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USAID ZAMBIA EDUCATION FACT SHEET

OVERVIEW

A well-educated population is essential to stimulate economic growth, and reduce poverty. The government of Zambia has recently implemented reforms including large-scale teacher recruitments, elimination of secondary school fees, and localized school grants to achieve near universal access to primary education; however, progress on learning outcomes is not comparable. The most recent Early Grade Reading Assessment found that only four percent of Grade 2 learners achieved national grade level reading proficiency. Only 38 percent of students enroll in secondary education. Zambia faces challenges of inadequate resources, poor-quality of education service delivery and management. In addition, the education system lacks the resilience to continue teaching and learning during emergencies such as the Covid pandemic and the more recent cholera outbreak.

USAID collaborates with the Government of the Republic of Zambia to strengthen the quality of education service delivery and, ultimately, improve learner performance in the early grades.

Strengthening Children’s Ability to Read

USAID partners with the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of reading instruction. USAID’s Let’s Read activity supported the Ministry of Education to develop relevant literacy teaching and learning materials in seven local languages, provided comprehensive teacher training, supportive supervision, and coaching and mentoring, and strengthened classroom and national assessment capabilities to improve children’s literacy rates. USAID’s Let’s Read activity supports half of all primary and community schools in Zambia, reaching 1.4 million children in pre-primary through Grade 3. Through this activity USAID has provided textbooks and school libraries to nearly half of the learners in early primary grades in Zambia. USAID has reached nearly all Early Childhood Education-through-grade 3 primary school teachers, including many newly recruited teachers, with training on literacy instruction and effective child-centered teacher pedagogies and management. The complementary USAID Transforming Teacher Education activity partners with U.S. based higher education institutions to reform pre-service teacher training in Zambia’s ten colleges of education and two universities to better prepare primary school teachers to teach literacy.

Expanding Learning Opportunities for All Children

The Zambia public education system is increasingly challenged to meet the educational demands of a growing population. As a result of critical education reforms, the Zambian Ministry of Education estimates an additional two million children enrolled in school since 2020, flooding schools with first-generation learners and resulting in classrooms with varied learning levels. USAID partnered with the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab to support the Ministry of Education’s Catch-Up accelerated education program at all primary schools in Eastern and Southern provinces. This program trains teachers to implement the Teaching at the Right Level approach, which involves grouping students by assessed proficiency level rather than grade level and providing remedial learner-centered activities that helps them recover foundational skills in order to “catch up” to grade level. The Ministry of Education went on to scale the Catch-Up program nationally, with support from partners. An increasing number of Zambian families are turning to low-fee private, non-state schools.

An increasing number of Zambian families are turning to low-fee private, non-state schools. USAID’s EduFinance activity works to expand access to education opportunities by increasing access to finance in the education sector. USAID works with local banks and microfinance institutions to offer tailored loans to low-fee private, non-state schools, to families to pay school fees and related education costs, and to teachers. USAID also provides financial literacy and business development training to non-state school owners and provides quality improvement training to school staff to improve the delivery of education services.

Measuring Academic Achievement

USAID’s Education Data activity conducted a 2018 baseline Early Grade Reading Assessment and a 2021 follow-on midline assessment to measure children’s reading proficiency. The findings from the Early Grade Reading Assessment are used to inform education decision making. This activity builds the capacity of the Ministry of Education Examination Council of Zambia and supports the Ministry of Education to track and collect data to improve learning outcomes.

USAID’s Let’s Read activity supports the Ministry of Education to develop and implement standardized school based literacy assessments in nearly half of all primary schools. As a result teachers, parents and education administrators have digital access to real-time learning outcome data that can be used to inform education service delivery. In addition, USAID supports the Ministry to collect digital data on all primary schools.