



ENSURING INCLUSIVE AND QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL

A Comprehensive Review of Community Schools in Zambia

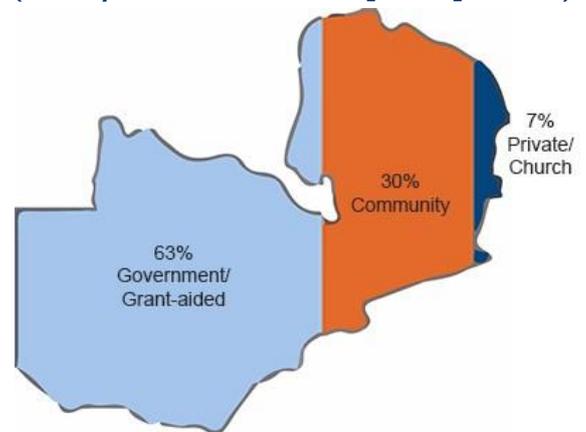
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INTRODUCTION

Community schools are the second largest provider of primary education in Zambia and thus play a critical role in the government’s efforts to achieve universal primary enrollment (**Exhibit 1**). Community schools are a grassroots strategy to serve disadvantaged populations, seeking to meet education needs in low-income urban areas and isolated rural locations, as well as for families struggling to meet the costs of their children attending school. Considering the indispensable role these schools serve in providing access to primary school in Zambia, **it is critical to look more deeply at the quality of this education and how the unique characteristics of community schools affect the learning environment.**

Exhibit 1: Distribution of School Types in Zambia (Ministry of General Education [MOGE] 2015a: 7)



There has been **growing concern about the quality of education provided in Zambia**, brought into renewed focus with Zambia’s commitment to the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), which reaffirmed the Education for All goals to provide inclusive and quality education to all children by 2030. Regionally, Zambia places at the bottom in terms of reading and math scores (Hungu et al. 2010). Zambia’s Grade 5 National Assessment Survey in 2014 showed less than 40 percent of learners meeting minimum standards for English, Life Skills, Mathematics, and Zambian Languages (**Exhibit 2**), and progress among all but private schools has been essentially flat since 1999. Surprisingly, government school learners tend to perform only slightly better than community school learners despite the fact that community schools operate with

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substantially fewer resources. However, average community school performance only provides part of the picture; **it masks the substantial variation that exists among community schools in terms of quality, with some far exceeding national averages, while learning at others is truly minimal.**

Study Approach

While a number of studies have examined community schools in Zambia, there has not been a comprehensive overview since 2006. Many of these studies focus on a narrow topic within the field of community schools, or have small sample sizes that impede the ability to generalize broadly. Misinformation regarding community schools also persists. For example, national figures for grade 7 exam pass rates are often cited as showing that community schools perform better than government schools. These data obscure the fact that only about 3 percent of community schools meet the strict requirements to be exam centers and thus overstate community schools' performance as a group. Consequently, **there is a need to synthesize findings across studies and data sources in order to present an accurate “big picture” and summarize the most important factors that will have bearing on current and future community school initiatives.**

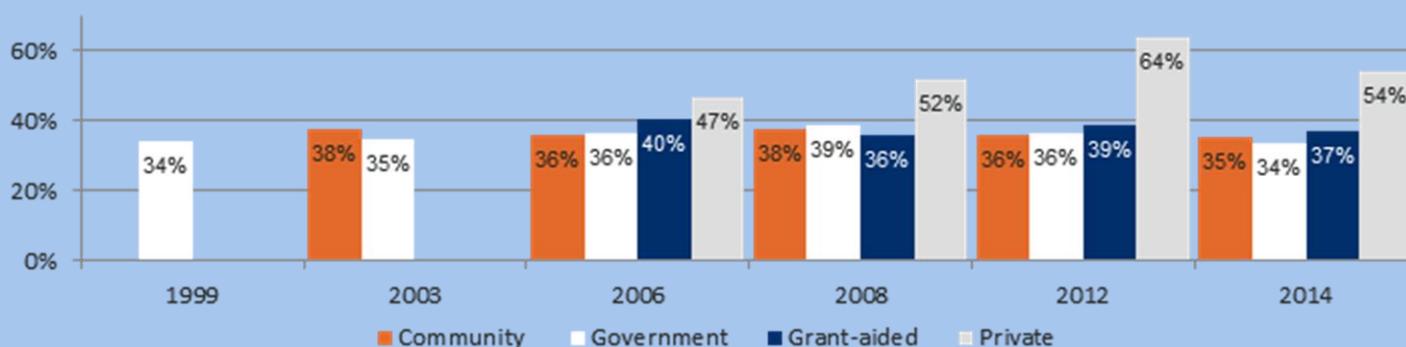
This study provides in-depth review of community schools, as they exist today, through the lens of two key questions:

1. What common factors characterize community schools as compared to the other three types of schools in Zambia?
2. To what extent do these unique community school factors support or hinder learning?

This study uses an exploratory approach to consolidate and synthesize the existing research and data from the Ministry of General Education (MOGE), civil society organizations working with community schools, the academic community, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Time to Learn (TTL) project's broad learning agenda from the last 4 years (2012 – 2016). TTL has worked with over 2,000 community schools located in 6 of Zambia's 10 provinces; its research and evaluation work has compiled two representative cross-sectional datasets (2012 and 2014) that include Early Grade Reading Assessment, classroom observation, and school demographic data, and conducted over 3 months of qualitative data collection. In addition, this study reviewed data and findings specific to Zambian community schools from over 45 reports and policies from government and other sources.

This report begins by situating community schools within the historical and policy context, followed by an examination of the particular characteristics of community schools (infrastructure and materials), sources of support (community, donors and MOGE), types of teachers, and finally learners themselves. The study concludes by considering learner achievement at community schools, examining what can be learned from community schools and what work needs to be done.

Exhibit 2: Aggregated Grade 5 Mean Performance in All Subject Areas by School Type*



*Community schools were first included in this assessment in 2003; private and grant-aided schools were first included in 2006.

Source: MOGE 2015b: 23

HISTORY AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Dr. Janice Steven, in collaboration with the Sisters of Charity, established the first recognized community school in 1992 (Chondoka 2006); it began with 48 girls learning under a tree in Misisi compound in Lusaka, an informal, low-income settlement lacking basic amenities, such as water and sanitation (Sampa and Gwaba 2014). Over the following decade, other communities across the country followed suit, founding their own community schools to address an increasing demand for education, particularly among poor and disadvantaged populations. This section discusses that expansion in the context of broader trends in the Zambian education sector and explores the current policy challenges for community schools.

Growth of Community Schools

Key Point

- Due to limited resources, the Zambian education sector has continually struggled to meet the education needs of its population.
- Community schools provide access to education to poor and vulnerable populations, becoming the second largest provider of primary education.



The education sector in Zambia has gone through a number of phases. In the period between Zambia's independence in 1964 and the move to a one-party state in 1972, the new government worked to forge a national education system by assuming increasing responsibility for running schools, including management, setting of standards, and financing. Enrollment rates increased and access to education expanded throughout these early years (Petrauskis and Nkunika 2006: 4).

Zambia's economic decline during the late 1970s into the 80s, precipitated by the fall of copper prices in 1976, had far-reaching effects on continuing investment in education. Drastic

structural adjustment programs in the 1980s instituted major cuts in public expenditure, and further aggravated the alarming increases in poverty among the majority of Zambia's population. The transition to a multi-party state in 1992 established a firm commitment to liberalization, promising economic revitalization through privatization of state enterprises and private sector expansion. Liberalization of the education sector had two significant changes for Zambian households: (1) large increases in user fees, which transferred a significant portion of education costs onto parents and guardians; and (2) increased numbers of private and community schools, which were now allowed to emerge and contribute more directly to the education delivery system (**Exhibit 3**) (Petrauskis and Nkunika 2006; UNICEF and UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS] 2014).

Exhibit 3: Official School Categories in Zambia

- **Government:** fully supported and operated by Government of Zambia
- **Community:** organized, owned, and operated at community level by a parent committee, may receive support from civil society organizations or government
- **Grant-aided:** run by organizations other than MOGE (often faith-based organizations), but with government teachers and assistance
- **Private:** run by private agencies and individuals and financed primarily through tuition; may be for profit or not-for-profit

Following liberalization's cuts to education expenditures, the quality of school infrastructure and teaching and learning materials declined, as well as teacher motivation due to poor conditions of service between 1991 and 2001 (Beyani 2013: 21). Urban schools became overcrowded, while education opportunities for rural areas diminished. The dramatic rise in unemployment

and a stagnant economy meant many families could no longer afford school fees and costs for items such as uniforms, shoes, books, pencils, and exam fees. The HIV/AIDS pandemic compounded these trends, increasing teacher shortages and the number of orphans and children caring for sick parents or working to support their families. A population boom combined with these intersecting developments resulted in an overall decline in enrollment and learner retention within the primary education system over the decade (Das et al. 2004: 20-21).

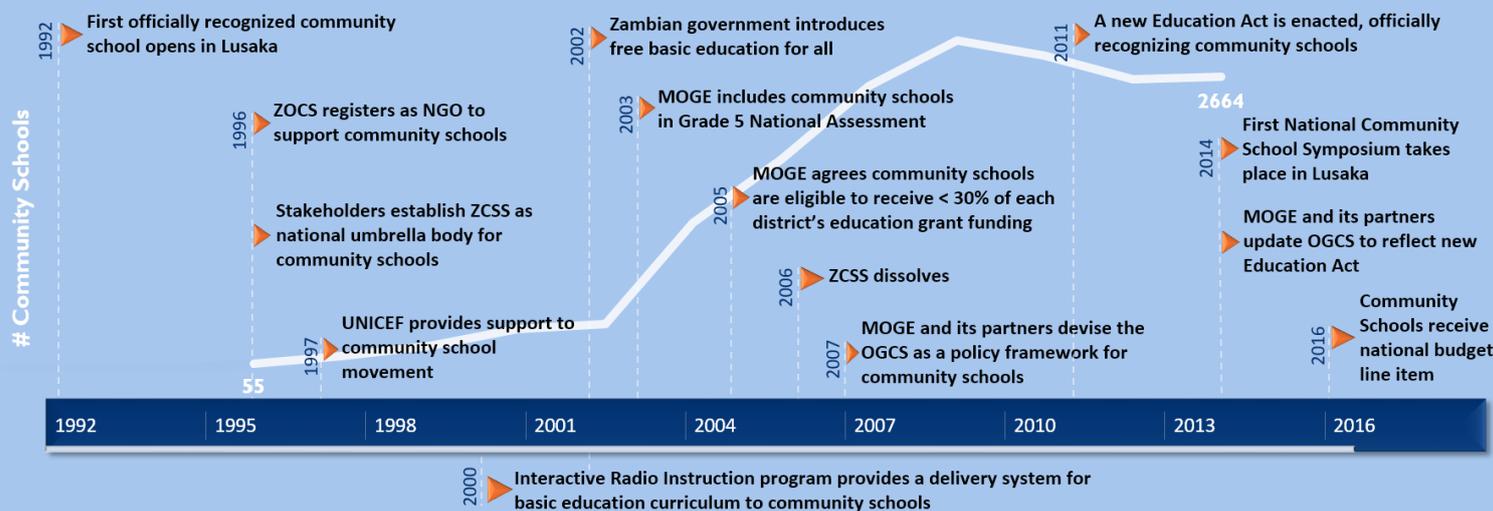
The turbulence in the education sector provided communities and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) an impetus for independent initiatives to provide low-cost or free education among marginalized populations. While reliable and consistent numbers of community schools are particularly difficult to determine, **Exhibit 4** indicates dramatic growth: from 55 schools in 1996 to 1,908 by 2004 and over 2,500 according to the official government count today (produced by MOGE annual school census). **Comparison to other data sources reveals the official figures likely severely underestimate the number of community schools actually operating;** TTL supports 2,307 community schools in the six provinces where it works, while the most recent annual school census counted only 1,851 schools in the same area (Frischkorn et al. 2016: 4). Including those additional TTL-supported schools would increase the proportion

of community schools from 37 to 42 percent of the primary schools in those six provinces (MOGE 2015a: 7).

In 2002, the Zambian government responded to the downward trend in primary school enrollment by instituting the free basic education policy, which aimed to remove all fees associated with attendance and lift the school uniform requirement for learners in grades 1-7. The dramatic change in policy resulted from a combination of local pressure and shifts in the international environment. Zambia became a signatory to the Millennium Development Goals and Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, which emphasized removing barriers to accessing primary education. The government allocated more resources to teaching materials, classroom construction, and hiring and training of teachers, which made considerable strides in addressing resource issues in the education sector (Beyani 2013: 24). **The free education policy and the emergence of community schools led to an increase in total enrollment** by more than 60 percent by 2005 and 80 percent by 2009 from 2000 (across all types of Zambian schools) (De Kemp and Ndaka 2011: 51, 55).

However, without the resources generated through school fees, the government grants for community schools introduced under ZCSS proved insufficient to cover operational costs of many government schools (Beyani 2013: 22).

Exhibit 4: Key Moments in the Growth of Community Schools in Zambia



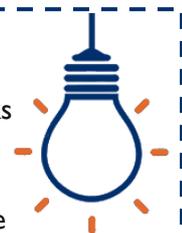
Source: Chondoka and Subulwa 2004; MOGE 2015a

Government schools began to collect a variety of other fees in contradiction to the policy of free education. The combination of these other fees and indirect costs (e.g., school uniforms and supplies) continued to keep primary education out of reach for some Zambian households (Petrauskis and Nkunika 2006: 4). An independent review of the Zambian education sector in 2006 found that, **while the number of children in school increased dramatically, equitable access remained a challenge, particularly for girls and poor and vulnerable children in peri-urban and rural areas** (Chileshe et al. 2007). It is in this context that the community school movement became a significant partner in the provision of basic education.

Policy Challenges for Community Schools

Key Points

- The policy environment lacks consistent implementation of support to community schools and clarity about the upgrading process.
- There is a danger that MOGE intervention may undermine the community-driven nature of community schools.



Early interest and investment by NGOs and donors supported the expansion of community schools, as seen in **Exhibit 4**. In 1995, Zambian Open Community Schools (ZOCS) became the first registered NGO to run community schools. By 2004, ZOCS was working with 17 schools, supporting a mentorship program between volunteer and government teachers; advocating for bursary support for orphans and vulnerable children; providing allowances for volunteer teachers; creating a microfinance program for parents and guardians; and empowering parent community school committees (PCSCs) through small grants (Sampa and Gwaba 2014). ZOCS found early donor support from UNICEF, which also funded development of a curriculum specifically for community schools in 1997 (Chondoka and Subulwa 2004). USAID supported an Interactive Radio Instruction program launched

in 2000, which lowered the barriers to opening community schools by providing a vehicle to deliver quality education without a skilled teacher and led to the growth of a number of radio centers, later becoming full-fledged community schools.

In 1996, ZOCS and the government, in coordination with the growing number of community school stakeholders, facilitated the formation of the Zambia Community School Secretariat (ZCSS) to provide structure and direction for the community school movement. By 1998, ZCSS had successfully gained official recognition of the importance of community schools within the education system and a MOGE commitment to provide community schools with access to funding, learning materials, teacher training programs, and government teachers (DeStefano 2006: 11; Miller-Grandvaux 2002: A-3). However, the ZCSS structure struggled to cope with rapidly increasing number of community schools and, in 2006, ZCSS was dissolved due to administrative challenges (Mwalimu 2011: 79).

The dissolution of the ZCSS left a void in national policy and coordination of community schools. Community schools were being founded without clear education standards, guidelines on operation, and defined procedures on establishment, registration, or upgrading to a government school (MOGE 2016:11). Support and coordination of community schools was left largely to donors, local and international NGOs, and proactive provincial and district education offices.

The MOGE acknowledged that many community schools were operating without their knowledge or assistance, resulting in “a situation where **the quality of education in community schools has varied tremendously across localities and running agencies because there have been no minimum standards that a school must meet for establishment**” (Ministry of Education 2008: 11). To fill this policy vacuum, MOGE, in collaboration with stakeholders, devised the *Operational Guidelines for Community Schools* (OGCS) in 2007. The goal of the OGCS was to: (1) guide MOGE officials and all stakeholders on their roles and responsibilities for management and coordination of community

schools, and (2) commit the Zambian government to infrastructure provision, teacher training, government teacher deployment, and equitable resource allocation to community schools. The guidelines are central to the system of community schools because they constitute the source of government policy explicitly focused on management of community schools. Unfortunately, the existence of the OGCS alone could not ensure a clear understanding and consistent implementation of policy towards community schools.

In the early 2010s, three factors combined to further support the community school agenda. First, the current ruling party, Patriotic Front, pledged in 2011 to upgrade community schools to fully-fledged primary and secondary schools (Patriotic Front 2011: 8), providing political support focused on community schools. Also in 2011, the first update to the Zambian Education Act since 1966 provided official recognition of community schools as one of four types of educational institutions, laying a legal foundation conducive to further policy improvement. Finally, USAID launched TTL in 2012 to strengthen MOGE's capacity to support community schools through its existing structures and systems.

In 2014, with TTL support, the MOGE revised the OGCS to reflect the new 2011 Education Act and further improve the policy framework governing community schools. Several of the key responsibilities of the government to community schools are noted in **Exhibit 5**. The 2014 OGCS clarifies the allocation of government grants to community schools, although it is quite limited in outlining the upgrading process.

Nevertheless, the Zambian government has embarked on upgrading community schools, despite the lack of official strategy and clear understanding of upgrading by all stakeholders. During the upgrading process, the community school is to receive infrastructure development, as well as government teachers, provision of grants, and school requisites (Macwan'gi et al. 2016). Yet ambiguity exists regarding how much support a school in the process of being upgraded should receive, at what point the process is formally completed, and how upgrading might shift

roles of the PCSC and volunteer teachers. Currently, upgrading is almost entirely a top-down process from MOGE with limited involvement by or input from community schools or their partners, even though this is in direct conflict with the 2014 OGCS. **Without appropriate care, community school advocates are concerned that community schools' aim and vision to provide education to poor and vulnerable children, and their community-driven nature will be lost.**

Exhibit 5: Several Key Responsibilities of MOGE to Community Schools

- Ensure that community schools are represented at all levels of decision making
- Deploy trained teachers to community schools
- Register community schools in line with defined procedures
- Provide equitable financial and material resources to all community schools
- Support infrastructure development to community schools
- Integrate community schools in all information management initiatives
- Monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in community schools
- Include community school teachers in Continuous Professional Development programs
- Provide technical support/capacity building to teachers in community schools to improve quality of teaching and learning
- Link community schools to the nearest school for mentoring, guidance and support

Source: MOGE 2016

COMMUNITY SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

This section focuses on community schools and examines the specific factors that combine to influence variation in learner achievement: PCSC administration, donor and MOGE support, community schools infrastructure and materials, teacher types and availability, and learner characteristics and performance.

School Administration

Key Point

- Community role and engagement via the PCSC are key and unique attributes of community schools.
- This role has the potential to influence school quality, but is at risk of being inadvertently undermined.



Community participation is a defining characteristic of community schools; this fact sets them apart from other types of Zambian schools, regardless of source of funding or who initiated the community school (e.g., local community, NGO, or faith-based organization). Each community school is managed and organized by the PCSC, composed of parents, community school head teacher and teachers, and prominent community members (MOGE 2016). These parent committees have key responsibilities, as outlined in the 2014 OGCS and shown in **Exhibit 6**; however, activities vary from school to school.

The PCSC-based system promotes ownership and community contribution to community schools, and represents a key attribute of community schools. Active PCSCs have sensitized parents on the importance of education, identified and recruited orphans and vulnerable children to attend school, mobilized parents and community members to support construction and rehabilitation of school infrastructure, and organized community members to attend school meetings (Kalembe 2013: 60).

Significant academic research regionally and globally has demonstrated the ability of parental involvement in school management to influence school quality (Barrera-Osoria et al. 2009; Ginsburg et al. 2014; Nielsen 2007). Research conducted on community schools in Zambia suggests a similar link between the parent committee and school quality: Falconer-Stout et al. (2014b) highlighted the significant potential of PCSCs to hold a range of school actors accountable, for example by ensuring teacher and learner attendance and lobbying local government for resources. However, even active PCSCs cannot alone overcome the limitations of poor teacher instruction and limited educational materials (Falconer-Stout et al. 2014b; Falconer-Stout and Kalimaposo 2014).

Exhibit 6: Several Key Responsibilities of the PCSC

- Support those teachers not employed by MOGE either in-kind or financially
- Support and encourage teachers to remain in the community
- Monitor and manage human, material, and financial resources
- Enroll learners at appropriate school age
- Ensure that learners attend school regularly
- Ensure safe and protective learning environment for all children
- Monitor quality of education by checking learners' exercise books
- Actively participate in school development projects
- Actively participate in resource mobilization (especially infrastructure development)
- Take an active interest in school governance issues

Source: MOGE 2016

A number of factors can affect PCSC involvement, including levels of competency and commitment among members, limited finances to work with, NGO or donor requirements, and relationships with the head teacher (Chondoka 2006; Falconer-Stout et al. 2014b; Nsapato and Chikopela 2012).

Local and international NGOs have conducted numerous trainings to improve PCSC skills in school management, record keeping, development plans, financial administration, and education policy (Chondoka 2006:13; Falconer Stout et al. 2015; Nsapato and Chikopela 2012). Nonetheless, PCSC members often feel underqualified to monitor teaching at the school and leave a critical piece of school quality to the head teacher alone (Chakufyali et al. 2008; Frischkorn et al. 2016; ZOCS 2013).

In many cases, the PCSC hires the head teacher, manages finances, and is responsible for teacher allowances (Gardsbane et al. 2013: 87). However, where financial contributions from the community are inadequate, teachers can leave and replacements may be difficult to find. While a common solution to the issues of supporting teachers is to deploy government-paid teachers to community schools or engage local NGO's support, these practices can diminish PCSCs' administrative and decision-making responsibilities (Falconer-Stout et al. 2014a; Kalemba 2013; Nsapato and Chikopela 2012; Sampa and Gwaba 2014). An increasing role of an NGO or the presence of a government-paid teacher can reduce the PCSC's role to mere participation in fundraising activities or provision of labor for building projects, minimizing their potential to influence and support school quality.

Volunteer Teachers

Key Points

- Community schools rely heavily on *volunteer* teachers, which can give rise to high turnover and instability in the classroom.
- Consistent allowances, mentoring, and in-service teacher training have been shown to significantly improve teacher morale and retention.



Along with PCSCs, the presence of volunteer teachers and head teachers has long been a hallmark of community schools, demonstrating local buy-in and making community schools a low-cost alternative to government schools.

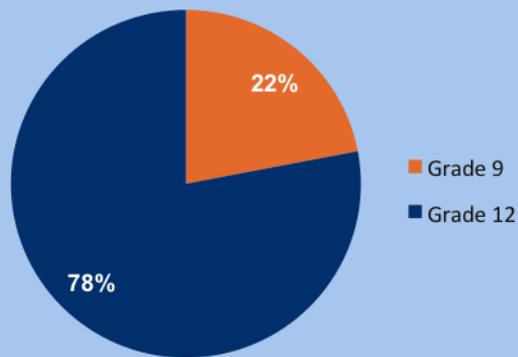
According to TTL's midline evaluation, volunteer teachers **constitute almost 60 percent of the teaching workforce in community schools** (Falconer-Stout et al. 2015). These teachers are considered 'volunteers' because they are promised small allowances or in-kind contributions. As volunteer teachers are typically recruited locally, their levels of dedication are often quite high, as well as their understanding of the local language and local needs (Beyani n.d.; Cashen et al. 2001; Frischkorn et al. 2016; Kalemba 2013). Many volunteer teachers are willing to work with a small salary because they feel invested in their community and in supporting children (Gardsbane et al. 2012: 5; Kalemba 2013:63).

While passionate about serving their communities, many volunteer teachers often find the compensation provided by the community to be insufficient to meet their daily needs and late, if provided at all (Cashen et al. 2001; Chakufyali et al. 2008; Nsapato and Chikopela 2012). As a result, **volunteer teacher turnover at community schools is high; among the 102 schools included in the TTL midline survey, average tenure was only 3 years** (Falconer-Stout et al. 2015).

Some schools operate on a "start-stop" basis, depending on the availability of resources for teacher support (Maambo and Chama 2014). Consistent, even if small, allowances from the community or donors have been shown to significantly improve teacher morale and retention in three USAID programs to support community schools during the 2000s (Chakufyali et al. 2008). Outside support from donors, however, raises concerns of sustainability of teacher salaries, particularly if MOGE is not involved in teacher support (Sampa and Gwaba 2014: 11).

Often from impoverished communities, volunteer teachers rarely have formal teaching credentials. A number of geographically bounded studies have found that the majority of volunteer teachers have attained grade 12 academic qualifications and, a much smaller percentage, only grade 9 (Bowasi 2010; Chondoka 2006; DeStefano 2006). Data collected during TTL's midline data also found this pattern (**Exhibit 7**) with 20 percent of these volunteer teachers having some type of pre-service teacher training.

Exhibit 7: Academic Qualifications of Volunteer Teachers



While large numbers of volunteer teachers are interested in enrolling in formal teacher training, Bowasi's study (2010) found that 65 percent of teachers lacked prerequisites and the vast majority (95 percent) came from poor households with no capacity to cover the costs. When community school teachers are able to access more formal training, they are often recruited for teaching positions in government schools where they receive higher pay and better amenities (Mwalimu 2011: 90).

Orientation and training of volunteer teachers varies widely across community schools, depending on school and head teacher. Well-managed community schools ensure new teachers receive training in classroom management, use of teaching and learning materials, and lesson planning (DeStefano 2006). However, high teaching loads and management functions often keep the head teacher from providing adequate and ongoing support to new teachers (Frischkorn et al. 2016).

As the community schools movement has matured, community school teachers have had better opportunities for in-service teacher training and continuous professional development. Yet attendance to these opportunities is often hindered by distance, travel costs, and exclusion by some zones or districts that do not perceive community schools as part of the school system (Frischkorn et al. 2016; Nkosha and Mwanza 2009; ZOCS 2013). Teachers found that attending district- or project-organized workshops has had a positive impact on their instructional practice (Falconer-Stout et al. 2013; Frischkorn et al. 2016). Nevertheless, **high rates of volunteer teacher turnover and low levels of**

education make it difficult, although not impossible, to sustainably build teacher capacity through vehicles of training and mentorship (Falconer-Stout et al. 2015; Frischkorn et al. 2016).

School Resources

Key Points

- Resources available to community school vary widely and significantly affect the learner environment.
- Teacher shortages have resulted in larger average class sizes, multi-grade classes, or teachers teaching multiple shifts, which can lead to limited learner-teacher contact and significantly shortened class time.



Community schools display a wide variation in school resources, but overall they tend to have fewer material and human resources than government schools. These limited resources have distinct impacts on the learning environment. While some community schools—typically those externally financed—are well resourced with solid construction and maintain permanent structures, the majority are missing key facilities, infrastructure, and teaching and learning materials. This situation, as well as its negative effects on learning, has been documented in numerous studies and reports about community schools over the years (Falconer-Stout et al. 2015; Nsapato and Chikopela 2012; ZOCS 2013). When communities finance and build their own school buildings, these structures may not meet minimum standards in regards to location, design, and materials (MOGE 2016). Some community schools are only partially completed structures; for example, walls without corrugated iron sheets or asbestos for roofs, or shelters constructed of local, temporary materials such as grass thatch or woven mats (MOGE 2016; Nkosha and Mwanza 2009). Nsapato and Chikopela (2012: 4) found that 59.3 percent of community schools sampled had classrooms requiring rehabilitation and 86.1 percent required construction of new classrooms to meet the needs of their learners.

Furniture and teaching and learning materials are regularly reported to be in short supply in community schools, and many schools lack appropriate water and sanitation facilities (Beyani n.d.; Chondoka 2006; Kucita et al. 2010; Nsapato and Chikopela 2012). Even though 79 percent of head teachers reported receiving some teaching and learning materials from MOGE during the TTL midline evaluation, they did not feel they had sufficient numbers (Falconer-Stout et al. 2016). In the follow-up performance evaluation, **teachers consistently complained that an insufficient variety and quantity of teaching and learning materials hindered their ability to teach literacy** (Frischkorn et al. 2016).

Community schools have also experienced deeper staffing constraints when compared to other school types, as seen in **Exhibit 8** that compares learner to teacher ratios across the four types of schools over time through 2009. More recent studies have placed the average ratio in community schools at 60 to 1 and at 45 to 1 in government schools within their samples (Falconer-Stout et al. 2015: 24; Maambo and Chama 2014: 22). However, community school learner to teacher ratios vary considerably from region to region, from rural to urban settings, and between schools. Some urban schools in wealthier districts have more teachers than necessary to meet the 45:1 target, while rural, poorer areas have far fewer, reflecting both teacher preference and, for MOGE, inefficient deployment of teachers (De Kemp and Ndaka 2011). For example, one community school reported a ratio of 171 to 1 in 2014 (Falconer-Stout et al. 2015: 24).

However, learner to teacher ratios alone do not capture the full picture of classroom circumstances. Due to large numbers of learners and limited classroom space particularly in the lower grades, schools practice double-shifting and even triple-shifting. This practice reduces contact time between teachers and learners to 2.5-3.5 hours, if shifts start on time and there are no staff meetings (Chileshe 2007; De Kemp and Ndaka 2011; MOGE 2015a). This is substantially below the Ministry-recommended 5 hours. Facing an inadequate supply of teachers, some schools have resorted to multi-grade classes, where one teacher teaches learners of different ages, grades, and abilities (MOGE 2015a: 44). These challenges are not unique to community schools; however, they are often more pronounced in community schools.

Community school teachers, facing high learner to teacher ratios, modify instructional practice accordingly: TTL's 2015 performance evaluation revealed **community school teachers often avoid what they perceive to be time-intensive activities, such as reading comprehension, even though it is a critical component of literacy instruction** (Frischkorn et al. 2016). Since most community school teachers teach more than one class, little time is left to prepare lessons or integrate what they have learned during training events into the classroom.

Donor Support

Key Points

- Donor support is uneven across community schools, leaving some schools over-resourced and most severely under-resourced.
- There is limited means to coordinate donor support to community schools.



Exhibit 8: Learner to Teacher Ratio by Type of School and Location, 2001, 2005, and 2009

	2001		2005		2009	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Government	59	37	66	44	56	39
Grant-aided	43	28	60	31	62	41
Community	-	-	58	54	73	59
Private	28	21	39	21	39	18
Total	57	35	64	41	58	38

Source: De Kemp and Ndaka 2011: 70

External funders, such as international donors, churches, and NGOs, have long played a pivotal role in community schools' development and support. Since community schools are often perceived as having a higher need (because they are community-owned and not guaranteed direct government support), they are more likely than government schools to receive charitable aid

(ZOCS 2013: 24). Support can take the form of trainings for teachers and PCSC members; investment in infrastructure and furniture, including sanitation and water facilities; and provision of teaching and learning materials. It can come through local NGOs, like ZOCS, which work and support the same schools over time, or through internationally funded projects providing more broad-based support through MOGE structures to distribute teacher trainings and teaching and learning materials to all community schools in its catchment area. In a number of situations, support is filtered through small local or international NGOs or faith-based organizations that may support a single school or provide one-off support as part of mission trips.

Efforts have been made to better coordinate support provided to community schools across this myriad of benefactors. This has been done through the Project Coordination Committee, composed of donors and MOGE, and a specific sub-committee on community schools. Yet some schools are still over-resourced, while many more are severely under-resourced (ZOCS 2013: 36). Local NGOs, such as ZOCS and People's Action Forum, focus on targeted provinces and districts to serve community schools. USAID, through its bilateral TTL project (2012-2016), has funded standardized support to all community schools in the six provinces, regardless of resources individual schools receive from other donors. Most community schools fall in the under-resourced category.

Impacts of this external support are sometimes difficult to determine. Even one-off support in the form of construction of classrooms or toilets; donations of desks, chalkboards, and educational materials; or provision of small grants to communities to improve infrastructure can be instrumental in creating a sense of stability within the school (Chakufyali et al. 2008: 35). Income-generating activities at the ZOCS' schools have encouraged parents to “a) start small businesses to supplement household income and b) become more involved in the day-to-day functions of the school within their own communities” (Mwalimu 2011: 169).

Direct, long-term donor support for schools can be very significant. Additional amenities (supported by donor funds) have been seen to

have strong effects on enrollment and completion rates, community participation at the school, and learner outcomes. Community school feeding programs in Zambia have attracted learners, encouraged family participation, and increased learner performance and completion rates (Kalemba 2013; Mwalimu 2011; Nsapato and Chikopela 2012). These types of visible benefits place community schools and education in a positive light in their communities. However, this type of targeted support is only present in a small portion of community schools and the long-term impacts are not fully known.

In many of these cases, detailed reporting on resource use is often required and schools are monitored closely, which also has an impact on quality of the schools and cost effectiveness (Kalemba 2013: 61). TTL's performance evaluations in 2013 and 2015 indicate that more targeted, ongoing school-level monitoring and support are necessary to ensure interventions have a positive impact on the school, and the quality of teaching and learner performance improves (Falconer-Stout et al. 2014b; Frischkorn et al. 2016).

MOGE Support

Key Points

- MOGE support to community schools, although increasing, but is still uneven and inadequate.
- Roles and expectations of government teachers at community schools are often unclear to PCSCs, volunteer teachers, and government teachers themselves.



MOGE's responsibilities, laid out in **Exhibit 5**, indicate its key intended role in supporting community schools. The OGCS enumerates 21 official forms of support (MOGE 2016: 18), which fall into seven categories of educational inputs: direct financial support, teaching and learning materials, free basic materials, continuing professional development for teachers and head teachers, monitoring teaching and learning quality and collection of basic data, infrastructure support (in terms of building materials), and government

teachers deployed to community schools (Falconer-Stout 2014: 34-35). One area of donor support has focused on building MOGE structures to institutionalize support to community schools, and build relationships between community schools and MOGE staff at provincial, district, and zonal levels (Chakufyali et al. 2008; Falconer Stout et al. 2013; Frischkorn et al. 2016).

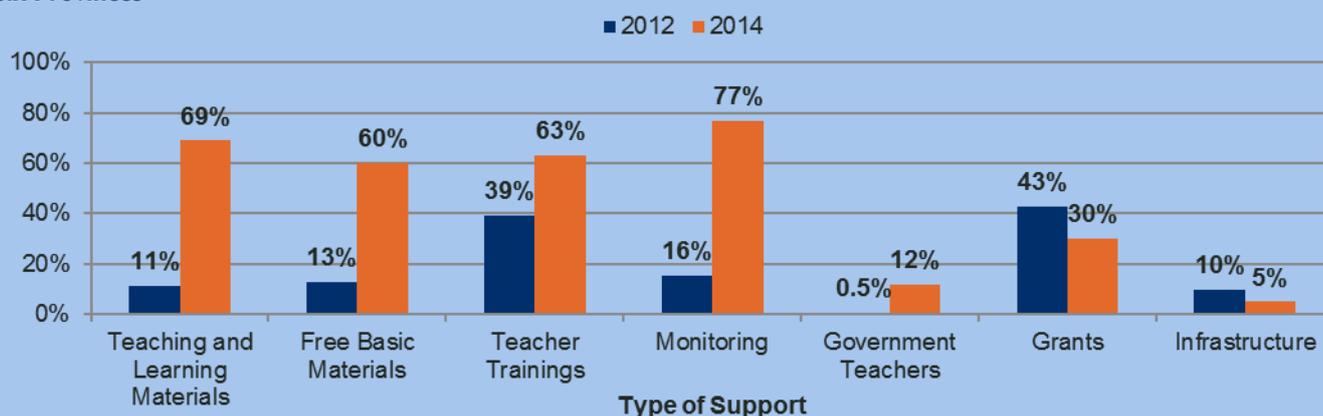
Community schools receive resources primarily through the district-level MOGE office (Chakufyali et al. 2008: 30-31; MOGE 2016: 30-32). Zonal schools frequently assist in delivering these resources and zonal in-service coordinators see monitoring community schools as a key component of their responsibilities (Falconer-Stout 2015: 37). District-level MOGE offices have organized continuing professional development, which includes community school teachers, delivered textbooks, and provided small grants (Kalembe 2013).

Community schools report they find these types of support helpful: teachers appreciate MOGE trainings as positively influencing their classroom practice and they similarly rely heavily on government-issued textbooks to design their lessons (Frischkorn et al. 2016). TTL evaluation data from 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 indicate that community schools in six provinces are receiving increasing amounts of support from MOGE in recent years (Falconer-Stout et al. 2013; Falconer-Stout et al. 2015; Frischkorn et al. 2016; Gardsbane et al. 2013). Overall, head teachers reported receiving significantly more types of MOGE support in 2014 than in 2012 (**Exhibit 9**).

However, resource allocations continue to be largely driven by the “goodwill” of district MOGE offices rather than the relative needs of community schools or MOGE policy (ZOCS 2013: 23). Disbursement of support is often uneven, and rests mainly at the discretion of district and provincial offices (Chakufyali et al. 2008; Zambian National Education Commission and ZOCS n.d.). A ZOCS’ (2013: 23) study noted that, “it is difficult to effectively track funds disbursed to community schools at the district level because there is no set or guaranteed amount that a school can expect to receive.” Examination of resource allocations in Lusaka and Southern provinces found that disbursements to community schools remained low compared to government primary schools (ZOCS 2013) (**Exhibit 10**).

The less tangible types of support MOGE is supposed to provide are harder to measure, but available data indicate variation in them as well. For example, the amount of monitoring a community school receives from MOGE officials is affected by distance and cost of travel, particularly remote schools (Frischkorn et al. 2016); this barrier has been an ongoing challenge since the early days of the community school movement, documented a decade ago by DeStefano (2006). Quality, formative monitoring of teaching practices is often lacking during visits, which can be a missed opportunity by MOGE to ensure quality of education at community schools (Frischkorn et al. 2016).

Exhibit 9: MOGE Support Provided in 2012 and 2014 as Reported by Head Teachers at 102 Community Schools in Six Provinces



Source: Falconer-Stout et al. 2015: 36.

Exhibit 10: Comparison of Basic School Disbursements Between Government and Community Schools in Lusaka District, 2012 (ZOCS 2013: 22-23)

Type of School	# of Schools	Amount Disbursed by district (K)	Average Disbursed per School (K)	% Disbursed
Government Schools	98	880,544	8,985	73.4
Community Schools	290	319,251	1,101	26.6
Total	388	1,199,795	10,086	100

With concerns about volunteer teacher turnover, MOGE has been more intentional about posting trained teachers to community schools countrywide (ZOCS 2013). The TTL midline evaluation found evidence this intentionality may be having results, with 26 percent of teachers in community schools being employed by the government (Falconer-Stout et al. 2015).

The addition of government-supported teachers at community schools bring substantial benefits. The presence of a government employee enables schools to access the grants provided by district education offices as direct funding rather than in-kind grants (Chakufyali et al. 2008: B:2). PCSCs and the community often organize the construction of the teacher’s house (a requirement to deploy a government teacher), which increases local investment in the school and the new teacher (Falconer-Stout and Kalimaposo 2014; Falconer-Stout et al. 2014b). The teachers are often designated as head teacher or “teachers in charge” providing technical leadership to the school.

The presence of government teachers in a community school can also create challenges. **Often PCSCs and volunteer teachers are unclear on the roles and expectations of government-paid teachers and this can undercut community involvement in the school.** In many cases, volunteer teachers, who were part of founding the school in the community and acted as head teacher for years, find their position suddenly taken over by a government teacher or are completely displaced (Macwan’gi et al. 2016: xiii). An in-depth case

study examining two community schools considered to have successfully weathered the transition to government teachers nevertheless found that: (1) presence of the government teachers diminished the engagement of the PCSC in school management and left accountability for educational outcomes to the “experts,” i.e. government teachers, and (2) community members and new teachers devalued the work of the volunteer teachers (Falconer-Stout et al. 2014a). The involvement of MOGE, particularly in the transition period, is critical in empowering the community, holding government teachers accountable, and orienting them to appropriately engaging the community (Falconer-Stout et al. 2014a).

The engagement of trained government teachers is often highlighted as a key strategy for improving educational outcomes at community schools (Beyani 2013; Chakufyali 2008; Chilufya 2009) and is a motivating factor in many community schools’ requests to district education offices for government teachers. However, there is no conclusive evidence yet that this strategy results in significantly higher learning outcomes, although there is potential for other benefits as highlighted in this section.

Learners and Learner Performance

Key Points

- Community school learners are generally older, come from poorer, less educated households, and experience high rates of absenteeism and dropouts.
- Learner performance at community schools is highly variable.



Research globally indicates that learners’ socioeconomic status and parental educational attainment affect academic performance and levels of attendance and absenteeism. These effects have been shown in Zambia as well. Absenteeism and dropouts are often linked to household poverty; out-of-school rates among primary school age children are 26.9 percent from the poorest families compared to 4.3 percent from the richest

(UNICEF and UIS 2014: ix). Poverty means learners suffer from hunger, malnutrition, and poor health, which can lead to absenteeism and withdrawal from school, and directly affect learning achievement (UNICEF and UIS 2014). Poverty also increases the pressure for children to work and earn an income for the household instead of attending school (Maambo and Chama 2014; UNICEF and UIS 2014).

Learners at community schools generally come from households that are more impoverished than those in government schools, especially in rural areas. This was first documented when community school learners were included in the 2003 Grade 5 National Assessment (Ministry of Education 2003). More recently, the 2014 Grade 2 National Assessment indicated that community school learners were more likely to belong to the lowest quintile in terms of socioeconomic status measured by household assets, and that learners with higher socioeconomic status tended to perform much better overall (Research Triangle Institute International 2015: 56).

The TTL midline evaluation found the average learner attendance rate at only 70 percent among the grade 2 classes sampled (Falconer-Stout et al. 2015). Nsapato and Chikopela's (2012: 11) survey of seven districts found that 91 percent of community schools reported problems with school dropouts.

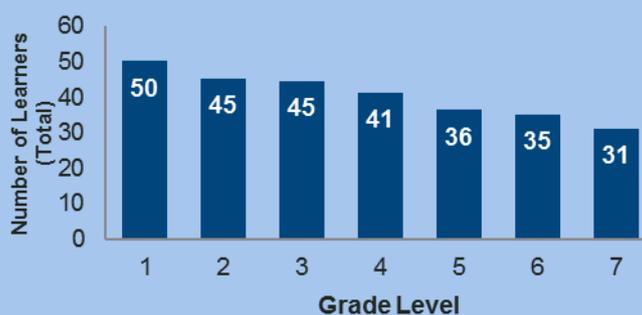
The 2003 Grade 5 National Assessment also found that half of the male guardians and over 60 percent of female guardians of community school learners had at most a primary school education, compared to 32 percent male guardians and 49 percent of female guardians of government school learners. Even with low levels of primary education, TTL's 2012 baseline study found that 83 percent of grade 2 learners have a household member who can read and more than a third of learners practice reading at home, even if the amount of reading material for children remains quite low in community school households (Gardsbane et al. 2013).

Community school learners tend to be older than the intended ages for enrollment. Zambia's official starting age for Grade 1 is 7 years old, although schools may enroll children as young as 5 and up to

9 years old (Nspata and Chikopela 2012: 36). Children should be completing grade 7 by age 13. TTL's midline revealed an average age of 9.55 for grade 2 learners, compared to the official age of 8, with 13.1 percent of the sample being 12 years of age or older (Falconer-Stout et al. 2015). UNICEF and UIS (2014: 3) found that the age disparity between community and government learners increases by the end of grade 7: more than half of community school learners are over 14 years, compared to 28 percent of government school learners.

The older ages of community school learners can affect their ability to move on to grade 8 because over-aged learners must go through a long process to gain eligibility to sit for the grade 7 exams (Kucita et al. 2010). The fact that they tend to be older indicates that they may experience additional factors that either delay the start of schooling or disrupt its progress. TTL's midline evaluation found the average enrollment in community schools decreased as the grade level increased (**Exhibit 11**), indicating that a substantial number of learners are either failing to progress or are exiting community schools as they move to higher grades (Falconer-Stout et al. 2015: 22).

Exhibit 11: Average Enrollment by Grade in 102 Community Schools in Six Provinces



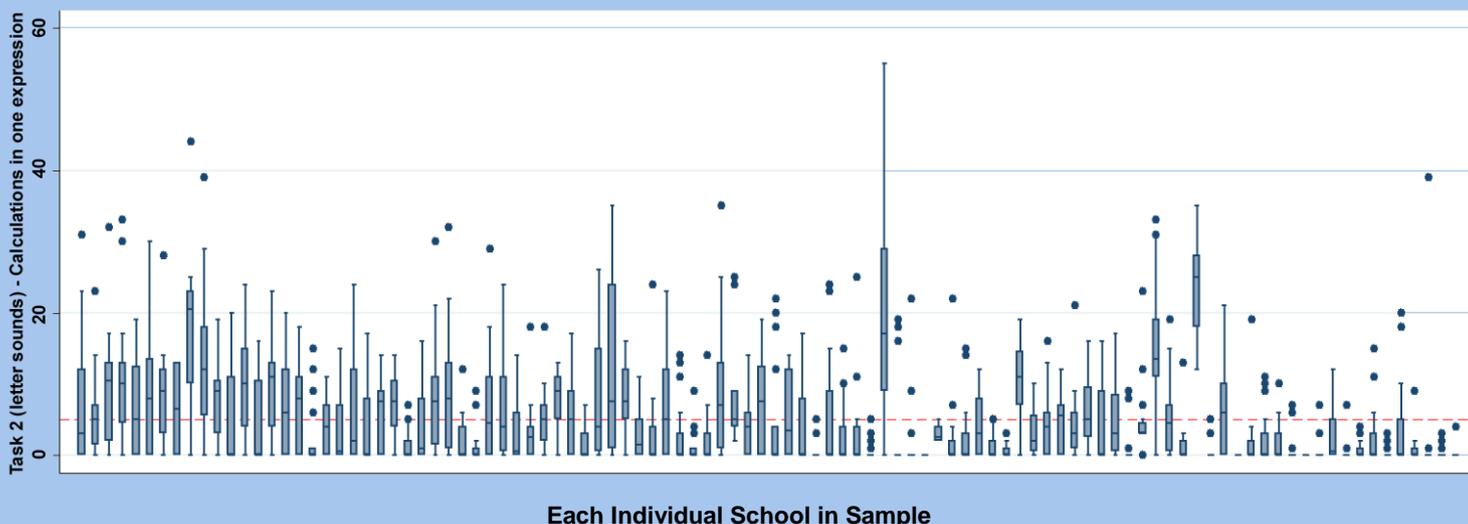
Source: Falconer-Stout 2015: 23

Learner outcomes in community schools show great variation. Primary-level community school learners, on average, perform similarly to (or only slightly lower than) government schools according to the Zambian Grade 5 National Assessment Surveys (see **Exhibit 2**). However, at least among community schools, these averages mask substantial variation. TTL's midline Early Grade Reading Assessment found that learning outcomes fluctuate widely from one school to the next: at

some schools, almost all learners scored near or at zero, while other schools had exceptional learning outcomes overall or in a subset of their learners. Two different distribution patterns among learners are evident: (1) scores clustering tightly together either at the high or low end of the performance spectrum, indicating the school was achieving fairly consistent educational outcomes across learners, and (2) a wide range of reading scores within the same school, suggesting that while a few learners were doing well, many were being left behind. **Exhibit 12** illustrates these two patterns, with each vertical line representing a single school. Some schools demonstrate a shorter vertical band, meaning more consistent scores across their learners. The blue box for each school represents the values

between the 25th and 75th percentile, while the thin vertical line represents the farthest points that are not outliers (“adjacent values”) and the dots represent outlier learner scores. The red dotted horizontal line represents the average score across all learners, reflecting schools’ wide variation around this overall low performance, and the extent to which many schools themselves are outliers. **The practical implication of this school-level diversity is that community schools cover a broad range in terms of quality; while some are among the top performers in the country, at others there is very little, if any, learning occurring.** This diversity reflects the similar pattern observed across schools in terms of resources.

Exhibit 12: Distribution of Letter-sound Scores by School (Letters per Minute) in 102 Community Schools in Six Provinces



**The dotted red line indicates the average across all learners.*



CONCLUSION

Community schools are contributing substantially to Zambia's effort to provide education for its children as the second largest primary school provider by enrollment. This study has reviewed the history that gave rise to the current community school movement and policy framework. It has examined the current status of community schools vis-à-vis other school types in Zambia in terms of the common determinants of education outcomes, such as teachers, school governance, and learning material base. Combined, this study provides an in-depth and comprehensive review of what is collectively known about community schools today.

In considering future strategies to support community schools and strengthen their role within the Zambian educational system, a number of considerations should be taken into account if community schools are to achieve the transformative potential of education to mitigate the impacts of poverty and social disadvantage.

Community schools are not a homogeneous group. This means improving performance of community schools requires more than a "one size fits all" approach, and will need increased and targeted coordination from MOGE and other partners. The use of average learner performance actually masks a wide variation in terms of the quality, with some far exceeding national averages, while learning at others is truly minimal. Community schools are typified by a great deal of variation in inputs, learner characteristics, and educational outcomes.

Community schools face significant challenges related to resource availability and learner background, in excess of those faced by other Zambian schools. Due to constraints in school resources and teacher retention, and effects of low socioeconomic status of learners, it is very possible that it will be more difficult to improve the quality of education delivery at community schools than in government schools where these limitations are not as severe.

While national policy towards community schools provides a good frame, implementation is not consistent. Better messaging and accountability are needed, particularly at district MOGE offices. Over time, the MOGE has taken increasing responsibility for the management and financing of community schools. Yet there is still inconsistent distribution of resources to community schools and confusion regarding the upgrading process. Further, general understaffing at MOGE negatively affects the ability of staff to manage all their official supervisory duties, including monitoring quality at community schools.

The level of community involvement in managing school affairs is a key feature that sets community schools apart. This heightened level of oversight strengthens accountability for all parties involved, including teachers, learners, and the government. This means that it is important to consider how to maintain this strength when providing external support, such as placing a government teacher and upgrading a school.

While some community schools have shown it is possible to provide quality education, there remain many practical constraints for the majority of community schools to improve quickly enough to benefit the current generation of children. The schools that are already successfully navigating this change should be studied further in order to learn from success. In addition, effort should be made to improve the overall data quality around community schools to ensure evidence-based decision making.

In order to achieve *quality and inclusive education* in Zambia, it will be necessary to address educational inputs in community schools, as well as government schools. Only by building on what works in community schools can Zambia ensure an inclusive and quality education for all.

Acronyms:

MOGE	Ministry of General Education
NGO	nongovernmental organization
OGCS	Operational Guidelines for Community Schools
PCSC	Parent Community School Committee
TTL	Time to Learn (project)
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZCSS	Zambia Community School Secretariat
ZOCS	Zambia Open Community Schools

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