

EDUCATION BUDGET BRIEF

DEALING WITH NEW DEMANDS EMANATING FROM THE 'EDUCATION FOR ALL' POLICY

unicef 
for every child

2023

KEY MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1

The provision of free education from early childhood education to secondary school level affords an opportunity to millions of learners, especially the disadvantaged from low-income families, to access education. However, despite the recruitment of 30,000 teachers in 2022, the continuing shortage of teachers and inadequate school infrastructure, amenities and materials heightens the scarcity and overcrowded nature of Zambian classrooms.

RECOMMENDATION:

Innovative financing mechanisms are required to augment the increased budget allocation to build more education facilities and recruit even more teachers. This includes having stronger links to the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) to enable the construction of extra classroom blocks, teachers' houses and ablution blocks in schools.

2

The Government of the Republic of Zambia and its development partners are investing significantly less resources in the early years of life (0-6 years) compared to older children. From 2016 to 2020, the Government spent an average of K397 and K406 per child under 2 years and between 3-6 years of age, respectively. This is compared to K2,123, and K1,485, per child between the ages of 7-17, and 18 to 22, respectively.¹

RECOMMENDATION:

The Government should reorient social sector budgets to ensure that the early years get a fair share of available public resources. A body of evidence exists to show that investments done in the formative early years achieve considerably more returns than those made later in life.

¹ 2022 Heckmann Analysis.

3

There has been a 28 percent nominal increase in the education budget in 2023. The budget allocated to education as a share of the total budget (13.9 percent in 2023) has increased but remains below international commitments.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Government needs to increase the share of the allocation to education and prioritise education in budget decision-making processes, by spending the maximum available resources towards education.

4

As more children are being enrolled, the poor education performance – partly epitomized by high levels of functionally illiterate and innumerate learners at the primary school level – is a matter of concern that needs to be addressed.

RECOMMENDATION:

This calls for urgent attention to improved quality of education through improved curricula and increased financial investments in improving pedagogical practices and facilities at the primary school level and even earlier through Early Childhood Development to ensure a better foundation and aptitude for learning.

5

School closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in learning losses and, for over 1 million vulnerable children in the most deprived districts relying on the Home-Grown School Meals programme, led to learners being deprived of nutritious meals; a situation likely to affect their learning outcomes. To minimise disruptions, better emergency preparedness is called for.

RECOMMENDATION:

In addition to regular school budgets, there is need for explicit education recovery strategies to be funded to ensure overall curriculum adaptations to ensure continued learning for students, targeted intensive accelerated learning programmes as well as designated sites in communities where school meals could be served during school closures.

6

The composition of education spending, though still dominated by emoluments, shifted towards transfers and subsidies to fund free education and creates room to spend on other education needs such as purchase of textbooks, construction of classrooms and additional desks. This allocation to transfers however reduced in 2023. Significant increases to transfers and subsidies need to be protected by timely disbursement and effective budget execution processes.

RECOMMENDATION:

To improve execution rates, a thorough review of what causes low budget execution rates is warranted. This includes dealing with lengthy and administratively cumbersome disbursement processes.



INTRODUCTION

This Education Budget Brief explores the extent to which the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) will support the educational needs of the country in 2023. The brief analyses the size and composition of budget allocations to the education sector for the fiscal year 2023, as well as spending trends for the past few years, in order to inform policy, strategies and legislation to tackle educational challenges compounded by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Education spending is not restricted to expenditures under the Ministry of Education.

Education spending includes agricultural training institutions such as the Zambia College of Agriculture under the Ministry of Agriculture, Zambia Institute of Animal Health under the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock, and Chalimbana Local Government Training Institute under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Other education spending is under the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts, which funds youth resource centres and Ministry of Community Development and Social Services' community skills development centres dotted across the country.



OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR

EDUCATION SECTOR POLICIES, STRATEGIES AND PROGRAMMES

The education sector's targets and priorities are articulated within the context of national and international targets. These include the Vision 2030, the 2022-2024 Medium-Term Budget Plan and the 2022 Budget which provided the policy direction for the 8th National Development Plan, and Sustainable Development Goal 4 to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". The focus in the medium term is to increase access to education, improve the quality of education while promoting equal opportunities for girls, learners with disabilities and vulnerable children and youth.

Access has been increased through the extension of the Education For All policy and building of additional school infrastructure. The Government extended the Education For All policy from primary education to early childhood education and secondary education. The Government also planned to commence the construction of 120 secondary schools in 2022 and 2023 which is being financed by the Zambia Education Enhancement Project (ZEEP). In 2022, the Government also planned to establish 270 ECE centres and hubs and by the end of the year established 423. In 2023, the Government plans to construct another 500 ECE centres and hubs across the country.

The quality of education will be enhanced through the planned recruitment of more teachers. 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 ratios. The Government has also ensured that teacher recruitment is based on a decentralized, transparent and location-specific process that engages all four tiers of the MoE – including the school, district, province and central Ministry of education. The Government has

prioritised the recruitment of primary school teachers whose pupil-teacher ratio currently stands at a national average of 58:1 as at 2020² which 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. Of those recruited in 2022, 25,736 or 84 percent are primary school teachers; this is followed by 2,694 or 9 percent secondary school teachers and 2,066 or 8 percent ECE teachers.

Government plans to promote equitable opportunities for girls, learners with disabilities and vulnerable children and youth. To promote equitable opportunities for quality education, the Government will continue expanding the Keeping Girls in School programme to address challenges that the girl child faces such as walking long distances to school, early marriages, menstrual hygiene and unwanted pregnancies. In 2022, the Government introduced a bursary scheme for vulnerable learners in secondary schools as well as skills development for vulnerable youth. The determining of eligible candidates for the bursary has been decentralized and is done through the Constituency Development Fund, administered through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.

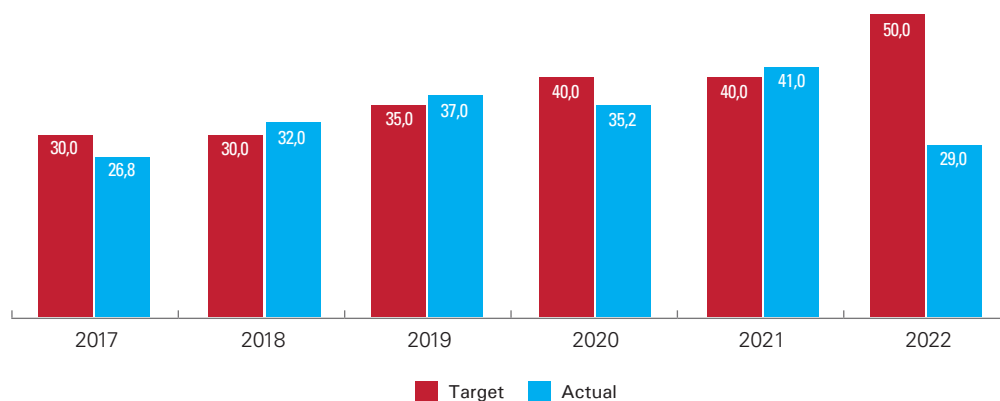
Enriching requisite skills for the labour market will be achieved through the reorganisation of the legal and policy frameworks. The Government aims to enrich development of requisite skills for the labour market through the re-organisation of the legal framework and implementation of the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) policy launched in 2020 that gives new focus towards skill building through enhanced access to quality skills training and equity. The Government will also prioritise the implementation of the Entrepreneurship Development Strategy as well as enhance the collaboration between TEVET, the private sector, other key stakeholders as the major players in entrepreneurship development.

EDUCATION SECTOR PERFORMANCE

This section reviews the education sector performance in 2022, and particularly focuses on the programme outputs outlined in the 2023 Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure (“Yellow Book”).

Only 29 percent of Grade 1 entrants who were enrolled in 2022 had pre-school experience. This is a decline from 40 percent in 2021. This implies that 3 out of 4 children did not attend Early Child Education (ECE) and the country is likely to miss out on a critical early learning opportunity. Inequalities are likely to arise as a result of some children benefitting from ECE while others will enter primary education without this important boost to their learning potential. Figure 1 shows the target and actual percentage distribution of Grade 1 entrants during 2017-2022.

FIGURE 1: PERCENTAGE OF GRADE 1 ENTRANTS WITH ECE EXPERIENCE, 2017 - 2022

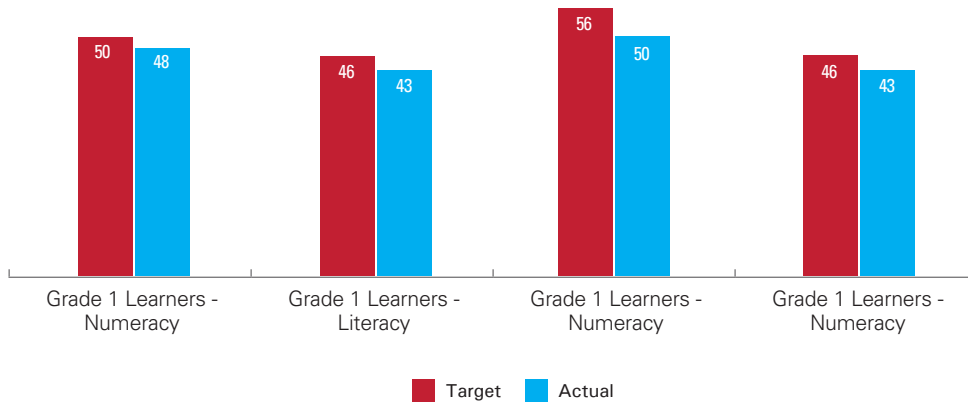


Source: Constructed from Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure (“Yellow Book”), 2023

² Calculated using EMIS 2020 data. Similarly, the 2020 Education Statistical Bulletin by the Ministry of General Education shows a PTR of 56.5:1, or around 57:1

Basic literacy skills are a learner’s gateway to success in school and beyond. Reading is a necessary prerequisite for learning in other subjects. Therefore, children who are unable to read in the early grades are more likely to fall behind across academic domains overtime, which will be evidenced by repeating grades and eventually dropping out of school. The proportion of the numeracy of the learners in both Grade 1 and 4 in 2021 stood at 48 and 50 percent, respectively. Literacy rates were lower at 43 percent in each of the two grades. Figure 2 shows the proportion of learners with the targeted and actual competencies in literacy and numeracy.

FIGURE 2: PROPORTION OF LEARNERS WITH REQUIRED COMPETENCE IN NUMERACY AND LITERACY AT THEIR RESPECTIVE LEVELS



Source: Constructed from Ministry of Finance: Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure (“Yellow Book”), 2023



- As enrolment increases due to free education, the low numeracy and literacy skills levels of learners at Grade 1 and 4 levels calls for a review of pedagogical practices to determine and address the reasons for the low literacy and numeracy levels.

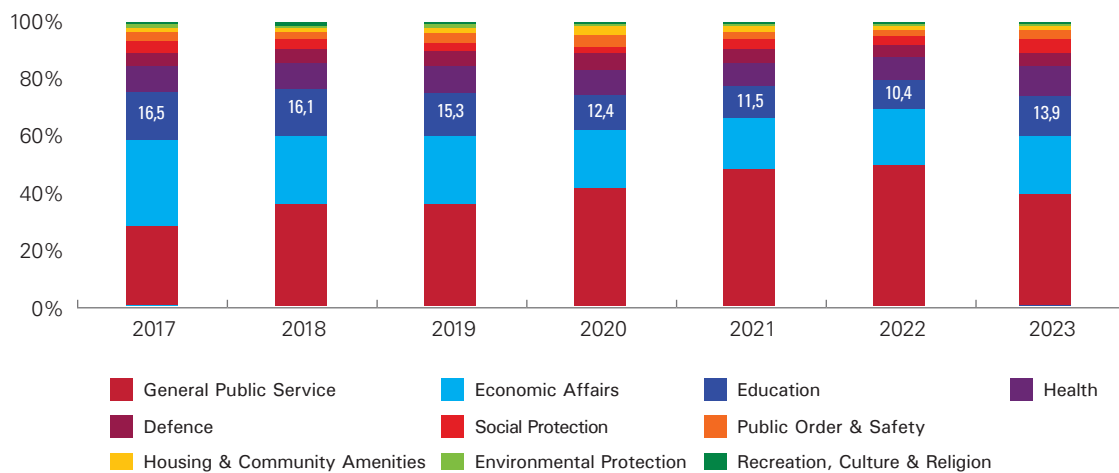
TAKEAWAY



SIZE AND SPENDING TRENDS

As a share of the total budget, the education budget has increased from 10.4 percent in 2022 to 13.9 percent in 2023. The education budget has risen by 28 percent. Expressed in current prices, government expenditure on education is projected to grow from K18.1 billion in 2022 to K23.2 billion in 2023, an increase of 28 percent. The increase is largely driven by the additional recruitment of 4,500 teachers and the priority for the deployment of these teachers will be given to rural areas. The increase can also be attributed to Government’s plans to complete the construction of 56 ECE centers, construction of 120 new secondary schools countrywide as well as completing abandoned school infrastructure from the past 12 years. The allocation of the budget to education is the third largest expenditure function after General Public Services and Economic Affairs (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3: EXPENDITURE BY FUNCTION SHOWING POSITION OF EDUCATION SPENDING, 2017-2023

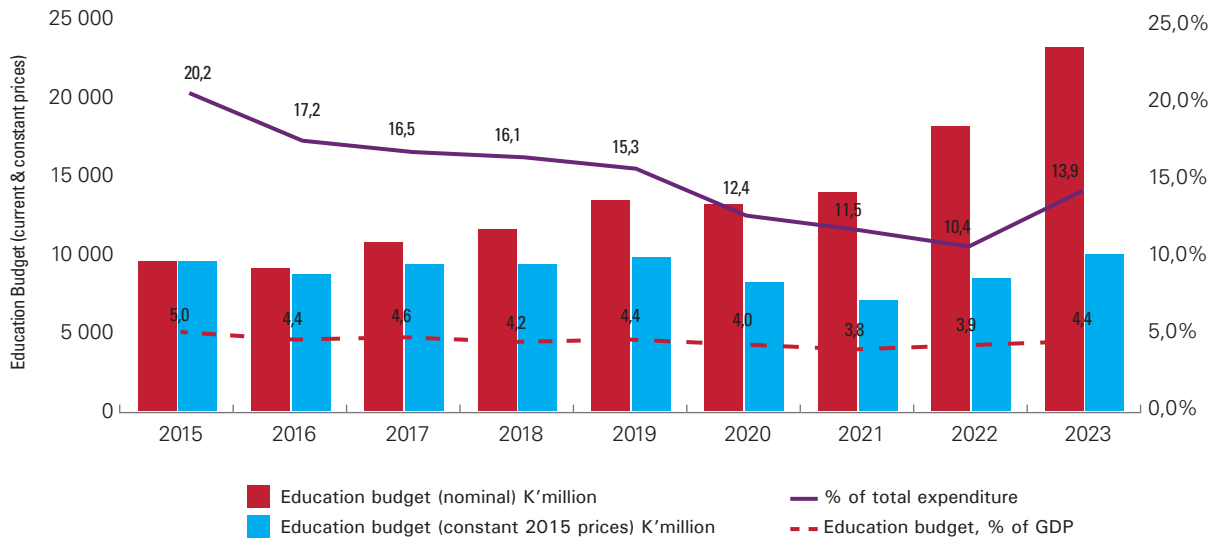


Source: Constructed from Ministry of Finance Annual Budget Speeches, 2017-2023

As a percentage of GDP and in real terms, the education budget is projected to increase in 2023.

Education spending is expected to increase to 4.4 percent in 2023 from 3.9 percent in 2022. At constant 2015 prices, the education budget is also expected to increase by 17 percent from K8.4 billion in 2022 to K9.9 billion in 2023³ (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: TREND OF PUBLIC EDUCATION EXPENDITURE BUDGET, 2015-2023



Source: Constructed from Ministry of Finance Annual Budget Speeches, 2017-2023; Zambia Statistics Agency, Consumer Price Index, and author's own estimates

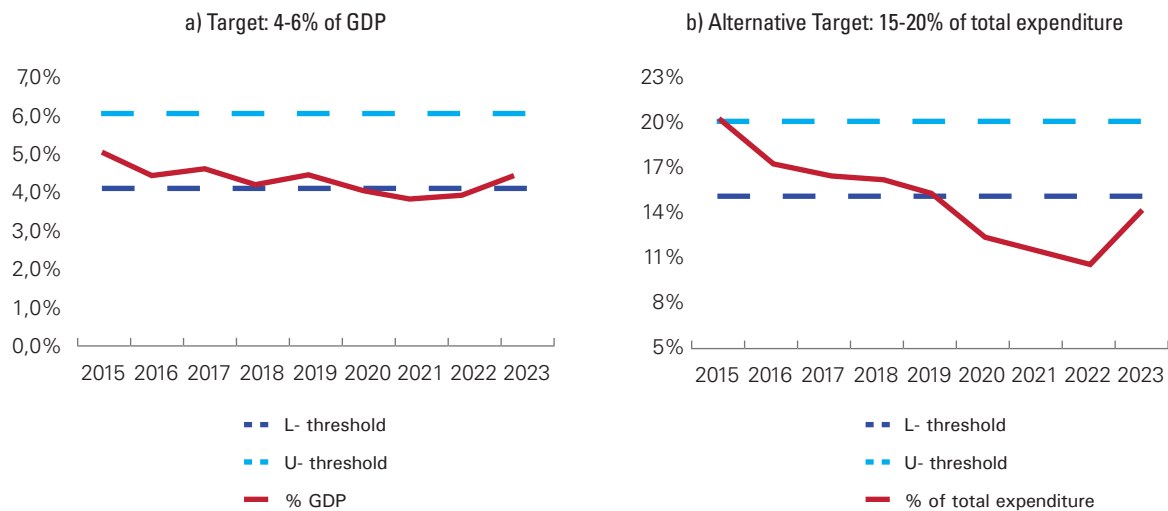
However, after being on the decline for three years, funding for education as a share of the total budget has increased in 2023.

Despite education consistently being among the top three expenditure allocations by function, the share of the budget allocated to education has steadily been declining from 2019 but increased in 2023. As a share of the total budget, the allocation to education has increased by 28.3 percent from K18.8 billion in 2022 to K23.2 billion in 2023.

The allocation to education is still below the recommended global commitments in one aspect. Under the Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action, a global plan agreed by countries in 2015 for the implementation of SDG 4, countries pledged to spend 4-6 percent of GDP or 15-20 percent of the total budget on education. In 2023, education spending was at 4.4 percent of GDP which is in line with the global recommendation. However, as a share of the total budget (13.9), the education budget remains below the lower threshold of the Incheon benchmark (Figure 5).

³ The constant price estimate for 2023 is based on the Bank of Zambia Monetary Policy Committee projection of 8.5 percent average inflation in 2023 (Source: Bank of Zambia, Monetary Policy Statement, November, 2022)

FIGURE 5: INCHEON DECLARATION THRESHOLD VERSUS LEVEL OF EXPENDITURE, ZAMBIA, 2017-2021



Source: Illustration based on the Incheon Declaration thresholds and Zambian education budget

ADEQUACY OF BUDGET

The abolishment of school fees creates a financing gap that will have to be met by the Government itself, hence requiring timely and regular disbursements of grants to schools.

While the move to provide free education is welcome, the loss in income from tuition fees and PTA contributions implies that the schools will now be wholly dependent on the Government for meeting most non-wage expenditures. Schools will now have to rely on disbursements of grants from the Government, as opposed to the previous situation in which school fees were directly collected from learners and monies were readily available for use. In order to mitigate poor budget execution and ensure school operations are not compromised, grants commitments must be fully met and disbursed in a timely manner.

The Government’s plan to build 120 secondary schools in 2023 will greatly contribute to improving access to education. There are currently about 9,400 primary schools against 1,300 secondary schools, translating to eight primary schools for every one secondary school (Text Box I provides more details). The government intended to build 120 secondary schools in 2022, of which 60 are still currently under construction and will be completed in 2023. The government plans on constructing 120 more secondary schools in 2023.⁴ Additionally, these new schools will need to be adequately resourced with school teachers and equipment.

The recruitment of 30,000 teachers in 2022 and additional recruitment of 4,500 teachers in 2023 will help alleviate the challenge of teachers that have been stretched due to teacher shortages and the burden of the high number of children that have returned to school due to the Education For All policy. Significant financial resources are still required to not only meet the emoluments but also housing, requisite school materials, teaching and learning materials and textbooks and other amenities for teachers.

⁴ 2023 Yellow book

TEXT BOX 1

The quest for more schools

According to the 2020 Educational Statistics Bulletin, substantial declines in enrolment are evident across most grades, but especially after the examinations in Grade 7 and again in Grade 9. Enrolment decreased by about 4 percent across primary grades, and then falls by 39 percent between Grade 7 and Grade 8, and by a further 51 percent between Grade 9 and Grade 10. The numbers in Grade 8 are around 164,000 less than those in Grade 7, and Grade 10 enrolment is around 130,000 less than in Grade 9. The examinations at Grade 7 and Grade 9 prevent progression to higher grades, and increase grade repetition.

Another constraining factor is the limited number of schools offering subsequent higher grades. The planned construction of 120 secondary schools will increase access to secondary school education and reduce the declines in enrolment at Grade 8 and Grade 10. But significant investments over the medium- to long-term are required to bridge the gap.

FIGURE 6: ENROLMENT OF LEARNERS ACROSS GRADES, 2020



Source: Constructed from Ministry of Education – Education Statistics Bulletin, 2020



- The education budget has been increased to meet additional needs of the provision of free education, but significant resources are still required.

TAKEAWAY

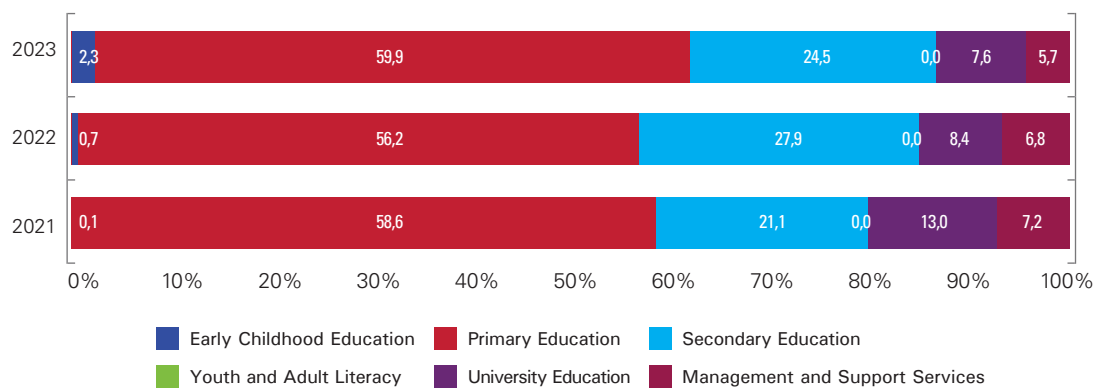


COMPOSITION OF EDUCATION SPENDING

SPENDING BY EDUCATION PROGRAMME

More than half of the education budget is allocated to primary education. Primary education accounts for more learners than any other level of education. In 2020, over 3.4 million learners were enrolled in primary school compared to 889,000 enrolled in secondary school, and about 258,000 ECE learners⁵. In 2023, primary education accounted for 59.9 percent of funds allocated towards education. On the other hand, secondary education accounts for 25 percent of the education budget allocation, a reduction from 28 percent in 2022. Tertiary education was allocated 8 percent and ECE was allocated 2.3 percent which is an increase from 0.7 percent in 2022. In 2023, the Government plans to spend approximately K3,557 per primary school child from K2,330 per primary school child in 2022.

FIGURE 7: COMPOSITION OF EDUCATION BUDGET BY PROGRAMME, 2021-2023



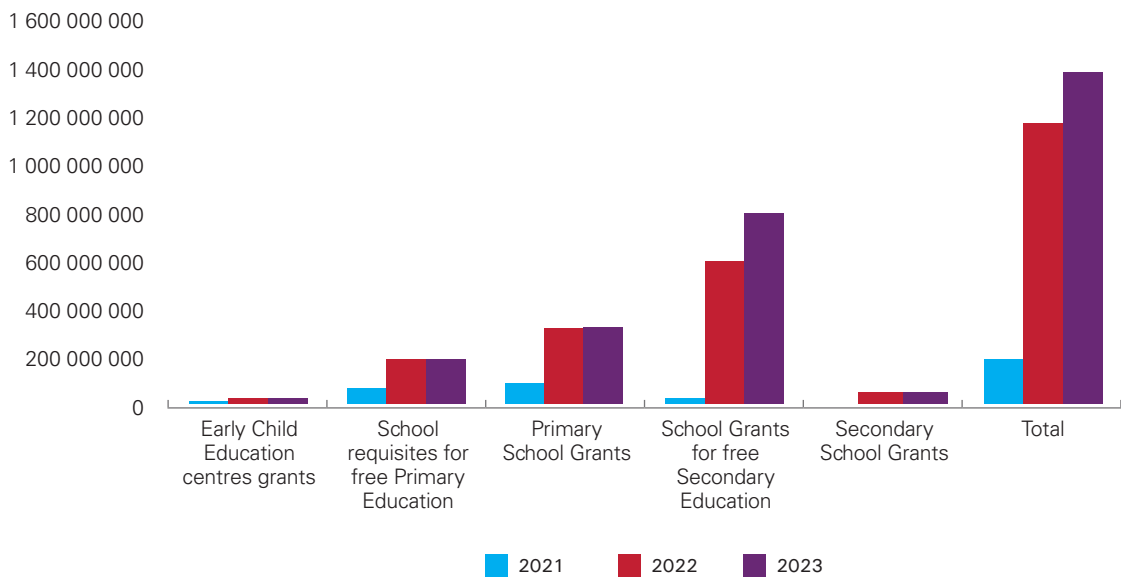
Source: Constructed from Ministry of Finance: Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure ("Yellow Book"), 2023

⁵ Source: Ministry of General Education 2020 Education Statistics Bulletin.

Pre-primary education spending as a share of total education expenditure, averaged 0.4 percent between 2016 and 2020, compared with the internationally recommended target of 10 percent of the total education sector budget. Clearly, investment in early childhood education is much lower than financing needs and hampers early learning opportunities for young children, which translates to lower academic achievements in primary school, higher rates of school drop-out, with longer term consequences such as lowered productivity, earnings, and poor health outcomes. **In 2023, the Government plans to spend K1,791 per child in pre-primary, a significant increase from K398 per child in 2022.**

Grants to schools have been increased to support the provision of free education. As part of the provision of the Education For All policy, the Government abolished all tuition, examination and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) fees charged in public early childhood education, primary and secondary schools. To cover the loss in income from fees, the grants to schools have been increased six-fold from K186 million in 2021 to K1.2 billion in 2022 and further to K1.4 billion in 2023. The largest allocation (K799 million) is earmarked for school grants for secondary education. It is also the largest increase from 2021 all the way through 2023.

FIGURE 8: GRANTS TO SCHOOLS BY EDUCATION LEVEL AND TOTAL, 2021-2023



Source: Constructed from Ministry of Finance: Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure (“Yellow Book”), 2023

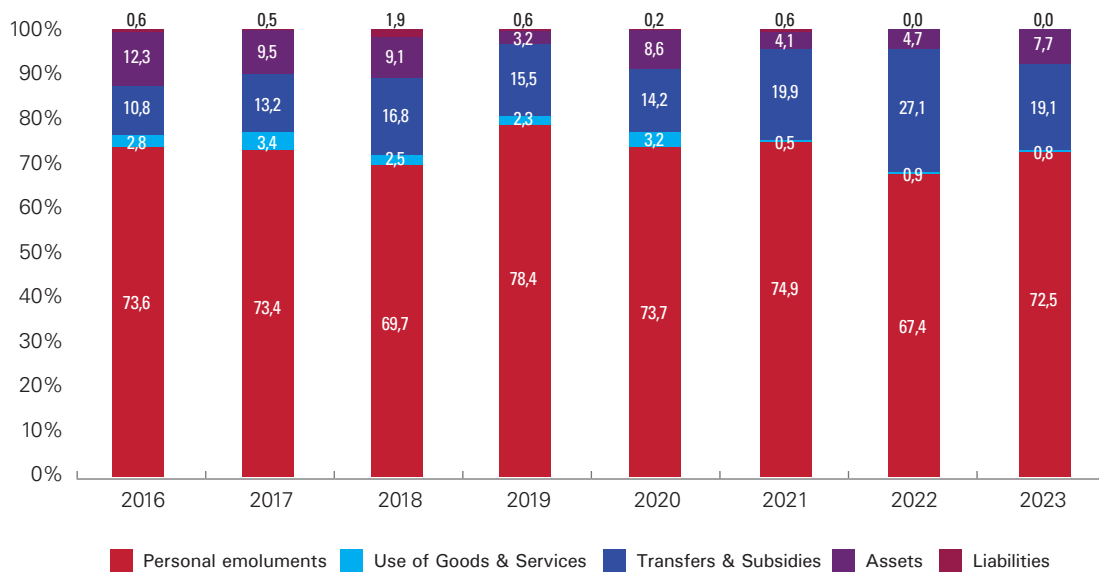
The skills development and science, technology and innovation component of education has been aligned to the newly created Ministry of Technology and Science. In previous years, this component was allocated under the Ministry of Higher Education. In 2022, a total of K716 million will be spent on science research and development, information communications technology (ICT) development, skills development and technology and innovation.

Secondary school bursaries are to be delivered through local governance structures. Two key pronouncements made in the 2022 budget speech was the introduction of free education and an increase in the Constituency Development Fund by more than 1500 percent. In 2023, K871 million has been allocated under the CDF to provide bursaries for vulnerable children in secondary boarding schools and for skills development.

EDUCATION BUDGET BY ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION

The education budget continues to be dominated by personal emoluments. Personal emoluments account for almost three quarters of the 2023 education budget, up from two thirds of the budget. Due to the Free Education policy, there was a significant increase in transfers and subsidies in 2022, accounting for 27.1 percent of the total education expenditure but this has dropped to 19.1 percent in 2023. Aside from the grants outlined earlier in Table 1, there has been a significant decline in funding for the Keeping Girls in School programme from K237 million in 2022 to K133 million in 2023; and K30 million has been allocated to the provision of sanitary towels to increase girls’ access.

FIGURE 9: EDUCATION BUDGET (MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION & MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION ONLY) BY ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION, 2016-2023*

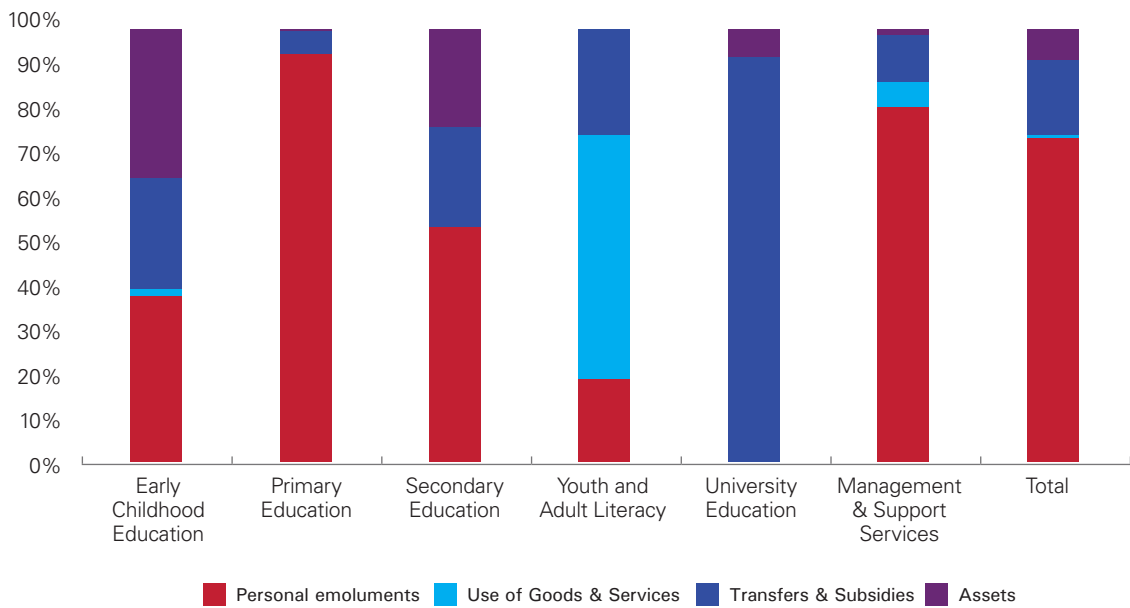


Source: Constructed from Ministry of Finance: Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure (“Yellow Book”), 2016-2023
 *2022 and 2023 Combines the allocations to Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Technology & Science

Under the Capital Expenditure budget (acquisition of non-financial assets), the construction of ECE centres, rehabilitation and operationalisation of schools has been prioritized. Under early education, 34 percent (or K155 million) of the ECE budget is allocated to the establishment of 500 ECE centres⁶. A total of K141 million has been allocated towards the rehabilitation of schools and school equipment in primary schools, while K1.1 billion in 2023 from K377 million in 2022 has been allocated to construct, complete and rehabilitate secondary schools across the country.

⁶ 2023 Yellow book

FIGURE 10: EDUCATION BUDGET (MINISTRY EDUCATION ONLY) BY PROGRAMME AND ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATION (MILLION KWACHA), 2023



Source: Constructed from Ministry of Finance: Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure (“Yellow Book”), 2023



- Despite the significant boost in budget allocations to school grants in 2022 to enable the provision of education under the Education For All policy, the allocation to school grants has reduced in 2023.
- The increased allocation to capital expenditure for the building of ECE centres, rehabilitation of primary schools and the operationalization of secondary schools will help to address issues of access and overcrowding.

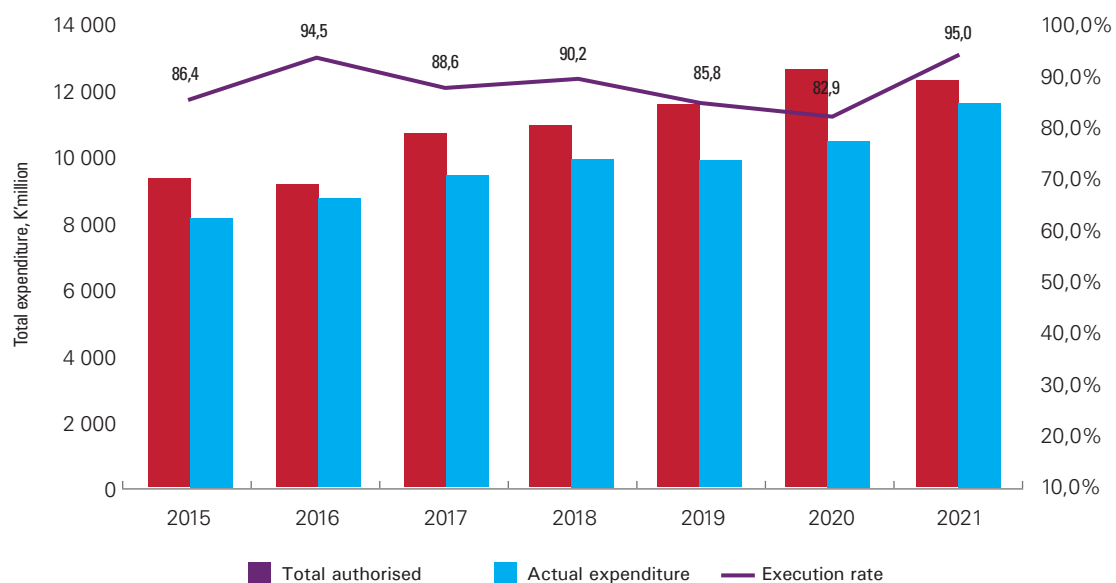
TAKEAWAY



BUDGET CREDIBILITY AND EXECUTION

The execution rates, defined as the share of actual spending to the total authorized budget provision, increased in 2021. Whilst the execution rate was on the decline from 2018 to 2020, it increased to 95 percent in 2021 from 82.9 percent in 2020. The decline previously was largely due to the lower than planned spending in university education, primary and secondary education, in that order. Against authorised expenditure of K12 billion, K11 billion was actually spent.

FIGURE 11: TOTAL AUTHORISED BUDGET, ACTUAL EXPENDITURE AND EXECUTION RATES, 2015-2021



Source: Constructed from Ministry of Finance Annual Financial Reports

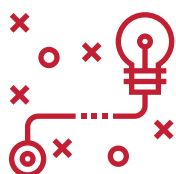
After being persistently low, the execution rates for ECE improved from 2020. Execution rates between 2015 and 2021 averaged 35.4 percent - the lowest across all other programmes in the education budget. During the same period, execution rates for primary and secondary education averaged 95.8 percent and 81.4 percent, respectively.

TABLE 1: DECOMPOSED EXECUTION RATES BY PROGRAMME, 2015-2021

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	AVERAGE
Early Childhood Education	18.5%	16.4%	3.8%	16.5%	19.8%	77.3%	95.7%	35.4%
Primary Education	94.2%	99.3%	97.4%	96.1%	93.2%	90.5%	100%	95.8%
Secondary Education	75.1%	82.9%	89.3%	82.3%	71.4%	81.3%	87.2%	81.4%
Adult and youth literacy	0.00%	46.3%	58.0%	49.4%	46.7%	70.5%	98.6%	52.8%
University Education	76.7%	99.9%	94.7%	97.2%	87.2%	55.3%	86.4%	85.3%
Skills Development	88.7%	85.2%	46.7%	55%	66.3%	95.3%	83.8%	74.4%
Management and Support Services	86.7%	89.5%	42.5%	82.5%	72.8%	89.9%	96.3%	80.0%
Total	86.4%	94.5%	88.6%	90.2%	85.8%	82.9%	95%	89.1%

Source: Constructed from Ministry of Finance Annual Financial Reports

The Government disbursed all free education grants in 2022. By October 2022, the government had distributed the K1.8 billion it had allocated for transfers in support of the free education. Grants were disbursed in a timely manner, at the start of each quarter, to guarantee that schools could operate without interruption in light of the government's decision to eliminate school fees.



- Budget credibility remains a challenge and may limit the country's ability to improve education performance and outcomes.
- Left unaddressed, it is likely to erode the good intentions of the provision of free education.

TAKEAWAY



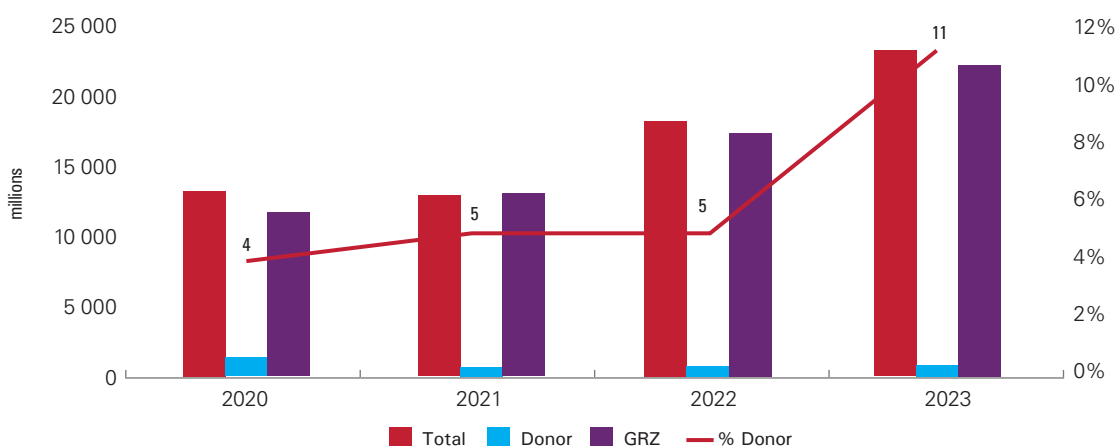
FINANCING OF THE EDUCATION BUDGET

SOURCES OF FINANCING

The main sources of public funds for education are financing from the Government, non-governmental organisations, cooperating partners, as well as private funding. At the institutional level, these include proceeds from own production and various other charges and sources of income.

Government financing has significantly increased in 2023. Following the abolition of several fees and charges in line with the Government’s policy to offer free education from pre-primary to secondary education levels, the Government has increasingly taken up a higher share of education financing in 2022 and 2023. Of the budget allocated to the Ministry of Education in 2023, the Government is expected to fund 96 percent. This is an increase from 95 percent in 2022. Direct budget support in 2022 by the World Bank amounts to K908 million of which K733 million are loans and K175 million are grants.

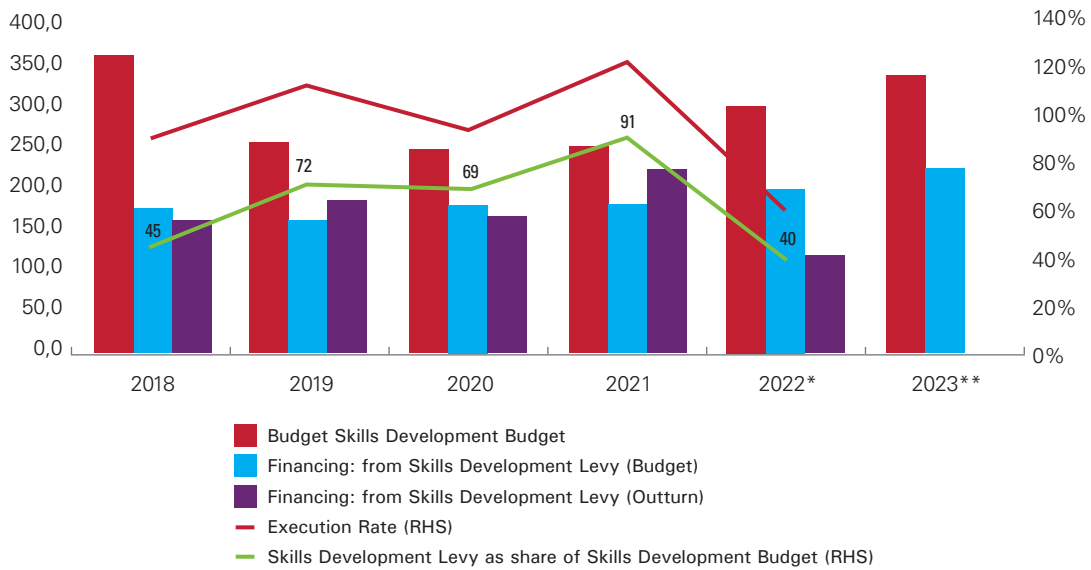
TABLE 2: FINANCING OF THE EDUCATION BUDGET IN 2021 AND 2022 BY GOVERNMENT AND COOPERATING PARTNERS



Source: Constructed from Ministry of Finance: Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure (“Yellow Book”), 2023

With the Government taking up a larger share of the education budget, and to ensure sustainable financing of education, more innovative financing mechanisms such as the Skills Development Levy are needed. The share of the ring-fenced Skills Development Levy out of the total Skills Development budget has been on the increase. It accounted for 87 percent of the entire Skills Development budget in 2021 compared to 69 percent in 2020. An innovative method of financing Skills Development, it is obtained from 0.5 percent of formal sector employers' monthly payroll. With an execution rate averaging 95 percent during 2017-2021, the Levy has ensured steady and sustainable funding for skills development since 2017.

FIGURE 12: FINANCING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE SKILLS DEVELOPMENT LEVY



Source: Constructed from Ministry of Finance Yellow Books; (*) Outturn for 2022 is a preliminary estimate; (**) Overall budget for skills development and budget for financing from skills development levy is from the 2023 Yellow Book.

Cooperating partners will also provide significant education financing in 2023. Key among the projects to be financed by cooperating partners are the World Bank financed Zambia Enhancement of Early Learning (ZEEL) project, the Zambia Education Enhancement Project (ZEEP)⁷ and the Keeping Girls in School bursary under the Girls Education and Women’s Empowerment (GEWEL) project.

The **ZEEL project** is a US\$38-45 million project supported by the World Bank under the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Commencing in 2022, it is expected to be implemented until June 2025. It is the first-ever externally-funded intervention in the ECE subsector that will be directly implemented by the Ministry of Education. The project’s main objective is to improve access for children of 3-6 years of age to quality early childhood services in 30 targeted districts across the 10 provinces of Zambia. The project has four main components: (i) improving equitable access to early childhood education; (ii) implementing early childhood education quality standards; (iii) enhancing delivery of quality early learning and care; and (iv) system strengthening, project management, monitoring and evaluation, and communication⁸.

⁷ <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P174012>

⁸ Ministry of General Education (2021). *Stakeholder Engagement Plan – Zambia Enhancement of Early Learning Project (ZEEL) P174012, July 2021*

The **ZEEP project** is a US\$60 million IDA-funded project which became effective in 2018 and is expected to run up to December 2025. ZEEP is structured around three closely related components: (i) improving the quality of teaching and learning through the strengthening of teacher training systems and improving textbook availability; (ii) increasing equitable access to secondary education through additional classrooms and facilities; and (iii) enhancing the planning, monitoring and evaluation capacity and project coordination of the Ministry of General Education^{9,10}. As of 31st January 2022, US\$36.47 million has been disbursed¹¹. As in 2021, K600 million is planned to be spent in 2022.

GEWEL project: In July 2020, the Government of the Republic of Zambia and the World Bank signed a credit agreement for additional financing to support the Girls Education and Women's Empowerment (GEWEL) Project. The additional financing supports, among other things, access to secondary education for disadvantaged adolescent girls in extremely poor households in selected districts. This financing includes a \$142 million credit from the International Development Association (IDA) and \$35 million in co-financing grants from the UK Department for International Development (now Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) and the Swedish International Development Association, which are jointly funding the programme under a World Bank-administered multi-donor trust fund. This support augments the existing GEWEL Project, worth \$65 million, which was approved in 2015. The GEWEL Project has supported more than 28,000 girls from poor households by covering their secondary school costs through the Keeping Girls in School bursary initiative¹². In 2023, the Keeping Girls in School budget has been reduced by 44 percent to K133 million in 2023 from K237 million in 2022.

- Zambia's ambitious school reform plans have impressed the international community, including the IMF and key donor organizations, who are now pushing for debt relief and restructuring. Global education donors like Global Partnership for Education (GPE) are ready to provide matching funds to maximize such activities once the creditors concur with the Government of Zambia that the restructured debt component be utilized for the development and reform of the education sector.

TAKEAWAY

- Given the medium-to long-term nature of the plans to provide free education, recruit teachers, and build schools, significant financial resources are required to ensure sustainability.



⁹ <http://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/ar/613441588692336203/pdf/Zambia-Education-Enhancement-Project-Additional-Financing.pdf>

¹⁰ Ministry of General Education, Zambia Education Enhancement Project (ZEEP) Brief: https://www.moge.gov.zm/?page_id=5439

¹¹ <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P158570>

¹² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/07/28/world-bank-continuous-support-to-empower-zambias-women-girls-and-the-poorest-households>



KEY POLICY ISSUES

The Education For All policy is a game-changer for the education sector in Zambia as it affords millions of children to access education, but it also creates challenges. Pupil-teacher ratios have significantly increased as a result of the influx of learners, which is problematic because lower ratios are required to guarantee quality teaching. Another issue is that teacher salaries take up a significant portion of public sector funding for primary and secondary school education, leaving inadequate funds for other essential inputs such as textbooks, teacher training, and strengthening school management that would improve the quality of education. **The curriculum needs to be reviewed.** In light of the increased enrollment at all levels, there is need to review the curriculum particularly in secondary and lower grades of primary. This should put an emphasis on providing quality foundational learning for ECE and lower grade learners and guaranteeing acquisition of foundational learning (literacy and numeracy) by the end of primary education, followed by relevant secondary education with the development of practical skills and career education. **The measures put in place to support the Education For All policy require significant financial investments.** It is therefore critical that the Government explores new approaches to financing education not only to increase enrolment, but also to improve the quality of education provided. While savings from the removal of energy subsidies will provide additional financing, more resources are required, including additional supports for vulnerable learners through the CDF.

The CDF offers an opportunity for better collaboration and coordination between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. Given the enormous requirements for the education sector, especially as a result of the Education For All policy, there has to be a deliberate link between the CDF and the education sector. Just as funds are specifically earmarked for bursaries (20 percent) and youth and women empowerment programmes (20 percent), the Ministry of Education and its counterpart – the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development – need to find synergies between the CDF and the education sector by possibly earmarking a specified amount to meet education needs at community level, including the construction of new classrooms and teachers' houses.

Given the increased enrolment as a result of the Education For All policy, another issue that needs to be dealt with is menstrual hygiene for teenage girls.

Menstrual Hygiene Management is about the provision of gender-sensitive facilities and infrastructure which will enable girls learn in dignity, safety and comfort. Girls need to be equipped with information, support, and enabling school environment for managing menstruation. The Government has provided a budget for reusable free sanitary pads for school-going girls. This will ensure equity of access so that girls are not left behind.

ECE is one of the most neglected ECD component which requires focused attention in government budgets.

ECE spending as a share of total education expenditure averaged 0.4 percent between 2016 and 2020. In 2020, total ECE spending was estimated at 0.1 percent of the total education budget down from about 1 percent in 2018. Over the past few years, the bulk of ECE budgets was for infrastructure development, especially in 2018. Between 2016 and 2018, infrastructure development accounts for an estimated 84 percent of total ECE allocations, on average. However, this trend was reversed between 2019 and 2020, with other recurrent transactions accounting for an average of 96 percent of total ECE allocations. This financial commitment is lower than the international recommendation for Governments to allocate at least 10 percent of their budgets to pre-primary education.



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UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
United Nations House, Alick Nkhata Rd, Longacres
P.O. Box 33610 Lusaka 10101, Zambia
Telephone: +260-211-374200

Follow us on:
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