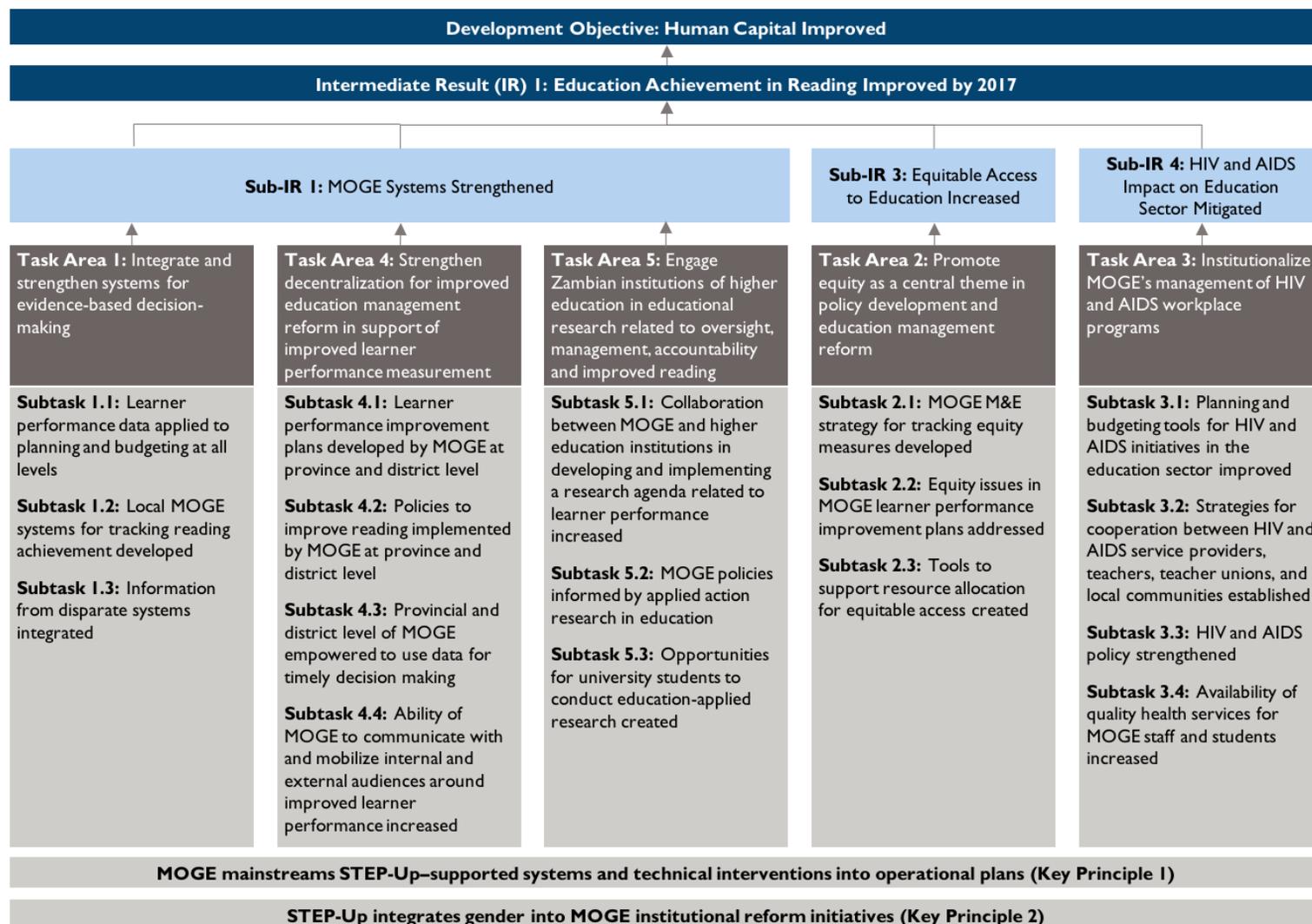
Lecturers, students, and other higher education stakeholders were essential actors in STEP-Up's ability to gain organizational support to move the research agenda forward for each partner institution. Participation benefited academic staff by sharpening their skills in research design and data collection, analysis, and dissemination and by equipping students to undertake practical research in the future. The interns' involvement in real-life research strengthened collaboration between institutions of higher learning and communities and empowered the interns by preparing them for their role as researchers supporting Zambian society. The ministry continues to support higher education institutions' community service function, which is one of the three key functions of a university (the others being teaching and research).

### **BUILDING A STRONGER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

In five years, STEP-Up made significant contributions to strengthen MOGE systems. Under Task Area 1, STEP-Up expanded the use of the LLPT and integrated it with the national EMIS to support data collection and knowledge sharing. Through Task Area 2, STEP-Up promoted a better understanding of equity and its impact on resourcing in education. Under Task Area 3, STEP-Up supported the ministry to address HIV and AIDS through policies that will help mitigate its impact on education. Strategic plans developed through Task Area 4 provided decision-makers with a more comprehensive understanding of where they are and where they are going on the path to increase overall learner performance. Under Task Area 5, STEP-Up facilitated capacity building activities, grounded in collaborative research efforts, that will inform education policy for generations to come.

STEP-Up has been proud to support the MOGE's vision and work in collaboration to create a foundation for improved learner performance. As one head teacher said, "We do not intend to wind up. We need to keep building on the pertinent themes and continue with the same work." It is this motivation, leadership, ownership, and accountability that will have the greatest impact on Zambia's education system and its learners.

# ANNEX A. STEP-UP RESULTS FRAMEWORK



# ANNEX B. STRATEGIC PLANNING SCORING RUBRIC

This excerpt from Central Province illustrates the rubric STEP-Up introduced to help provincial and district education managers evaluate the quality of their LPISPs. The full rubric has 10 criteria. Each indicator is scored on a scale of 0 (minimal) to 4 (extensive).

		CENTRAL PROVINCE					
		Mumbwa District	Chibombo District	Serenje District	Kapiri Mposhi District	Mkushi District	Kabwe District
<b>1. Baseline information on reading levels for grades 1–4</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan does not have any baseline information on reading levels.</li> <li>Information is either dated and scanty or current but not for all grades.</li> <li>Baseline information is current for grades 1–4.</li> <li>Baseline information on reading levels for grades 1–4 is current, disaggregated by gender; a level of analysis has been done to give further insights on the reading data. Attempts made to also include grade 1 enrollment data and projections over the strategic plan period.</li> </ol>	3	3	1	3	3	3
...							
<b>10. Resources/Budget</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Learner Performance Improvement Strategic Plan has not been costed to appreciate the budget implications of the plan.</li> <li>There has been an attempt to cost the planned activities for the Learner Performance Improvement Strategic Plan and/or there is reference to the fact that annual work plans and budgets shall be based on priorities in the plan.</li> </ol>	3	1	2	4	1	3
<i>District Score</i>		2.7	2.6	2.5	3.5	3.2	2.9

# ANNEX C. PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLAN

## STEP-UP ZAMBIA RESULTS THROUGH OCTOBER 31, 2016, BY FISCAL YEAR (OCTOBER 1 – SEPTEMBER 30)

INDICATOR	FY 1 2011–2012		FY 3 2012–2013		FY 3 2013–2014		FY 4 2014–2015		FY 5 2015–2016		LIFE OF PROJECT		PERCENTAGE ACHIEVED
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	
1. Increase of 15% in learning achievement in reading at grade 5 by 2017	N/A	35.3%	N/A	—	—	—		—		—	40.56%	—	Impact measure (end-of-project evaluation results)
2. Number of laws, policies, regulations, or guidelines developed to improve equitable access to or quality of education services	5	5	40	56	20	23	10	27	21	14	96	116 (121%)	
3. Number of MOGE districts and provincial offices that have reading tracking targets and tools (Task 1)	0	5	20	51	20	94	20	61	0	0	60	94	157%  The number of districts and provinces with reading targets and tracking tools is the same as previously assessed; 94 include new and old managements units reached.
4. Number of MOGE management units that use reading tracking tools to develop and disseminate reading improvement plans (Task 4)	0	0	46	92 Natl.: 1 Prov.: 10 Dist.: 81	20	10	10	24	0	0	76	116	153%

INDICATOR	FY 1 2011–2012		FY 3 2012–2013		FY 3 2013–2014		FY 4 2014–2015		FY 5 2015–2016		LIFE OF PROJECT		PERCENTAGE ACHIEVED
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	
5. Number of policies developed by MOGE as a result of project-supported higher education research activities (Task 5)	0	0	1	3	2	0	1	10	1	0	5	13	260% 13 policy briefs developed as a result of a study, in collaboration with ZAMISE, CLCE, and USAID
6. Number of education research internships completed (Task 5)	0	0	12	28 M: 8 F: 20	20	25 M: 7 F: 18	19	19 M: 10 F: 9	0	0	50	72 M: 25 F: 47	144%
7. Number of individuals who have received testing and counseling services and received their test results (Task 3)	0	237 M: 114 F: 123	25,000	23,346 M: 10,968 F: 12,378	15,000	16,318 M: 7,836 F: 8,482	10 000	18,234 M: 7,623 F: 10,611	0	0	50,000	58,135 M: 26,541 F: 31,594	116%
8. Number of education officials or administrators and officials successfully trained with U.S. government support (all task areas)	200 M: 100 F: 100	425 M: 300 F: 125	1,531 M: 1,167 F: 364	2,630 M: 1,891 F: 739	350 M: 245 F: 105	484 M: 318 F: 166	200 M: 120 F: 80	701 M: 433 F: 268	350 M: 210 F: 140	1,142 M: 827 F: 315	2,631 M: 1,842 F: 789	5,382 M: 3,769 F: 1,613	205%
9. Number of districts tracking resource allocation for equitable access to education (Tasks 1 and 2)	0	0	0	0	40	2	23	0	20	50	83	52	63%
10. Number of districts that have reallocated resources in support of equity (Tasks 1 and 2)	0	0	0	0	40	2	23	0	20	50	83	52	63%
11. Number of PPPs that have made commitments to support education improvement programs (Task 4.4)	0	0	0	0	5	2	5	4	0	0	10	10	100%

INDICATOR	FY 1 2011–2012		FY 3 2012–2013		FY 3 2013–2014		FY 4 2014–2015		FY 5 2015–2016		LIFE OF PROJECT		PERCENTAGE ACHIEVED
	Target	Actual	Target	Actual									
12. Number of districts generating and disseminating quarterly reports from the LLPT to stakeholders (Task 1)	0	0	0	0	20	0	20	0	0	50	40	40	100%
13. Number of districts and provinces with a data management committee that meets at least quarterly to review and analyze data (Task 1)	0	0	0	0	40	37	11	15	51	0	51	52	102%
14. Number of guidelines, policies, advisory memos generated as a result of the Local Education Management Information System (LEMIS) data analyses conducted by data management committees (Task 1)	0	0	0	0	40	0	11	0	0	49	51	50	98%
15. Number of district/province strategic plans that have rated higher in quality based on the Learner Performance Improvement Strategies (LPIS) scoring rubric (Task 4)	0	0	0	0	65	53	26	0	0	0	91	53	54% <sup>1</sup>

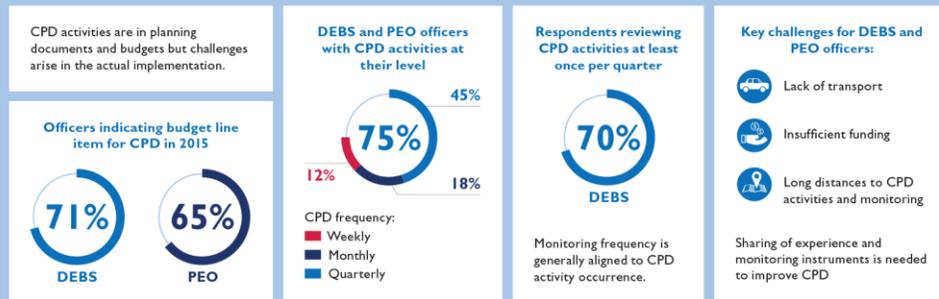
<sup>1</sup> Indicators 9, 10, and 15 were outcome indicators that measured the MOGE units' response to STEP-Up interventions. The project trained district officials in tracking resource allocation for equitable access (indicators 9 and 10); and strategic planning to improve learner performance (indicator 15). The results are an indication of how the MOGE units responded and depended on the individual district internal and external contextual factors such as available skills, responsiveness, and preparedness to adopt/adapt new innovations/interventions.

# ANNEX D. POLICY INFOGRAPHICS

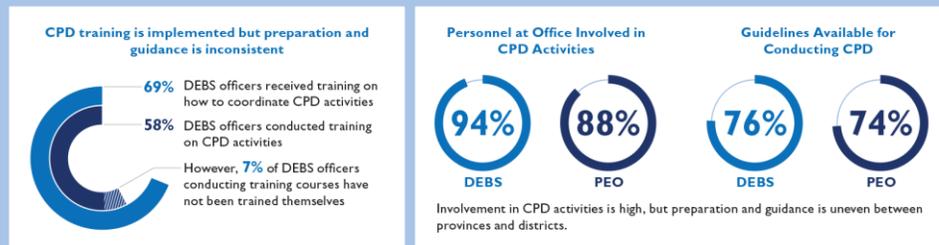
## STRENGTHENING CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO IMPROVE EARLY GRADE READING

Data was collected using questionnaires administered in early 2015 with 135 District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) officers from 30 districts (three per province), 44 Provincial Education Office (PEO) officers from all 10 provinces, and 11 officers from national level (HQ).

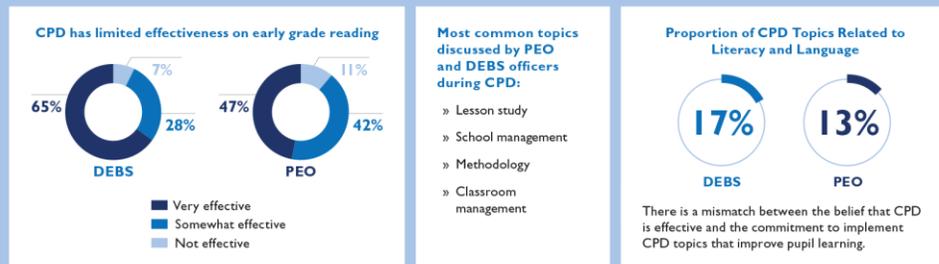
### CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CPD) ACTIVITIES



### CPD TRAINING



### CPD EFFECTIVENESS



### POLICY ACTION POINTS

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p><b>Focus</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Literacy must be given more attention in CPD.</li> <li>» CPD topics should be needs driven.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Training to coordinate and provide CPD should be intensified and funding increased.</li> </ul> | <p><b>Guidance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Guidelines and support must be dynamic to include new teaching methods, and the review process revisited to ensure annual assessment of strategies.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Officers providing CPD should be trained and reviewed. Trained officers should be posted in areas lacking CPD coordinators.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|--|---|

# ENSURING TEACHERS ARE EMPOWERED TO TEACH IN ZAMBIAN LANGUAGES

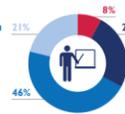
This poster focuses on one of five strategies employed by MOGE: the empowerment of teachers to teach in Zambian languages. Data was collected using questionnaires administered in early 2015 with 135 District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) officers from 30 districts (three per province), 44 Provincial Education Office (PEO) officers from all 10 provinces, and 11 officers from national level (HQ).

## TEACHING OF ZAMBIAN LANGUAGE DURING TEACHER PREPARATION

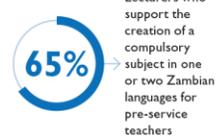
The recent revision to the national curriculum mandates that pupils in Grades 1-4 learn in a local language. Student teachers must therefore develop competency in local languages during their training in order to effectively teach literacy and other subjects to early grade learners.

Lecturer perception of how effective using English is when teaching Zambian languages

■ Very effective  
■ Effective  
■ Somewhat effective  
■ Not at all effective



- The two languages are incompatible
- Using English limits exposure to local languages
- All students understand English so can grasp concepts

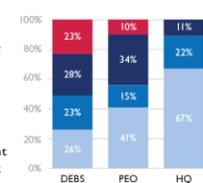


Several lecturers suggested the use of local language helps student teachers and pupils learn. Developing the competencies of teachers' local language abilities has the potential to significantly improve their confidence and competence when teaching in one of these languages.

## DEVELOPING AND USING GUIDELINES FOR TEACHER PLACEMENT

Perceived level of importance of considering teaching experience when placing teachers

■ Very important  
■ Important  
■ Somewhat important  
■ Not at all important



Less than half of all administrators considered teaching experience, marital status, and knowledge of a local language.

Perceived level of importance of considering a teachers knowledge of local language when placing teachers

■ Very important  
■ Important  
■ Somewhat important  
■ Not at all important



When comparing all factors for placement, 79-100% of DEBS, PEO, and HQ indicated that the most important factor considered in placing teachers is the availability of the vacancy followed by academic qualifications.

Officers indicating that guidelines for teacher placement were not available



Given the shift towards local language instruction in Grades 1-4, there is a greater need to consider the languages teachers know when placing them across the country. If literacy levels are to improve, teacher placement guidelines should include assessment of teacher language competencies during placement.

## POLICY ACTION POINTS

- » Teacher placement guidelines must be available to all departments and levels in MOGE.
- » Ongoing orientations and sensitization should be done for officers across all three levels of MOGE so that officers are aware of these guidelines.

- » Develop and improve the monitoring of teachers with greater focus on local language.
- » Introduce regular assessment of local language skills during and after teacher placement.

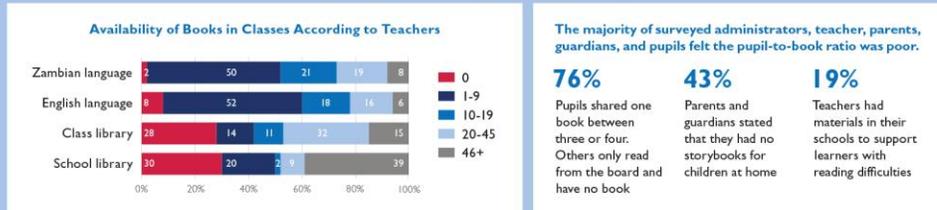
- » Support Local Language Use And Knowledge In Pre-Service Training
- » The policy on training of teachers must align with the National Literacy Framework and other policies to accommodate the use of familiar languages as a medium of instruction.
- » In practice, lecturers can continue

to encourage student teachers to respond and ask questions in the language they are most comfortable.

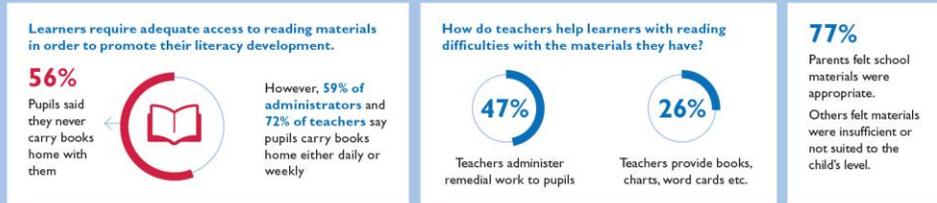
# LITERACY TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

This poster draws on the results of Objective 3. The research results below are based on analyses of interviews and questionnaires administered to 37 administrators, 134 teachers, 137 parents, and focus group discussions with 157 groups of Grade 3 and 4 pupils.

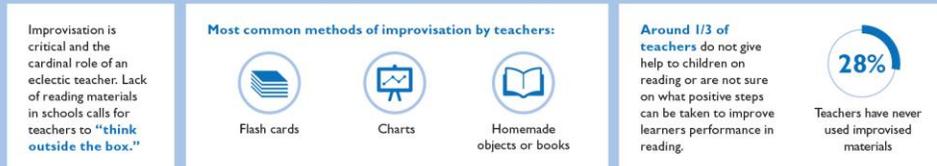
## AVAILABILITY OF READING MATERIALS



## UTILIZATION OF READING MATERIALS



## IMPROVISATION OF READING MATERIALS



## BUDGETING AND PROCUREMENT OF READING MATERIAL



## POLICY ACTION POINTS

- » Decentralize funds for book procurement
- » Establish libraries in schools and communities with books addressing specific learner needs
- » Track reading levels and access to books termly in schools, zones, districts, and provinces
- » Promote e-literacy in multiple forms
- » Introduce Parent Child Reading day per term
- » Introduce a child-to-child peer reading program
- » Establish a rewarding system for teachers who improve reading levels in their class

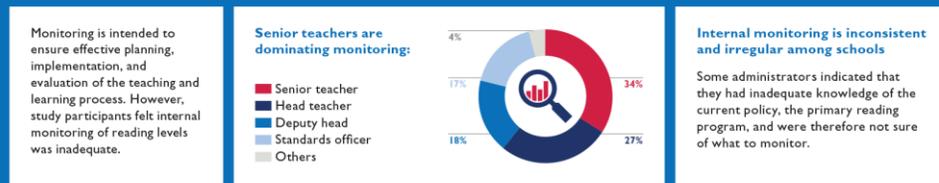
# MONITORING MATTERS

Data was collected in early 2013 by 130 college students of CLCE during teaching practice undertaken in their third year of the primary diploma program. The data was collected from 67 primary schools in 14 districts in Southern, Lusaka, and Western provinces. Analysis was based on 52 administrator interviews, 84 teacher questionnaires, 99 parent questionnaires, and 78 pupil focus groups.

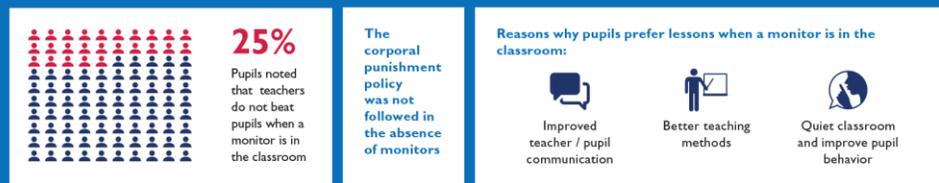
## MONITORING IMPROVES AND SUSTAINS TEACHERS PERFORMANCE AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS



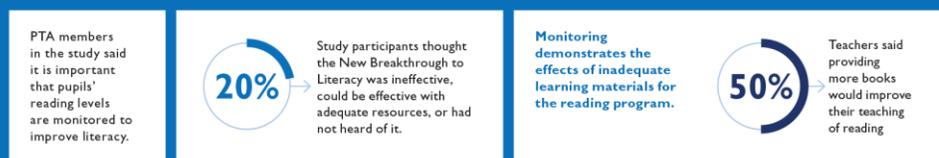
## INEFFECTIVE INTERNAL MONITORING NEGATIVELY AFFECTS LEARNING



## MONITORING SAFEGUARDS PUPIL'S LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



## INADEQUACIES IN TEACHER TRAINING AND READING RESOURCES ARE REVEALED THROUGH MONITORING



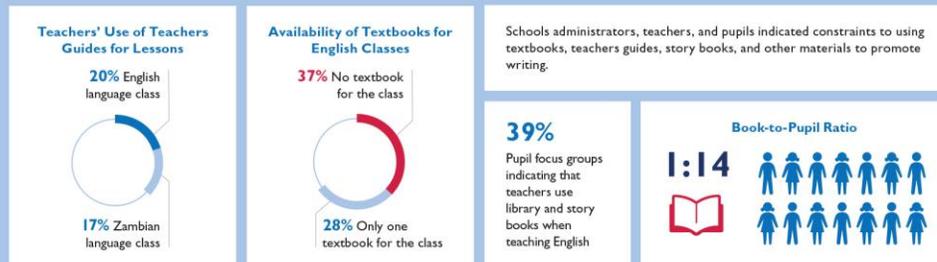
## POLICY ACTION POINTS

- Reinforce corporal punishment policy implementation
  - » Produce low-cost, high-impact sensitization campaign about the ban on corporal punishment
  - » Monitor occurrence of punishment through pupil focus groups
- Increase in-service training courses on reading methodologies
  - » Design low-cost, school-based training courses to better allocate resources
  - » Strengthen monitoring protocols to regularly review reading material inadequacies
- Strengthen internal monitoring
  - » Clear guidelines for internal monitoring to be developed
  - » Clear recommendations on how school-based groups could support peer monitoring

# TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON READING

This poster presents results of Objective 3. Data was collected in early 2013 by 130 college students of CLCE during teaching practice undertaken in their third year of the primary diploma program. The data was collected from 67 primary schools in 14 districts in Southern, Lusaka, and Western provinces. Analysis was based on 52 administrator interviews, 84 teacher questionnaires, 99 parent questionnaires, and 78 pupil focus groups.

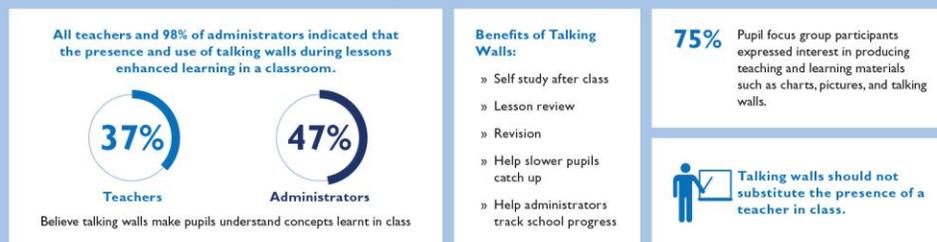
## READING IS COMPROMISED BY LIMITED MATERIALS IN THE CLASSROOM



## INVOLVE PARENTS IN PROCUREMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS



## TALKING WALLS IMPROVE PUPILS UNDERSTANDING, MOTIVATION, AND REVISION OR SELF-STUDY



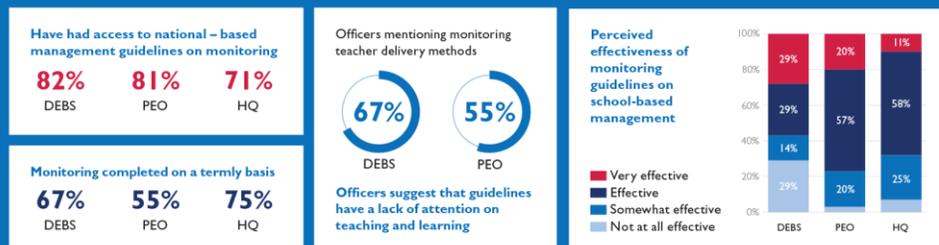
## POLICY ACTION POINTS

- » Increase teaching and learning materials available in schools
- » Encourage improvisation and creativity
- » Parents can work with teachers and pupils to make teaching and learning materials
- » Lower primary can draw and write words for upper primary
- » Strengthen material storage management systems at school level
- » Schools and parents should work together on fundraising projects to buy teaching and learning materials
- » Upper primary pupils can write stories for lower primary

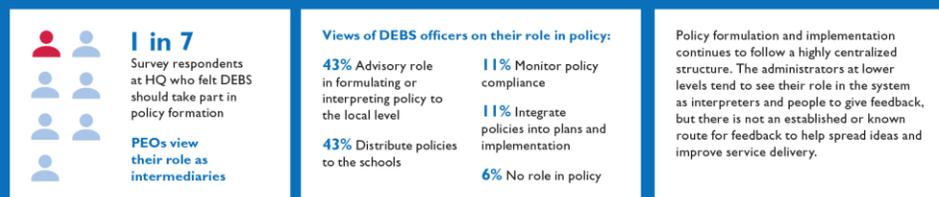
# POLICY – PRACTICE RELATIONSHIPS TO IMPROVE LEARNING

Data was collected using questionnaires administered in early 2015 with 135 District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) officers from 30 districts (three per province), 44 Provincial Education Office (PEO) officers from all 10 provinces, and 11 officers from the national level (HQ).

## MANAGEMENT FOCUS IS MOSTLY ON MONITORING RECORDS VERSUS PERFORMANCE AND USING GUIDELINES



## FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY IN MINISTRY STRUCTURES



## STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT



## POLICY ACTION POINTS

- » Pupil and teacher performance indicators must be integrated with strategic plans and local priorities.
- » Recognize improved management through incentives and awards at school, zone, district, provincial, and national levels.
- » Engage all levels in needs assessment and also conduct "review workshops to look at the coverage and the effectiveness of the programs initiated"
- » Improve feedback channels across the system to ensure efficiency in the implementation of policies.

# POTENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE GAPS IN EARLY GRADE LITERACY TRAINING

This poster represents results of research conducted in seven institutions of higher learning that provide primary teacher training in Zambia in 2014. The overall objective of the study was to identify potential knowledge and practice gaps in teacher training processes in light of the revised Zambia School Curriculum introduced in primary schools. A total of 39 lecturers, eight administrators, and 710 students in their second and third year participated in the study.

## PREPARING FUTURE TEACHERS FOR EARLY GRADE LITERACY

Administrators have mixed views about the effectiveness of non-language lecturers to prepare students to teach other subjects using local languages.

**Practical teaching experiences** in schools can serve as powerful tools to help prepare future teachers. These are only effective when students are adequately supported and provided constructive feedback.

**63%** Students felt better prepared in teaching methods than content  
**75%** Students felt they receive more preparation to teach English than Zambian languages

**80%** Students are satisfied with teaching preparation in oral communication, writing, and reading.

**63%** Students are satisfied with literacy teaching.

**Most common approaches lecturers use to teach literacy:**

- » Demonstration
- » Lecture
- » Peer teaching
- » Role play

Students suggested that language and literacy topics are challenging, and have difficulties following lectures on phonemic and phonological awareness.

**41%** Students have no remedial support, however.

**Teachers are not adequately trained** to use local languages as the medium of instruction for Grades 1 to 4.

Instruction by lecturers, the literacy curriculum, and the support for pre-service teachers and their schools' experiences deserve immediate attention.

## PERCEPTIONS OF LITERACY AND TEACHING LITERACY

Most administrators said they encourage students to learn the language of the area in which they will be teaching.

**Pre-service teachers** should be trained separately to teach lower and upper primary.

**90%** Students defined literacy as the ability to read and write

**20%** Students included achieving fluency, interpreting texts, and communicating effectively

**24%** Students with poor competence in local language according to lecturers

**<5%** Students who do not know a local language

The availability and alignment of teaching and learning materials in teacher training colleges and primary schools was a significant issue.

Lack of vital teaching resources is one of the most important challenges faced in teaching pre-service teachers to teach literacy

**Need for concentrated efforts among stake-holders to improve the reading culture**

**50%** Administrators say Primary Literacy Programme materials were not available in their college

**49%** Students feel materials available for teaching literacy are adequate

**52%** Students said teaching materials in school were not the same as in college

**59%** Students on school experience said pupils' books were available

## THE USE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

## BUILDING A READING CULTURE

**59%** Lecturers indicated reading culture of students was poor

**62%** Students dedicated 2 hours at most per week to reading

**Multiple stakeholders** are responsible for improving literacy and reading skills among learners.

**Respondent reasons for low reading levels in Zambia:**

- » Teacher preparation, attitude
- » Lack of materials
- » Pupil's attitude, background, lack of reading culture
- » Language of instruction
- » Over-enrolment/limited teaching time
- » Changing or inconsistent policies

## PERCEPTIONS AND POLICY GUIDANCE

**73%** Lecturers support the policy to teach Grades 1-4 in local languages

**32%** Lecturers feel a lack of reliable policy and a history of policy changes and inconsistent programs

**More collaboration is needed** between the policymakers, curriculum developers, teacher training colleges, and primary schools to ensure pre-service teachers are appropriately prepared to teach in local languages. Currently there is a mismatch between existing curricula, CPD courses, and teaching practices. Although the majority of administrators use the National Literacy Policy and/or Educating our Future as policy documents to disseminate new approaches to teaching literacy through CPD, these new approaches are not fully integrated into the curriculum for pre-service teachers.

## POLICY ACTION POINTS

### MOGE Central

- » Sensitize stakeholders on the local language policy
- » Procure and distribute books in the local languages that relate to the new curriculum
- » Realign curriculum to include MOGE, teacher training colleges, and primary schools

### Students

- » Attend tutorials for remedial support
- » Develop and practice techniques for creating and improvising teaching and learning materials
- » Establish a regular reading routine
- » Practice teaching methods with other students

### Lecturers in Teacher Training Institutions

- » Teach Zambian languages
- » Develop pedagogical content knowledge and model approaches in courses
- » Teach students innovative techniques for developing teaching and learning materials
- » Monitor student teaching

### PEO and DEBS

- » Provide training and workshops to sensitize stakeholders on the local language policy
- » Organize a course for teachers unfamiliar with the PLP
- » Post new teachers to regions where they speak the local language

### Administrators in Teacher Training Institutions

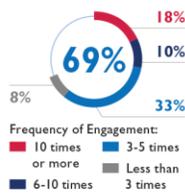
- » Allocate adequate resources for CPDs in new literacy approaches
- » Supply teaching and learning materials that align with the PLP

# SCHOOL AND HOME ENVIRONMENTS: LEARNERS SUPPORT IN LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

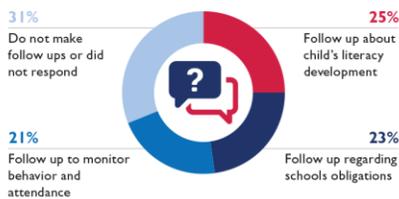
This poster presents results of a study "Literacy development for children with reading difficulties," which was carried out in Lusaka Province by lecturers and students of the Zambia Institute for Special Education (ZAMISE) in partnership with the Ministry of General Education (MOGE), and Strengthening Education Performance Up (STEP-Up), a USAID-funded project. The research results below are based on analyses of interviews and questionnaires administered to 37 administrators, 134 teachers, 137 parents, and focus group discussions with 157 groups of Grade 3 and 4 pupils.

## FOLLOW UP OF LEARNER PERFORMANCE

Parents who make an effort to engage with the school at least once in a term



Type of parent follow up with schools:



The majority of parents require guidance on the type of follow up they should make, specifically regarding the child's literacy development.

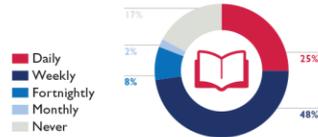
Administrator strategies to encourage follow up:

- » Homework policy
- » Family pack
- » Open days
- » Invitations to discussions and PTA meetings

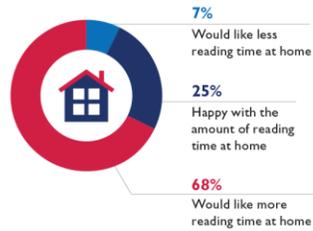
## READING TIME AT HOME IS LIMITED AND PUPILS WANT MORE

Parents do not spend time reading with their children daily. This is particularly detrimental to those in the early grades when motivation and exposure to reading materials is most vital to their literacy development.

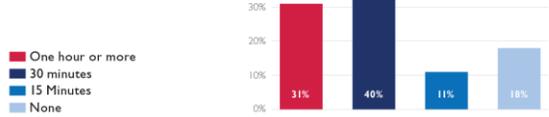
Frequency parents read with their child



Pupils views on amount of reading time at home



Amount of time parents read with their child



Data suggests learners see the home as a space for continued practice and learning reading skills.

## SUGGESTED STRATEGIES BY PUPILS ON HOW TO HELP THEM READ

**Materials**  
Parents can buy more story books, picture books, and charts, and help with using different learning materials.

**Time**  
Parents can dedicate more time to reading and learning with pupils on a daily basis.

**Homework**  
Parents can help with homework when pupils cannot read alone and do exercises together.

**Support**  
Parents can help with spelling using dictation, not correct mistakes with anger, and pay school fees on time.

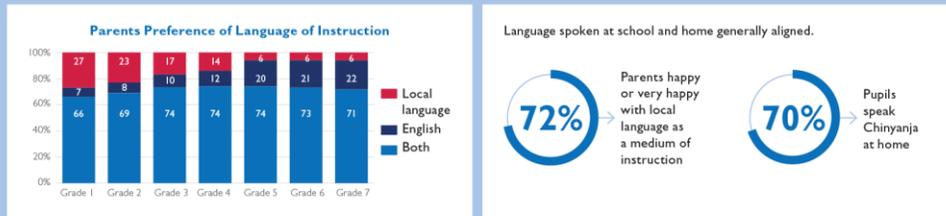
## POLICY ACTION POINTS

- » Schools and parents to design and manage support mechanisms to help learners with reading difficulties, especially those from homes where parents cannot read or write.
- » Parents should spend at least 20 minutes each day with children reading.
- » The homework policy should be refined to promote assessment.
- » Parents should make follow ups at schools to formally and informally assess the reading levels of their children.

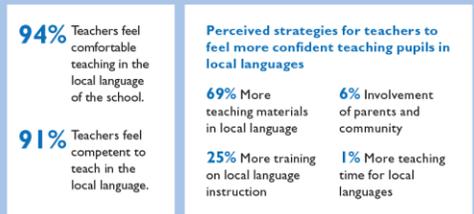
# THE USE OF LOCAL LANGUAGES IN EARLY GRADE LITERACY

This poster presents results of a study "Literacy development for children with reading difficulties," which was carried out in Lusaka Province by lecturers and students of the Zambia Institute for Special Education (ZAMISE) in partnership with the Ministry of General Education and USAID's Strengthening Education Performance Up (STEP-Up) project. The aim of study was to explore how using evidence informs policy and practice in bringing about system reform to improve learner performance. This poster draws on the results of Objective 1. The research results below are based on analyses of interviews and questionnaires administered to 37 administrators, 134 teachers, 137 parents, and focus group discussions with 157 groups of Grade 3 and Grade 4 pupils.

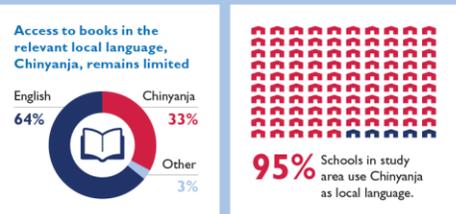
## TEACHING OF ZAMBIAN LANGUAGE DURING TEACHER PREPARATION



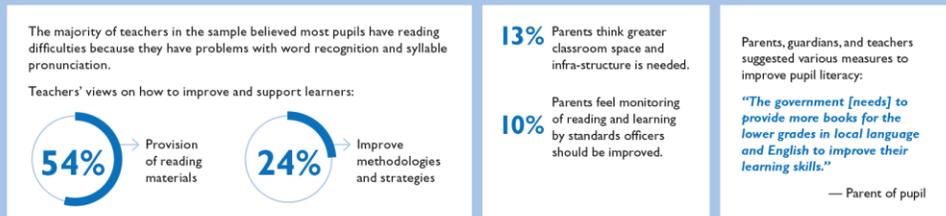
## TEACHER COMPETENCIES IN LOCAL LANGUAGE



## AVAILABILITY OF READING MATERIALS IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES



## STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE LANGUAGE AND LITERACY



## POLICY ACTION POINTS

- » Extra reading time should be given for pupils whose mother tongue is not the medium of instruction.
- » In-service training through continuous professional development should be conducted in schools to instruct teachers methodologies of teaching literacy.
- » Teacher group meetings with a focus on teaching in local language should be held more regularly.
- » Ministry of General Education should procure more reading materials in the local language of instruction.

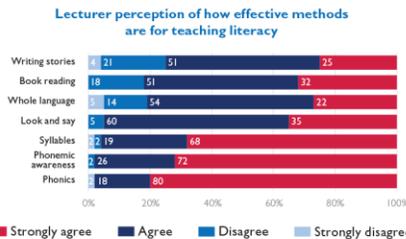
# STUDENT TEACHER PREPARATION FOR THE REALITIES IN ZAMBIA'S SCHOOLS

This poster focuses on one of five strategies employed by MOGE: challenges and successes in student teacher preparation experienced in teacher training institutions. Data was collected using questionnaires administered in early 2015 with 135 District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) officers from 30 districts (three per province), 44 Provincial Education Office (PEO) officers from all 10 provinces, and 11 officers from national level (HQ).

## LECTURERS VIEW TEACHER TRAINING IN PEDAGOGY AS MOST CRITICAL TO ADDRESSING LOW LITERACY LEVELS AND VIEWED TEACHER LED METHODS AS IMPORTANT

More than 50% of the lecturers indicated that they routinely suggest **four strategies** to student teachers to identify and assist learners who face literacy difficulties.

**64%** Lecturers felt the methodology, content, teaching, and learning materials are all important in the teaching of language and literacy



The top 4 methods lecturers felt are most effective for teaching literacy are all teacher led methods rather than student centered

- » Remedial Teaching
- » Frequent assessments
- » Homework
- » Revisions

## LECTURERS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT HOW WELL TEACHERS ARE PREPARED TO TEACH IN LARGE CLASSES AND AUTOMATIC PROMOTION OF PUPILS TO THE NEXT GRADE

Supporting student teachers is a vital part of the preparation process alongside the methodologies used in their coursework.



Lecturers felt student teachers were given adequate peer support during teacher training



Lecturers felt student teachers are trained on how to teach more than 40 pupils in a class



Lecturers felt automatic promotion of pupils from one grade to another has a negative impact on raising the reading and writing levels

## LECTURERS WISH TO BE MORE INTEGRATED INTO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AS A VALUED HUMAN RESOURCE

Literacy teachers need more training and peer to peer engagement to become more effective

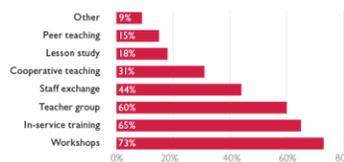


Lecturers comfortable teaching methodology and content for language and literacy



Lecturers received in-service training since initial teacher training

Type of help lecturers need to be more a effective literacy teacher



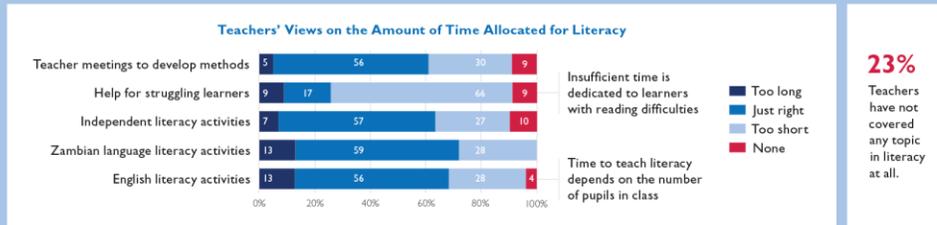
## POLICY ACTION POINTS

- » Lecturers should continue to have professional development on methods and strategies in teaching literacy and language.
- » Trainee teachers should be prepared to teach and manage large classes in response to the current reality in schools.
- » Class size standards should be reviewed and adhered to given the opportunities and constraints in the system.
- » Emphasis should be given to methodologies, content, and teaching and learning materials to enhance effective teaching and learning of literacy and language.
- » Automatic promotion and large class sizes may not be a teacher preparation problem but a policy issue to consider changing across the system.
- » Lecturers should be involved in pre- and in-service training efforts to ensure that the most up to date and best practices are spread throughout the system.

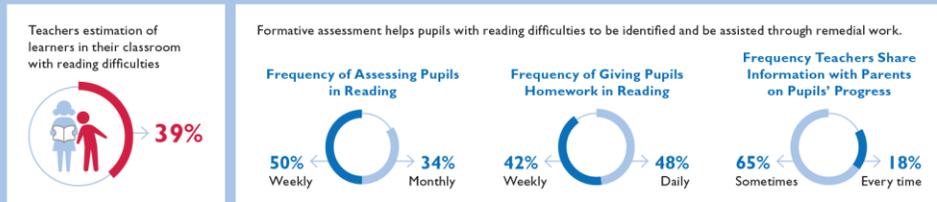
# TEACHING LITERACY IN SCHOOLS

Reading in the classroom is one of the main ways to teach literacy. A teacher needs to ensure a class is well managed to promote effective learning. The research is based on interviews and questionnaires to 37 administrators, 134 teachers, 137 parents, and focus group discussions with 157 groups of Grade 3 and 4 pupils.

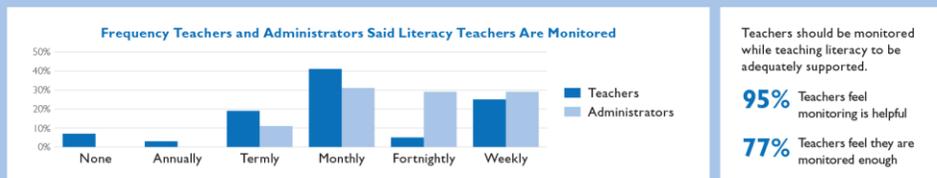
## TIME AND ACTIVITIES IN LITERACY



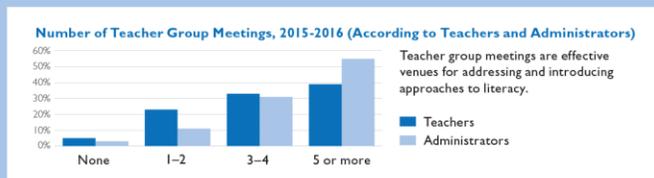
## ASSESSING PUPILS LEARNING AND LITERACY



## MONITORING THE TEACHING OF LITERACY



## EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHER GROUP MEETINGS



## POLICY ACTION POINTS

- » Ministry of General Education to develop literacy teacher/normal teacher ratio to ensure adequate literacy support to schools
- » Regular monitoring of teachers by standards officers to resolve pupil problems and plans for literacy activities

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