

1 APPLICATION OF THE 20 PERCENT GRANT ALLOCATION FOR VOLUNTEER TEACHERS



Teachers play an extraordinary part in the lives of children for the formative years of their development and the importance of teachers is something that cannot be understated. They involve themselves in moulding their learners into responsible citizens of their country. In Community Schools, there were 8768 teachers (Education Statistical Bulletin 2022), the majority being volunteer teachers that have been providing teaching and learning services to Orphans and Vulnerable Children. And in recent years, Government started deploying qualified teachers to Community schools however, the teacher deficit in the sector still remains.

According to the UNICEF Budget Brief 2023, in 2021, the Government announced the plan to recruit 55,000 teachers over a five-year period and, in 2022, 30,496 teachers were recruited and deployed in schools across the country. In 2023, the Government intends to recruit an additional 4,500 teachers. This will not only reduce the unemployment backlog but will also improve education quality by reducing the pupil-teacher ratio currently standing at a national average of 58:1 as at 2022. The 58:1 is not only beyond Zambia's national policy target of 40:1, but beyond global norms and best practices related to class sizes and learning conditions.

Additionally, the Committee on Education, Science and Technology Report (for the second session of the 13th National assembly) on the Free Education Policy in Zambia: Opportunities and Challenges revealed that the number of teachers recruited was not commensurate to the increase in the number of learners arising from the implementation of the Free Education Policy, as the country already had a teacher deficit of about 115,000 before the recruitment. This meant that with the recruitment of 30, 496 teachers, Zambia still had a teacher deficit of 85,000, meaning more teachers needed to be recruited to effectively address the issues of pupil-teacher ratio in order to improve learning outcomes.

A Research commissioned by ZOCS on Understanding the changes brought by the implementation of the Free Education Policy in Zambia 2023, equally revealed that the Free Education had led to an increase in the learner enrolment, the increase had in most cases out passed the number of teachers required to teach these learners. This had led to an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio, leading to further administrative challenges. The research further highlighted that it was difficult for the teachers to process assignments leading to less work being given to the pupils, high teacher workload, and poor quality of learning outcomes.

Given such a scenario, volunteer teachers remain relevant in most Community Schools across the country. And ZOCS remains excited that among other things in the Guidelines for utilization of funds for schools under the Free Education Policy, Government allocated a 20 percent towards emoluments for workers not on payroll such as general workers and volunteering teachers.

To ZOCS' dismay, not all Community School managers were disbursing the 20% provided for in the Guidelines for utilisation of funds for schools. Monitoring reports revealed that Community Schools continue facing high attrition rate as volunteer teachers abandoned their classes due to lack of appreciation/incentives from both community members and Government despite the provision in the guidelines.

With that background, ZOCS is recommending to the Ministry of Education the following.

- Issue a directive to all schools for all Headteachers/school managers/accountants to use the grants as per the provided Education for all Grants Guidelines & Public Finance Management Regulations.
- All DEBS to thoroughly check that grants are correctly applied by schools and the 20% paid to the intended beneficiaries' failure to which the school managers should explain where they channel that allocated amount.

2 BOARDING SCHOOL FACILITIES - KEY IN EDUCATION ACCESS FOR VULNERABLE



This is the structure that is currently being used as a boys' boarding facility at Kalobolelwa Secondary School



This is the structure that is currently being used as a girls' boarding facility at Kalobolelwa Secondary School

Children of remote and rural areas have benefited from education in boarding schools. Boarding schools have enhanced children's educational foundation and in the case of Zambia, boarding facilities are a long school tradition at the secondary level. The distance from village communities to secondary schools continues to make secondary education inaccessible to many children. As a result, many children drop out of school after the primary level. In this context, boarding schools play a key role in providing secondary education especially for the vulnerable children.

In the case of Western Province where ZOCS is implementing the Education Action for Marginalised Children project that supports 400 vulnerable children with bursary, the majority of learners build pole and mud structures for shelter and prepare meals for themselves using food stuffs collected during weekend home visits. The accommodation conditions were not conducive. Looking at the project implementation districts, Mulobezi and Nkeyema had no boarding schools while Sesheke had one and Mongu had four. According to the Education Statistics Bulletin 2022, Western province had the lowest number (79) of Secondary Schools in Zambia compared to other provinces.

The above situation demands that an urgent response be in place especially that Government last year introduced the Free Education Policy. Once established, well managed and operated, like elsewhere, boarding schools, can/will yield benefits for learners, parents and educators. Furthermore, hostels will most likely allow girls from remote and rural areas of the country, where opportunity for obtaining secondary education does not exist, a chance to get an education. The facilities will equally allow for learners to have decent meals (a comparable diet than at home).

Given the aforementioned, there is an urgent need to do the following.

- Through CDF, construct boarding facilities to promote access to schooling. The primary goal of boarding schools is to increase access to learning opportunities of children from underserved and disadvantaged communities.
- Boarding facilities will complement and enhance Government's Free Education Policy by allowing children access education where distance is a barrier.

References

- *Committee on Education, Science and Technology Report (for the second session of the 13th National assembly) on the Free Education Policy in Zambia: Opportunities and Challenges Report*
- *Education Statistical Bulletin 2022*
- *Education for all Grants Guidelines & Public Finance Management Regulations document*
- *UNICEF Budget Brief 2023*
- *ZOCS Report on Understanding the changes brought by the implementation of the Free Education Policy in Zambia 2023,*
- *Interviews with Provincial Education Offices*