DROPPING OUT?

A PARTICIPATORY EXPLORATION OF ADOLESCENT SCHOOL JOURNEYS IN ZAMBIA

unicef
for every child

SAMUEL HALL.

Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research in countries affected by issues of migration and displacement. We specialise in socio-economic surveys, private and public sector studies, and impact assessments for a range of humanitarian and development actors. With a rigorous approach and the inclusion of academic experts, field practitioners, and a vast network of national researchers, we access complex settings and gather accurate data. We bring innovative insights and practical solutions to addressing the most pressing social, economic, and political issues of our time.

Samuel Hall has offices in Afghanistan and Kenya, and a presence in Germany and the United Arab Emirates. For more information, visit www.samuelhall.org.

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit www.unicef.org/zambia.

This publication was commissioned by UNICEF Zambia. It was prepared and conducted by Samuel Hall. The views and analysis contained in the publication therefore do not necessarily represent the views of UNICEF Zambia. Any errors are our own and should not tarnish the reputations of others.

This document should be cited using the following referencing style:

Samuel Hall (2019). Dropping Out? A Participatory Exploration of Adolescent School Journeys in Zambia, commissioned by UNICEF Zambia.

Front cover picture:

© Samuel Hall, 2018 - Pilot phase participant in Lusaka

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 8

1. INTRODUCTION 12
1.1 Why this research? 13
1.2 Research objective 17

2. METHODOLOGY: A FRESH APPROACH TO PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH 19
2.1 Adolescent-centred design: A principled approach to research on and with children 20
2.2 Data collection tools 22
2.3 Scope and sampling 25
2.4 Analysis 26
2.5 Challenges and limitations 28

3. A CHALLENGING EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EXISTING LITERATURE 30
3.1 Mapping the school journey: Overview and statistical challenges 31
3.2 Education-influencing factors in Zambia 33

4. SETTING THE STAGE: THE CONSEQUENCES OF STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES 40
4.1 Endemic poverty 42
4.2 Infrastructural limitations 45

5. BEYOND THE NUCLEAR: COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON SCHOOLING 54
5.1 Community-level decision-making frameworks and influencers 55
5.2 An evolving context: Cultural changes in adolescents' worlds 57
5.3 Traditions in practice 60

6 HOUSEHOLD: NEXUS OF DECISION-MAKING 64
6.1 The central role of parents and guardians in adolescents' lives and schooling 65
6.2 Economic constraints and views of parental agency 67
6.3 Structure of households 68
6.4 Valuing education 70

7 ADOLESCENTS: TESTING THE LIMITS OF AGENCY 73
7.1 The social world of adolescents 75
7.2 Parameters of adolescent agency: Influence of age and gender 76
7.3 Key factors framing adolescent agency 78
7.4 Watershed moments in the schooling journey 82
7.5 Brief district-level overview 85

8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 88
8.1 Conclusions 89
8.2 Recommendations 92

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY 96

ANNEXES
Annex 1 – Research questions by data source 100
Annex 2 – Detailed research methods 102
Annex 3 – Benchmarking programming in neighbouring contexts 111

LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES AND BOXES

Figure 1 - Sample dropout journey 17
Figure 2 - Round Robin activities by day 23
Figure 3 - Categories of targeted participants for Round Robin sessions 24
Figure 4 - In-person surveys by location and gender (Lusaka only) 26
Figure 5 - Map of data collection activities per districts 27
Figure 6 - Gross-enrolment-rates in Zambia in 2016 31
Figure 7 - Overview of the education sector 33
Figure 8 - Faith's school journey (age 17) 44
Figure 9 - Selected obstacles to re-entry for post-partum mothers 49
Figure 10 - Main school-related fees in Zambia 51
Figure 11 - Annual fees of secondary schools visited, expressed as % of average provincial annual income 51
Figure 12 - Vignette: Traditional dancing 62
Figure 13 - Age and gender timelines 77
Figure 14 - Primary drivers of dropout identified by adolescents 78
Figure 15 - Key sources for literature review 102
Figure 16 - Fieldwork timeline 106
Figure 17 - Overview/ mapping of respondents and sample sizes by location (quant. survey in Lusaka) 110

Table 1 - Linguistic equivalences for dropout used in the research 15
Table 2 - Selected locations by district 24
Table 3 - Qualitative sample by adolescent, parents/guardians and teachers 24
Table 4 - KIIs conducted at the local and national level 25
Table 5 - Selected locations 108

Box 1 - Inclusion of adolescents along the study cycle 21
Box 2 - Disability and education in Zambia 46
Box 3 - Building an ideal school 48
Box 4 - Search for a sponsor 52
Box 5 - The human rights trope 59
Box 6 - Traditional initiation rites in Zambia 61

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DRGS	Directorate of Research and Postgraduate Studies
ESARO	East Africa and Southern Africa Regional Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
G5NA	Grade 5 National Assessment
GER	Gross-Enrolment-Rate
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GRZ	Government of the Republic of Zambia
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
ICT	Information and communications technology
KII	Key Informant Interview
NER	Net-Enrolment-Rate
MoGE	Ministry of General Education
PTR	Pupil to teacher ratio
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SH	Samuel Hall
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNCRC	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UN-DESA	The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
UNZA	University of Zambia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
ZMW	Zambian Kwacha

GLOSSARY

Key terms to exploring school attendance in Zambia are defined below.

Term	Definition	Sources
Adolescence	The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) describes adolescence as "the transition from childhood to adulthood", often marked by puberty from ages 12-17. However, following the WHO definition, UNICEF describes adolescence as an "age of opportunity" between 10-19 years of age. This study will use the WHO/UNICEF definition.	UN-DESA, "World Population Monitoring Adolescents and Youth" UNICEF, "Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity"
Agency	The "sociocultural mediated capacity to act", which is always determined by one's context.	Laura M. Ahearn, "Language and Agency"
Child/Early Marriage	"A legal or customary union before the age of 18"; applies to both boys and girls.	Republic of Zambia, "Qualitative Study of Child Marriage."
Child Protection	"UNICEF uses the term 'child protection' to refer to preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and abuse against children" – this includes protection from all forms of physical and mental harm. Children's right to protection is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), as well as many treaties and conventions and national laws.	UNICEF, "What is Child Protection?" Save the Children, "Child Protection and Care Related Definitions"
Dropout	To leave school before full completion.	UNICEF, "Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Zambia"
Empowerment	According to the World Bank, "empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes".	World Bank, "What is Empowerment?"
Exam Absenteeism	To be partly or fully absent from a school exam, especially relevant for Grade 7 and 9 exams.	Examinations Council of Zambia and UNICEF, 'Research Study on Learner Absenteeism from Public Examinations"

Factor	Life events or circumstances or social, economic, cultural and political realities that may influence whether adolescents complete schooling.	n/a
Guardian	Drawing from the Juveniles Act (Republic of Zambia), a guardian is a person who has temporary or permanent charge over a child.	Republic of Zambia, The Juveniles Act
Out of school	UNICEF defines "out of school" to mean "[t]hose who have once attended school but have dropped out; those who will never enter school; and those who will enter school late".	UNICEF, "Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Zambia"
Primary school	In Zambia, primary school comprises Grades 1-7 (officially, ages 7-13). Primary education is officially free for all Zambian pupils, although some schools may impose fees directly.	UNICEF, "Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Zambia"
School Categories in Zambia	Government: "Fully supported and operated by the 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 the government (often faith-based organizations), but with government teachers and assistance". Private: "Run by private agencies and individuals and financed primarily through tuition; may be profit or not-for-profit".	Zacharia Falconer-Stout, Rebecca Frischkorn and Lynne Franco, "Time to Learn: Endline Evaluation Report"
Secondary school	In Zambia, secondary school (Grades 8-12; officially, ages 14-18) is divided into two categories: lower secondary and secondary. Transition to lower secondary school is marked by an exam at the end of Grade 7, and transition to secondary school is marked by an exam at the end of Grade 9. Secondary education in Zambia is not free; the actual amount of school fees varies between school providers (see: "School Categories in Zambia").	UNICEF, "Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Zambia"
Tradition	Customs, laws, beliefs and practice mediated by local, non-state institutions, such as healers, governance structures, and belief systems.	n/a

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

While the provision of free education has meant that nearly all Zambian children attend primary school, these numbers drop rapidly as they age. As of 2011, only 28% of "all children who enter the school system go on to complete secondary education".[1] Existing data provides some information around retention and dropout rates; however, to date, little evidence exists on the underlying layers and decision-making factors that define individual histories regarding schooling in Zambia. Past studies on the issue and surveys of the sector generally focus on linear, single-factor explanations (e.g. poverty, child pregnancy, lack of valuing of school). Commissioned by UNICEF, this research thus proposes to address this gap, asking, "How are decisions made on whether or not adolescents complete their schooling in Zambia?" In particular, the report seeks to identify actors, factors and events contributing to decision-making around school attendance in Zambia.

How are decisions made on whether or not adolescents complete their schooling in Zambia?

Methodology

To answer this question, the research team designed an inductive, highly participatory research framework, emphasising child protection and empowerment. Three-day participatory exercises – Round Robins[2] – were conducted with eight adolescents (boys and girls) with differing academic and demographic backgrounds. In addition, case studies with adolescents and parents, focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents and teachers, key informant interviews (KIIs) with local and national stakeholders, and a quantitative exercise in Lusaka were completed. Extending to eight districts across the country – namely, Katete, Lunga, Lusaka, Luwingu, Petauke, Mufulira, Rufunsa and Senanga – in 17 locations, the team was able to conduct in total 17 Round Robin sessions, 55 case studies, 49 FGDs, and 85 KIIs. The 503 in-person and 1,081 *U-Report*[3] quantitative surveys in Lusaka were completed between September and November of 2019.

The research encountered both theoretical and practical limitations. These included the indicative nature of granularity in results due to the research design; logistical access challenges including heavy rains, avoiding conflict with exams, and wealthier households not wanting to participate. Furthermore, two enumerators required replacement with other trained personnel. Despite the above-mentioned challenges, data collection was completed in all locations in a timely fashion, reaching targets without any major incidents.

In addition to this report, 8 district-level highlights reports have been produced, focusing on key findings at the district level.

1 UNESCO, "Zambia: Education Policy Review", 2016: p. 61.

2 Samuel Hall undertook an adapted version of the Round Robin sessions originally designed and implemented by the University of Edinburgh and the Women's University of Africa for the research project "Addressing Social Norms that Underpin Violence Against Children in Zimbabwe". These are "designed to elicit objective responses that drill down on the multiple dimensions of violence against children", taking an iterative approach and "encouraging contributions from all participants in the group". See: Fry, D., Hodzi, C. and T. Nhenga, "Addressing Social Norms that Underpin Violence Against Children in Zimbabwe: Findings and Strategic Planning Document". Harare: Ministry of Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare, 2016.

3 SMS-based software platform used by UNICEF to provide interactive counselling services to adolescents and youths.

Gaps in existing knowledge

A detailed literature review was conducted prior to designing the research tools and in order to better structure the approach. This was also carried out to ensure that the study would identify and effectively address gaps in existing knowledge. As the review indicates, several studies and surveys provide a range of numerical data around dropout trends and peaks, as well as exploring provincial differences. These publications consistently isolate single factors influencing decisions on whether adolescents stay in school. Key among these are early marriage, school fees, general poverty, cultural practices, school availability and accessibility, peer pressure, bullying. However, to date, no research has specifically sought to understand dropping out within the broader Zambian context, and existing discussions consider dropping out as a linear process.

The data collection and subsequent analysis thus focused on exploring the individual realities, stories and actors of those involved with this decision-making process in order to take a more holistic view of the process and provide contextually adapted ways forward.

Key findings

Chapters 4 to 7 set out the study's findings, key elements of which are set out below. We have organised these according to the framework of engagement from the structural and infrastructural to the individual.

- **At the structural level**: endemic poverty is both a direct and indirect factor of school dropout, leading to inability to pay fees, unhealthy familial coping mechanisms and poor school facilities. Problematic and contradictory views around education as a solution to poverty emerge. On one hand, education is presented as the only way to get employment, and parents reported valuing school; on the other, teachers, and others, raised the concern that this promotes unrealistic expectations and that, when families realise that education does not always lead to jobs, this "instrumentalised" view of valuing education loses credibility.

- **Infrastructural challenges** also limit school attendance. Schools suffer from limited places and accessibility as well as facilities lacking equipment, poor water and electrical access; a significant portion of students and students' families reported an inability to pay fees and attendant costs; and irregular staff quality is also cited as a contributing factor to dropout.

- **At the community level**: households, and their decisions, must be considered within the broader context of the communities and extended family around them. Although community leaders and village elders have increasingly limited roles, traditional social practices and norms continue to influence decision-making, and advice from family, friends, teachers and community leaders is taken into account. Lusaka respondents are outliers on this front. They generally focused on a more restricted understanding of which community members impact decision-making. Adult respondents in particular highlighted shifting external influencers and cultural evolution as changing how decision-making happens within communities, and the concept of human rights in particular increasing adolescents' perceived agency. When it comes to cultural transitions to adulthoods, these

Endemic poverty is both a direct and indirect factor of school dropout.

Infrastructural challenges limit school attendance.

have a greater negative impact on schooling decisions for girls, who are more likely to enter into early marriage or drop out after childbirth.

Traditional social practices and norms continue to influence decision-making.

- **At the household level:** while poverty and household economic decision-making play a primary role in school attendance, they are not sufficient to explain who drops out and who remains in school. Household cost-benefit analyses are shaped by socio-cultural practices and individual backgrounds. All respondents and interviewees agree that parents and guardians are at the centre of adolescents' decision-making, both as final decision-makers for and influencers on adolescents. Parents and guardians express a limited sense of agency around this, due in particular to poverty and economic constraints (expressing dropout decisions as inevitabilities rather than choices). Teachers and adolescents, on the other hand, assign more agency to them in this decision-making, in particular around resource allocation within the household. The death of a parent or economic hardship, such as job loss or poor crop yield, strongly precipitate adolescents dropping out of school. External support through extended family or a turn in the household's financial well-being advances return to school.

Parents and guardians are at the centre of adolescents' decision-making.

- **At the individual level:** adolescents' social worlds evolve as they age. While primarily shaped by parents and guardians, as adolescents grow older their peers gain in importance and influence. Adolescents begin to test their agency, with age and gender shaping how and when they do this. Adult respondents identified a number of risky behaviours by adolescents as contributing to dropout journeys – for boys, pointing to drug and alcohol consumption, for girls, sexual behaviours. Indeed, teen pregnancy, early marriage and exam failure are all precipitating events for dropout, but these are part of a more complicated journey and cannot, in most cases, be identified as a single cause of dropout. When adolescents express having made a "decision" to drop out of school, the parameters and drivers of these decisions varied significantly. Aspirations and school performance also act as key factors in adolescents' valuing school for themselves.

The research evidences the breadth of actors and factors contributing to adolescents' dropout journeys. This is in addition to more widely accepted drivers, including widespread poverty; infrastructural challenges in secondary school attendance The report also nuances the parameters of several past discussions: speaking of "decision-making" about a single point of "dropout" is, for example, misleading, as adolescents' school journeys often follow winding paths, with instances of re-entry, seasonal attendance and financially-constrained irregular attendance; the commonalities of factors cited in districts across the country; and, the complexity of adolescent decision-making, as this group has limited agency in "decision-making", although they exert their agency in areas which can impact school journeys.

Conclusion

The main implication of this study is clear: **the key focus of actors and organisations wishing to support adolescents' secondary school attendance should be working to prioritise education systems that work for adolescents holistically** – not just ones that ensure that adolescents complete schooling, or that only consider single factors leading to dropout. Secondary schooling must offer real gains to those who complete it. This requires consideration of the effectiveness of learning and alternatives to formal school education, in addition to addressing the factors detailed in the findings.

Recommendations

The following is a summary list of recommendations, all of which are discussed at greater length in Chapter 8.2. They are specifically based on the key findings from the research, with a focus on the educational sector and school journeys – given the impetus for this research – whilst also keeping in mind broader challenges facing Zambian households. These recommendations have been aligned with the four social system levels considered in this report: the individual, the household, the community and the infrastructural.

I. Infrastructure level recommendations

1. Address facility-linked barriers to attendance
2. Build teacher capacity around participatory teaching

II. Community level recommendations

3. Encourage school-friendly means of participation in traditional practices
4. Engage local participation in education and the school community

III. Household level recommendations

5. Promote cross-sectoral approaches to address the “cost-benefit” narrative
6. Specifically target at-risk households for support based on structure and size
7. Strengthen household economic well-being

IV. Individual level recommendations

8. Design programmes to holistically support pregnant and post-partum pupils linked to the Re-Entry Policy
9. Drive realistic aspirations among adolescents
10. Target programmes to support individuals at risk from an educational performance perspective
11. Address perceptions and knowledge around risky behaviours to slow and eventually eliminate adolescent uptake

© Samuel Hall, 2018
Buildings at a school in Lusaka (pilot phase)

1

INTRODUCTION

"IT JUST HAPPENED"

Michael,[4] aged 18, from Katete, moved to live with his aunt after his parents died recently. She has struggled to make ends meet with her meagre earnings from odd jobs. One day, he said, he'd love to return to school, but it seems impossible now. At first glance, this seems like a "typical" story, emblematic of poverty-driven dropouts in Zambia: a young man, orphaned and living with relatives who simply cannot afford to send him back to school.

But Michael's schooling journey did not hinge on just one a moment. It has been characterised by temporary dropouts, periods of illness, renewed attendance, exam failure and intra-household decisions about how to allocate limited resources, occurring long before his parents passed away.

I did very well in my Grade 7 exams … I really enjoyed mathematics and science and enjoyed the competition between me and my friends. But in Grades 8 and 9, my parents lacked finances. In term 3, I only attend[ed] school for two months [instead of the full term] and I did not write my mock exams because of this. When time came for the final exams, I doubted myself, so I just decided not to do it. At some point, I had tried to return to school, but I did not perform well, and when time for the exams came once more, I got sick, and only wrote four of eight subjects.

When I sat for my final Grade 9 subjects, I only passed five subjects out of eight.

When my brother was accepted to college, [my parents] decided to sponsor him instead, making it difficult to pay for school. They asked for my opinion; at first, I really wanted to stay in school, but because of failing, I doubted myself. I miss learning and playing with my friends. [...] because I dropped out of school, I will miss out on getting a good job.

Michael's aunt added, "I did not want this child to stop school, because school is his and our gateway to a better life … It just happened that I had nothing I could do as I rely solely on piece work". Yet, even at 18, it is possible that Michael's school journey is not yet over.

Most of the respondents interviewed in this research – from parents to adolescents to community leaders – expressed appreciation for the value of education. They acknowledged that education provided access to more economic opportunities later on in life and an opportunity to learn positive life values. Dropping out was generally portrayed as unfortunate, although without the stigma that might be attached to it in some other contexts, and as almost an inevitability in many cases due to the very real structural factors that inhibit universal attendance. With **only 30.8% of children in Zambia completing Grades 1-12** as of 2015,[5] understanding the school journey and how and why decisions are made around school attendance and dropping out is critical. The complex interplay of obstacles to school completion must be considered with the ultimate objective of providing Zambian children with a solid foundation for their future.[6]

1.1 Why this research?

Not only is basic education a fundamental right of children, according to Article 28 of the UNCRC, but also "young people should be encouraged to reach the highest level of education"[7] – the right to education extends through to successful Grade 12 completion.[8] In line with this, an educated citizenry form both a driver and a goal of the Republic of Zambia's *Vision 2030* plan, which seeks to turn Zambia into a prosperous middle-income nation by 2030.[9] Completion of education has been linked with key denominators of increased quality of life such as delayed early marriage and pregnancy, and increased potential future earnings. It further improves adolescents' literacy, social and critical thinking skills.[10]

In 2002, the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) introduced free primary school (Grades 1-7) in an effort to achieve universal primary school completion. Zambia recommitted to these efforts with the 2011 *Education Act*, which made primary school free and compulsory for all Zambian pupils[11] (though some primary schools[12] still charge fees despite this policy).

4 All names in this report have been changed to protect anonymity of the respondents.
5 Zambia Central Statistical Office, Education Statistics 2015.
6 UNESCO, 'Zambia: Education Policy Review', p. 61.
7 UNICEF, "FACT SHEET: A summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child."
8 Sonja Grover, 'Secondary education as a universal human right`, Education and the Law 16, no. 1 (2004): p. 21–31.
9 Republic of Zambia, "Vision 2030", 2006.
10 The World Bank, "Adolescent Girls in Zambia: Executive Summary" (The World Bank, 24 June 2016).
11 UNESCO, "Zambia: Education Policy Review," 2016.
12 Hiroshi Saeki et al., "Education Public Expenditure Review in Zambia" (The World Bank, 1 December 2015)

Since then, absolute enrolment numbers for primary schools showed an annual average growth rate of 2.0%.[13] Zambia has achieved almost near-universal primary school enrolment and gender parity.[14]

However, the positive gains at the primary school level make the problems at secondary (Grades 8-12) even more stark. The number of pupils transitioning from primary to lower secondary (Grade 7 to 8) and lower secondary to upper (Grade 9 to 10) is 66.2% and 46.6%, respectively, indicating two major dropout (push-out) points for children within the Zambian educational system.[15] Put another way, of out of every three is left behind in the transition from primary to secondary school and one out of every two adolescents will not enter Grade 10.

While enrolment rates are relatively high for most of the primary education levels, with an overall net enrolment rate of 90.4%,[16] those start dropping by Grade 5 before the significant decrease in Grade 8; **school dropout in Zambia thus primarily affects adolescents** (ages 10 to 19). This means that Zambia's educational system, as it currently stands, is unlikely to support the Government's vision of an educated citizenry. While the landscape of available (secondary) data on school retention and/or dropout rates in Zambia is comprehensive, little evidence exists on the underlying layers and decision-making factors that define individual histories of whether or not adolescents complete their schooling in the country. This gap in evidence and knowledge is problematic for the successful design and implementation of interventions to increase school retention rates until the completion of secondary education.

Linear, limited narratives

On preliminary examination, the challenges within the education system are obvious: extreme shortages of places available in secondary school, the burden of school fees on household finances, the immediate economic value of children working instead of attending school, the pressures of teenage pregnancies and early marriages, and the very real questions about the quality of education delivered and its relative value in context where over half the country lives in poverty.[17] While the government has reached a number of targets, such as increased access to primary education and the development of a new curriculum, limited progression into secondary education, persistent low performance (no growth) in national examination results, increasing numbers of out-of-school children (estimated to be around 800,000), gender and equity issues and skills shortages/skills gaps in almost all areas of work remain.[18]

This research asked participants in the study – adolescents, parents, teachers, community and government leaders, Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) and Civil Society Organisation (CSO) staff, and others – about these constraining factors, and specifically why, in their view, such a small percentage of Zambian youth complete Grades 1-12. Four strong narratives emerged,[19] indicating dominant discourses in how school dropout and retention is conceptualised in Zambia. As examined in this report, these are **not sufficient to understand the lived reality of adolescents and their households.**

1. Dropouts are rational economic decisions made by parents and guardians. School fees represent a significant expense, and households engage in strict cost-benefits analysis to determine whether or not schooling is "worth the investment".

2. Female dropouts are driven by teenage pregnancy and early marriage. Across the board, pregnancy was cited as a key driver of female dropouts, and, to a lesser degree, early marriage. These are described as both self-driven and resulting from parental pressure.

13 Ministry of General Education (Zambia), "Educational Statistical Bulletin 2016", 2016, p. 11.
14 Ibid, p. 11.
15 Ibid, p. 3.
16 Ibid, p. 3.
17 Zambia Central Statistical Office. "Education Statistics". 2015.
18 Lenssen, R. "Review of Education Sector in Zambia and Analysis of Entry Points for Donor Support", 2018.
19 These are not mutually exclusive; however, they are somewhat contradictory. For example, arguing that parents see the value of education but are making a rational decision around financial costs, versus that parents do not value school and so do not prioritise it.

Table 1 - Linguistic equivalences for dropout used in the research

English	Lusaka Nyanja	Eastern Nyanja	Bemba	Lozi
Dropout	*Kulekeza ikulu (sukulu) pakati:* Stopping school half way (before reaching grade 12) *Kuleka sikulu (sukulu):* Stopping/ending school *Kusiya ikulu (sukulu):* Stopping school *Kuchoka musukulu:* Coming out of school	*Olepera mapunziro* (Chewa and Nsenga): Stopped school *Kutondeka sukulu:* Stopped school	*Ukufuma musukulu pakati:* Coming out of school halfway (before reaching grade 12) *Ukupeleshya isukulu:* Stopping school halfway *Ukuleka isukuku:* Stopping school	*Mutu yatuhelezi sikolo fahali:* Stoppinng school halfway (before reaching grade 12) *Mutu Yapalelezwi sikolo fahali:* Dropped out of school *Mutu yanakalile sikono kono asikafeza:* Stopped school halfway

A government official, for example, noted "they believe that if they do not fall pregnant or do not get married, then they are less of a woman".

3 Parents or guardians, especially uneducated ones, do not value school, and therefore do not prioritise their children's schooling, so they "easily give up on finding funds".

4 Adolescents are influenced by their peers into risky behaviour, such as alcohol and drug use and prostitution, often going against traditional Zambian values, and so drop out of school.

Multiple respondents framed their decisions around school dropout as no decision at all, but rather a fatalistic capitulation to external factors, perhaps not a rational choice but an inevitable one. **Yet families with similar profiles make different decisions around education;** their proposed lack of agency thus does not fully represent reality and indicates a more complex and varied trajectory.

Closer examination and analysis of the individual realities, stories and actors within this decision-making process is needed to both expand and challenge these narratives and create a foundation for collaborative approach to multifaceted solutions.

Understanding dropout in the Zambian context

UNICEF defines dropout as "To leave school before full completion".[20] This suggests a binary understanding of dropout – a pupil has either left school or is still in school. However,

20 UNICEF, "Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Zambia." 2014.

existing UNICEF research on Zambia nuances this: UNICEF's *Out-of-School Children* report notes that "When considering how dropout should be defined, it can be useful to consider dropout as a spectrum. A student may be truant for 1 day, or 10 days, or 2 years – but at which point is the student considered to have dropped out? […] Moreover, the dropout process is often gradual, and may start with occasional truancy, continue on to chronic truancy, and finally lead to a permanent departure from school".[21] Key informants confirmed the difficulties in identifying actual dropout rates, noting the challenges in using an enrolment-based understanding, when actual attendance is a real problem.

"The dropout process is often gradual, and may start with occasional truancy, continue on to chronic truancy, and finally lead to a permanent departure from school."

The definitional question is further complicated in this case by the fact that the research was conducted in four languages – English, Nyanja (Eastern and Lusaka), Bemba and Lozi. Keeping a relatively open definition of dropout is thus also important from the perspective of analytical rigor; this avoids the attribution of specific meanings to words which in fact only appear from translation.[22] Table 1 details the equivalents used for "dropout" and understood as "dropout" in each of the languages used for this survey. Across these, there are two common usages: stopping school, and coming out of school "halfway".

An open definition of the term dropout was used in this research in order to explore how it is understood by different respondents, and when they consider dropout to have occurred. **Respondents were asked how they define "dropout"; adolescents and adults tend to highlight different elements of the dropout process rather than considering it a binary decision.** As will be explored further in this research:

- Adolescents were most likely to attribute an element of agency to the adolescent in question when discussing dropout.
- Adults often focused on explanatory reasons for the dropout. In Mufulira, for instance, they gave examples of dropping out as stopping school due to failing exams and not having money to retake them, or parents/guardians not having money to support the children.

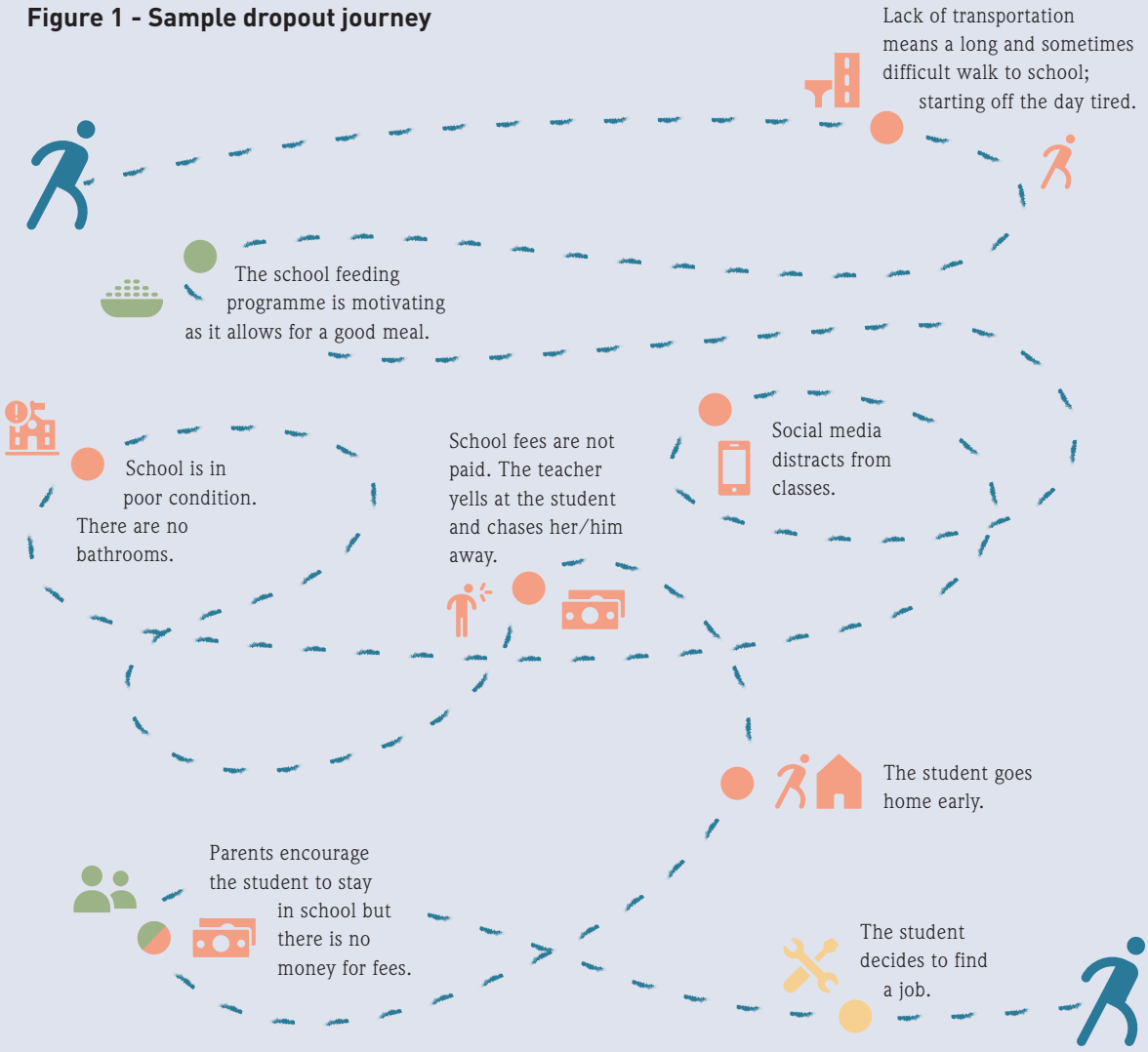
This question of intent is useful as deeper dives into perception of agency in the decision-making process suggest that adolescents generally feel limited agency in the dropout decisions; the definitional attribution of intent could suggest that adolescents themselves do not want to think of themselves as dropouts, but rather as having been pushed out. What comes out clearly from these multiple interpretations of dropout is, as confirmed by UNICEF's *Early Warning Systems for Students at Risk of Dropping out*, that "there is seldom one single reason for a child or adolescent to dropout of school. Instead, this is a process shaped by many factors that interact in ways that are both complex and dynamic (Figure 1). These factors can relate not only to individual and family characteristics or circumstances, but also to factors at school, community and national level".[23] **This study thus seeks to understand dropout as a process, rather than explainable by a single narrative.**

21 UNICEF and UIS, "Monitoring Education Participation", p. 25.

22 A 2008 study describes this risk of conceptual equivalence as follows: "Conceptual equivalence" means that a translator provides a technically and conceptually accurate translated communication of a concept spoken by the study's participant (Jandt, 2003). Therefore, when a poor translation occurs, the researcher may lose the conceptual equivalence of or find the meanings of the participants' words altered because of how the translator performed the translation (Gee, 1990; Fredrickson, Rivas Acuña, & Whetsell, 2005; Temple & Young, 2004)". Squires, 'Methodological Challenges in Cross-Language Qualitative Research: A Research Review, 2008.

23 UNICEF, 'Early Warning Systems for Students at Risk of Dropping Out' p. 2.

Figure 1 - Sample dropout journey



1.2 Research objective

The primary objective of this study is thus to better understand how decisions are made around school dropouts in Zambia in order to provide recommendations to UNICEF, the GRZ and other stakeholders for the creation of evidence-based interventions in Zambia's secondary education sector. In order to do so, this research collected data around dropout decision-making in eight districts of Zambia across six provinces from adolescents themselves, parents/guardians, teachers, and local and national stakeholders.

To answer the above objective, the main research question was defined as follows:

How are decisions made on whether or not adolescents complete their schooling in Zambia?

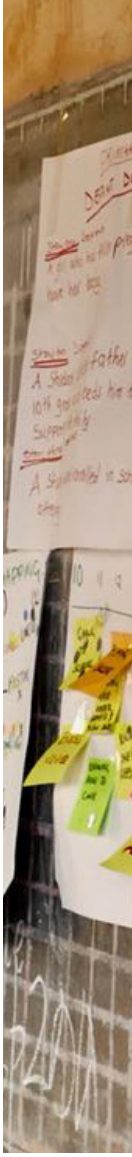
The main research question can be broken down into three categories (*actors/agency*, *factors/journeys* and *recommendations*) with various sub-questions, namely:

1 **Which actors either decide whether or not adolescents complete schooling in Zambia, or influence such decisions significantly?** This question is also targeted at the level of agency of adolescents in such decision-making processes.

2 **Which family/household, socio-cultural, individual and (infra)structural factors and events contribute to choices regarding schooling in Zambia? How are these related to decisions and journeys of school retention/dropout?**

3 **How can findings from this study be utilized to create evidence-based interventions in Zambia's (secondary) education sector that allow for positive and empowering opportunities for adolescents?**

NB: the full list of research questions is available in the Annex 1.



© Samuel Hall, 2018
Various Round Robin materials from the pilot phase in Lusaka

2

METHODOLOGY

A FRESH APPROACH TO PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

One of the main goals for this study was to **amplify the voices of adolescents** and their communities by following an inductive/knowledge-building and **highly participatory research framework** that emphasises child protection and empowerment. The Round Robin sessions conducted with adolescents were central to this methodology. Samuel Hall (SH) undertook an adapted version of the Round Robin sessions originally designed and implemented University of Edinburgh and the Women's University of Africa for the research project "Addressing Social Norms that Underpin Violence Against Children in Zimbabwe".[24] These are "designed to elicit objective responses that drill down on the multiple dimensions of violence against children", taking an iterative approach and "encouraging contributions from all participants in the group. They have the distinct advantage of encouraging contributions from all participants in the group, allowing each participant an equal opportunity to voice their thoughts, and a space to present their ideas without undue influence by potentially overly assertive individuals".[25]

From the perspective of the adolescent participants themselves, they felt empowered and excited by the exercise. Adolescents across all study locations consistently returned, over the course of the three days, to draw, play games and be **UNICEF's "teen advisors"**.

I am glad that I was picked to be a part of this exercise. I have learned so much and I just want go back to school next year.

I enjoyed all the games especially Age and Gender Timelines *because it was just the boys in that group.*

I enjoyed everything and I wish that you people could come back and help those that do not have money to go to school.

Thank you so much for being with us. We are really happy; you should continue doing this with other children.

Conducted in eight districts across the country – namely Katete, Lunga, Lusaka, Luwingu, Petauke, Mufulira, Rufunsa and Senanga – in 17 locations, the research utilised a mixed-methods approach consisting of 17 Round Robin sessions (three-day-long group sessions with adolescents), 55 case studies, 49 FGDs, and 85 KIIs, and a brief quantitative survey in Lusaka only. The inclusion of further qualitative tools, in addition the Round Robin session, allowed SH to comprehensively investigate the interplay between diverse factors and actors, and identify the key components influencing schooling decisions.

2.1 Adolescent-centred design: A principled approach to research on and with children

Numerous voices have in recent years outlined the importance of a participatory approach in working with children, aligned with Art. 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which introduces the right of children to be heard and to have their voice listened to in international law.[26] Given the centrality of adolescents themselves to the topic being considered in this research, excluding them as drivers of the research would have severely limited the relevance of findings. The question then posed itself: **how best to include adolescents in the research process?**

A main underlying task for this study was to ensure a child- and adolescent-friendly approach that allows them to voice their opinions and perspectives while at the same time generating the information needed for the analysis team to produce relevant results and conclusions. SH engaged with a variety of resources (literature, initial conversations with experts, internal feedback loops) to further refine the conceptual understandings underpinning this study and answer this question. The following conceptual considerations informed our approach:

- Based on the lack of knowledge that exists around decision-making processes and individual school dropout/retention journeys

24 Fry, D., Hodzi, C. and T. Nhenga, "Addressing Social Norms that Underpin Violence Against Children in Zimbabwe: Findings and Strategic Planning Document. Harare: Ministry of Public Services, Labour and Social Welfare", 2016.
25 Ibid.
26 Lansdown, 'Every Child's Right to Be Heard', 2011.

Box 1 - Inclusion of adolescents along the study cycle

Recognising the role of adolescents as independent "agents of change" and central to this research project, SH considered them not just as interlocutors whose voices must be consulted, but also as actors in the design of the research process itself. In order to do so, adolescents were consulted about the research approach in three ways:

- During a scoping mission to Lusaka, research team members consulted with male and female adolescents during open conversations around their schooling journeys and challenges. This feedback informed the initial development of the study approach and tools.
- As part of the pilot exercise, adolescents interviewed were specifically engaged after each tool was conducted to provide feedback on these and broader research questions at the end of each session, allowing the research team to adapt tools to best gather data while ensuring adolescents' well-being.
- Finally, throughout the research process, the SH team engaged with adolescents around the tools to allow them to provide additional information and suggestions and not limit questions to those explicitly raised in the research tools.

in Zambia (see Chapter 3), SH proposed an inductive research approach to this study[27] based on in-depth and rigorous qualitative data collection instead of (solely) using quantitative tools. This study's goal is to uncover unknown knowledge and unheard voices through using such tools as Round Robins. In this way, issues and factors will be explored that may currently be missing from the conversations around these topics, rather than merely testing assumptions.

- A study project on decision-making processes and agency of or involving adolescents naturally must consider child protection and empowerment (see Glossary). SH applied these principles in three ways. Firstly, questions of empowerment and individual agency are at the core of this study, as is the protection of child rights (eg education); this is reflected in the actual research question and their tools. Secondly, the empowerment of adolescents as active agents of knowledge production was ensured by SH through continuous feedback loops with participants (including but also beyond the pilot exercise) and highly participatory tools (Box 1). Finally, SH implemented a rigorous and contextually adapted child safeguarding protocol for its fieldwork and study design, based on our policy for ethical research with children. This protocol specifically considered possible project risks and necessary mitigation measures to address them.
- Ensuring the relevance of this study – to Zambia's Ministry of General Education (MoGE), UNICEF Zambia, other actors and adolescents themselves – was of high priority. SH consulted/approached UNICEF staff and other actors conducting research on similar topics to avoid duplication of efforts, discuss synergies and adapt the research concept and its question(s) to existing knowledge gaps

27 "Inductive reasoning begins with detailed observations of the world, which moves towards more abstract generalisations and ideas. When following an inductive approach, beginning with a topic, a researcher tends to develop empirical generalisations and identify preliminary relationships as he progresses through his research. No hypotheses can be found at the initial stages of the research and the researcher is not sure about the type and nature of the research findings until the study is completed". (https://research-methodology.net/research-methodology/research-approach/inductive-approach-2/).

among stakeholders. This resulted in a stronger focus on actors, journeys and networks of decisions-processes regarding schooling than initially anticipated. In addition, the research now also includes precise questions and tools that are explicitly directed at potential ideas for interventions and general recommendations.

Further, the study proposal and all its tools underwent a rigorous ethical clearance procedure, administered by the Directorate of Research and Post-Graduate Studies at UNZA, with positive results. The study was also endorsed/approved by the National HIV/AIDS/STI/TB Council and the MoGE.

The tools/methods used to answer the main research questions are explained below. Annex 1 provides an overview of categories and questions and maps to what extent specific tools of the study were used to answer various sub-questions.

2.2 Data collection tools

Round Robins: Forums for adolescent self-expression

Three-day Round Robins were conducted with adolescents in each of the eight districts visited. SH targeted younger (age 10-14) and older (age 15-19), male and female adolescents who were either in school or have dropped out of school (sampling strategies are detailed below).[28] The mixed group of adolescents was designed to bring out the breadth of lived experiences within the decision-making processes for school retention and dropout.

The Round Robin sessions used a variety of sub-tools/elements in order to place participants in a comfortable, engaging environment prompting not just additional participation but willingness to challenge each others' opinions and reengage previously discussed points in more depth. Two Round Robin leaders – one male and one female – guided the students through these exercises, including warm-up elements and opportunities for feedback. Each Round Robin session was ended by an open feedback discussion with the participating adolescents to a) enhance the participatory and empowering nature of the tools and b) to allow for continuous adaptions of the tools, if necessary. The key exercises conducted are listed in Figure 2; more detail can be found in Annex 2.

Given the focus on potentially sensitive topics in Zambia, and the risk of child protection-related issues coming up, the tools were designed to be **contextually and culturally sensitive and adaptive** (eg by gender- or age-splitting Round Robin sessions for particular questions, such as those around sexuality).

Other qualitative tools: Bringing in key voices

This research used three additional tools to provide an alternative platform for adolescent voices and to bring in the perspectives of key actors involved in decision-making processes or experiencing the results of such decisions. See Annex 2 for more details regarding these tools.

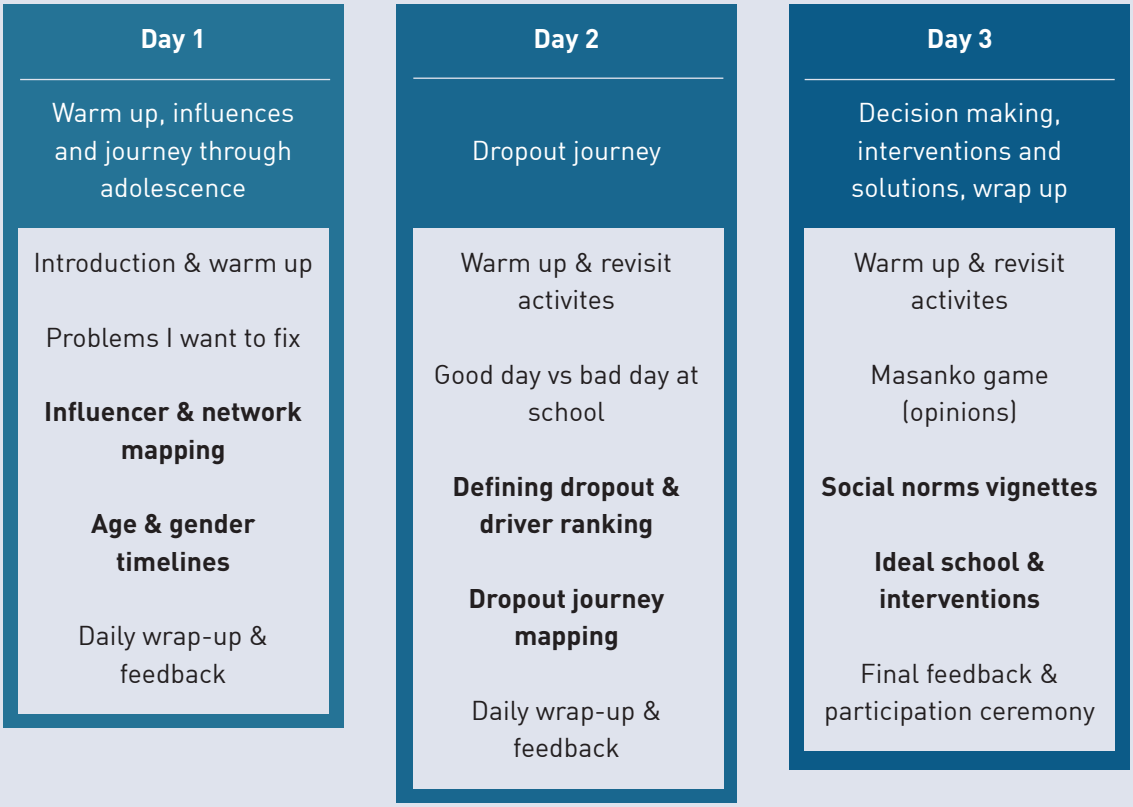
- Adolescent case studies: Conducted in-depth interviews with **adolescents** to overcome potential bias and psychosocial barriers of speaking freely in group sessions, using a narrative approach and enabling participants to "tell their stories". Two-thirds of the conducted case studies featured additional interviews with **parents or caretakers** of the child.

- FGDs with parents and teachers: Held discussions with three groups – **parents of adolescents in school, parents of adolescents out of school and teachers** – to capture those directly involved in decision-making processes or experiencing the results of such decisions.

- KIIs: Interviewed key stakeholders, including **head teachers, traditional/community leaders, government officials, and staff**

28 Adolescents who have never been to school are not a target group of this study, as – despite a large potential thematic overlap – those cases would require and adaptation of the research concept and scope.

Figure 2 - Round Robin activities by day



of NGOs and/or CSOs and international organisations, to understand the contextual and national/local frameworks.

Quantitative tools

The study's quantitative fieldwork – consisting of an in-person survey on household level and an SMS-based survey via UNICEF's *U-Report* platform, both targeting male and female adolescents – was conducted in Lusaka District only, to deliver the following outcomes:

- Providing a basis for understanding of how representative UNICEF's *U-Report* data is of adolescents overall in Lusaka, and
- Providing points of triangulation for the findings from the qualitative research in Lusaka.

SH created a set of 20 questions used in the surveys. Ultimately, given the concerns regarding the *U-Report* data, only the in-person data is used in this report. See Annex 2 for more details regarding the approach to the quantitative data collection.

Enumerator training and quality assurance

All selected enumerators participated in a primary three-day training on qualitative tools, followed by a three-day pilot emphasising ethical research (especially but not only for interviewing children), data quality control and extensive opportunity to practice tools. A one-day training and pilot was also held for the in-person quantitative survey. To ensure close monitoring of field activities and data oversight, a number of additional refresher trainings and quality assurance mechanisms were put in place. For additional details on data collection procedures and data quality, see Annex 2.

Table 2 - Selected locations by district

	Katete	Lunga	Lusaka	Luwingu	Mufulira	Petauke	Rufunsa	Senanga	**Total**
Urban			2	1	2	1		1	**7**
Town	1						1		**2**
Rural	1	1		2		1	1	2	**8**
Total	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	3	**17**

Figure 3 - Categories of targeted participants for Round Robin sessions

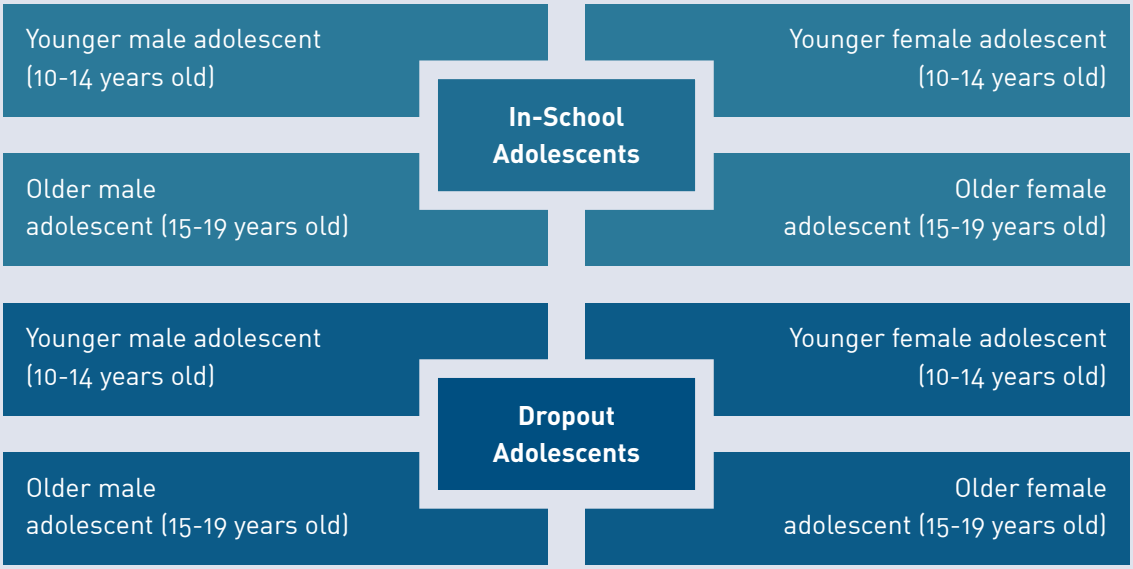


Table 3 - Qualitative sample by adolescent, parents/guardians and teachers

	Round Robin		Case studies		FGDs		**Total**
	male	female	male	female	male	female	
Adolescents	68	68	28	30	-	-	**194**
Parents/ Guardians	-	-	2	30	54	77	**163**
Teachers	-	-	-	-	30	40	**70**

Table 4 - KIIs conducted at the local and national level

	Local	National
UNICEF	-	9
NGO/ CSO staff	11	7
Government officials	9	12
Academic	-	5
Local/ community leaders	11	-
School Staff	12	-
Religious leader	6	-
Business leader	1	-
Total	50	33

2.3 Scope and sampling

The study considered the two defining aspects/ factors in selecting the target locations for field research:

1 **Rural-urban differences** in decision-making on whether adolescents complete their schooling have to be accounted for.

2 **Distance to school** has been identified as a potentially crucial factor in such decision-making processes.

Following these considerations, overall, three types of locations were accounted for, namely urban areas[29] or major towns in the respective districts, rural locations with close proximity to a secondary school and rural locations classified as "far from school" (Table 2; see Annex 2 for more detailed breakdown). According to UNICEF staff and MoGE staff consulted, the GRZ/MoGE defines "far from school" as distances of 5 km or more.

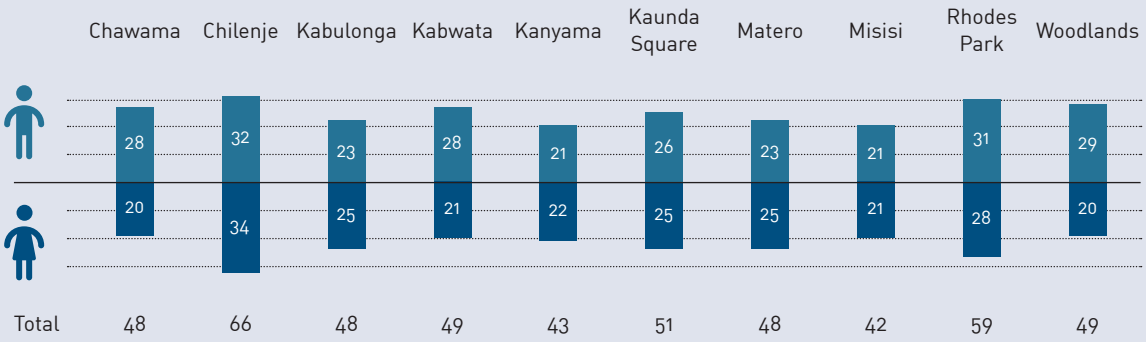
Qualitative Sampling

For all qualitative tools, a purposeful sampling strategy was undertaken to identify the participants for each tool, designed to get diverse perspectives of adolescents. Due to the nature of purposeful sampling, **the qualitative sample is not representative.** The selection criteria for participants vary from tool to tool. While KIIs were selected by purely considering how much detailed information a participant could deliver about adolescents, the education system and/or school dropouts, the selection for Round Robins, FGDs and Case Studies follow the principles of diversity and sensitivity to vulnerability. In this regard, the participants were selected by creating diverse groups/cases based on gender and age. In addition, individuals or families with high vulnerability (for example, female-headed households, persons with disability, HIV status, early marriages, etc) were particularly targeted. See Annex 2 for detailed sampling approach.

Each Round Robin involved eight adolescents per target location and needed to account for at least two dimensions (age and gender) as well

29 According to the 2015 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey Report, urban areas are defined by population size (minimum of 5,000) and type of economic activity.

Figure 4 - In-person surveys by location and gender (Lusaka only)



as adolescents in school and out of school. For each target location, the selected participants represented eight different categories (Figure 3).

Target numbers for activities in all districts were met or exceeded. See Annex 2 for more detail regarding targets. Figure 5 provides a map of the total number of activities per district, while Table 3 and Table 4 indicate the total number of individuals involved in this research.

Quantitative Sampling

503 in-person interviews were conducted (Figure 4), well above the target of 400 set to provide a statistically significant sample of adolescents in Lusaka and with sufficient granularity to allow for analyses around specific variables. In order to provide a sample representative of Lusaka's overall demographics, 10 target areas, representative of overall wealth demographics in Lusaka, were identified (see Annex 2 for selection of locations). Within each area, enumerators were to conduct a target of 40 interviews.[30] Enumerators were given randomly selected starting points within each neighbourhood and branched out from there to conduct interviews by knocking at every third building.

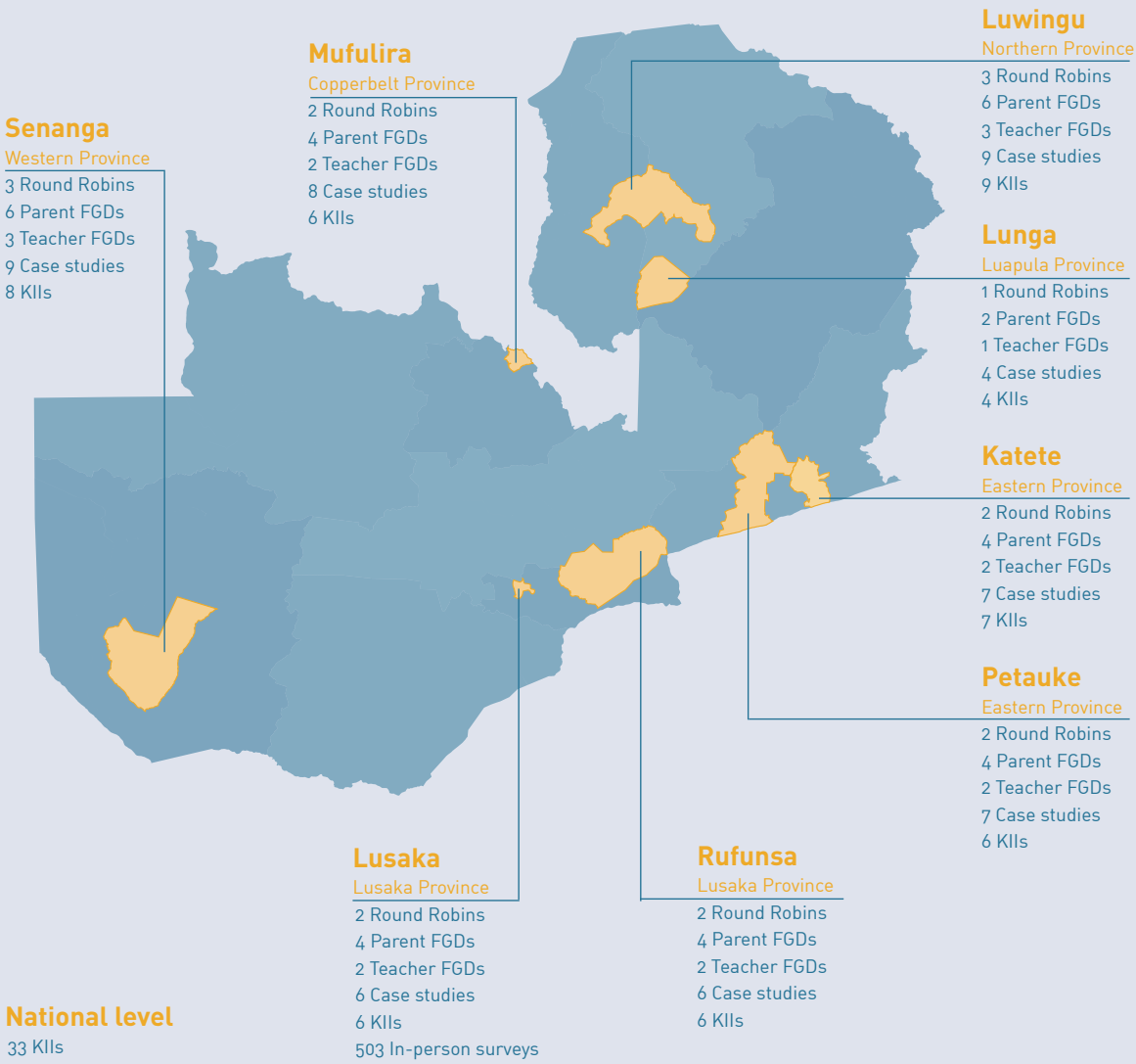
The *U-Report* survey was implemented by UNICEF's *U-Report* Focal Point. The final *U-Report* data set featured a total of 1,081 individual respondents/interviews. See Annex 2 for sampling approach and ultimate limitations of the dataset.

2.4 Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the process of finding, and linking, themes and patterns through (often) disparate data and making sense of how these themes provide explanations of what is being studied. The first step of analysis was a deductive approach to coding using *Dedoose*, a cross-platform application, as a means to organise the data by research question, while also allowing for inductive identification of emerging themes. Based on the research questions and refined as early results came in, the research team developed and internally piloted a code-book (including sub-codes for each research question) to ensure the relevance of the coding structure and consistent code application by the analysts. The coding structure was applied to all

30 On weekdays, enumerators were instructed to conduct interviews between 2pm and 6pm; on weekends, over the course of the day to ensure, as much as possible, that the target population be available at home.

Figure 5 - Map of data collection activities per districts



transcripts and included disaggregation by key characteristics, such as sex, age, district, etc for more nuanced analysis.

Each code was analysed to generate emergent themes through an inductive process. Inductive analysis avoids presupposing hypotheses regarding respondents' experiences and thus allows unexpected experiences to surface based on respondents' most salient points. The team used a collaborative process to compare emergent themes, triangulate across data sources and synthesise findings.

The first step in the **quantitative analysis** of the in-person survey was to derive simple statistics through cross-tabs by disaggregating the data through demographics such as age, poverty-level, gender, and other demographics deemed influential in qualitative analysis. Combined with findings from the qualitative analysis, the simple crosstabs informed a more rigorous linear regression conducted in *STATA* to explore the correlation between variables.

See Annex 2 for detailed discussion on determining the quality of the *U-Report* data.

2.5 Challenges and limitations

Research design

The heavily qualitative approach was specifically selected to allow for an understanding of *how* decisions are made. The following must be kept in mind when considering results:

- **This research was not designed to provide statistically representative data**; granularity (geographic, age-based, socio-economic, etc) is thus of indicative nature.
- **Sub-themes of relevance to the overall topic are included and addressed in this report only when they emerge as findings from the data.** These include, for example, child labour, disability, health and others. The focus of the study is exploring the key factors and actors coming out from the research to provide actionable and appropriate recommendations.

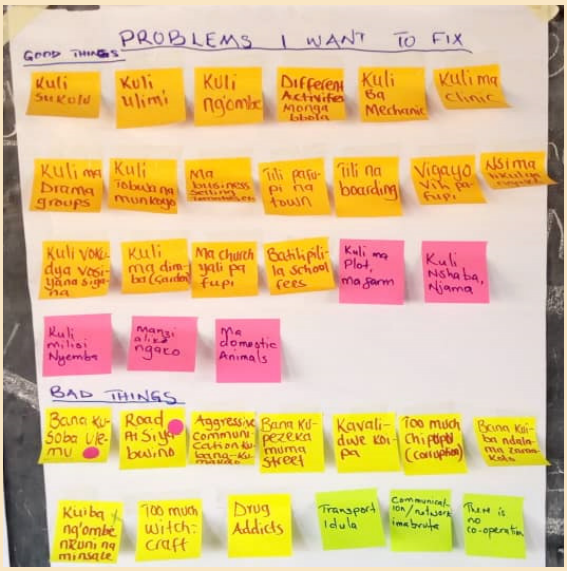
Fieldwork

As teams worked hard to ensure the success of the fieldwork over eight districts – in particular, with the hard deadline posed by the rainy season – the logistical challenges of reaching remote locations made access difficult. Other challenges included:

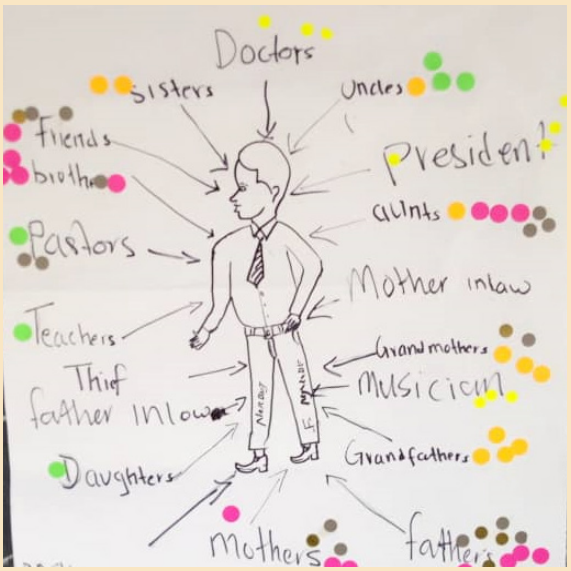
- Heavy rains: Whilst fieldwork was concluded prior to roads becoming impassable – and the field plan carefully structured to ensure fieldwork was first conducted in more remote locations – this nonetheless posed a significant challenge for travels, recruitment, participation and recording in several districts, specifically Luwingu, Mufulira, Senanga and Lusaka. In Lusaka, two additional days were added to the fieldwork to account for rain-generated delays.
- Accessing households/participants in wealthier areas: The Lusaka quantitative data collection team in particular faced challenges in accessing participants in wealthier areas, where residents were also more likely to push back against the team being there to gather data.
- Accusations of Satanism: In several more rural locations (including Luwingu), some local residents expressed concerns that the teams were involved in Satanism. The close collaboration between the research team and local authorities, as well as permission letters, which were shared, assuaged these concerns.
- Enumerator changes: Two trained enumerators had to cancel their participation before the start of fieldwork; these were immediately replaced with other trained enumerators. One additional enumerator had to cancel her participation after Phase 1 of fieldwork – she was replaced with a newly trained enumerator, and the training was conducted by the Project Officer in Lusaka after Phase 1. The contract of one enumerator was terminated early.
- Participant recruitment challenges: Ongoing examinations over the course of data collection created some complications in recruitment and participation for students and teachers, as the research team prioritised not disrupting planned activities. This challenge was mitigated differently at each location but always in close communication with the respective school.

Despite the above-mentioned challenges, data collection was completed in all locations in a timely fashion, reaching targets without any major incidents. Overall, field teams and SH staff established positive relationships with local contacts, such as head teachers, MoGE officials, NGO staff and others. Additionally, in most target areas, local contacts and communities were very supportive of the data collection activities (eg schools were providing rooms from Round Robin sessions, chiefs and indunas were mobilizing adolescents and parents, etc).

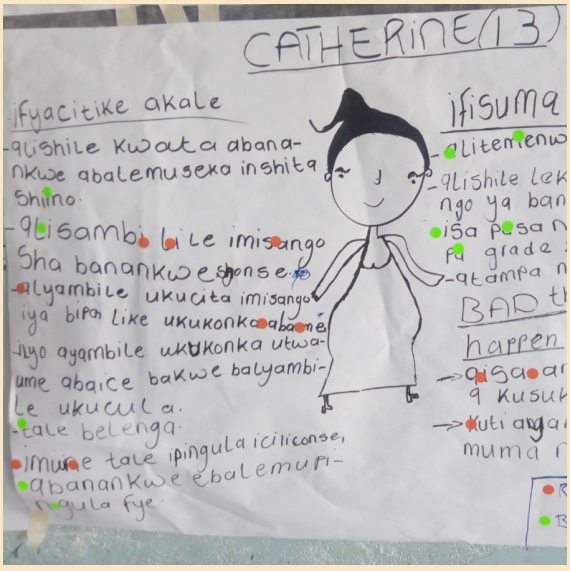
IMPRESSIONS: ROUND ROBIN MATERIALS



© Samuel Hall, 2018
Problems I Want to Fix from a Round Robin session in Petauke

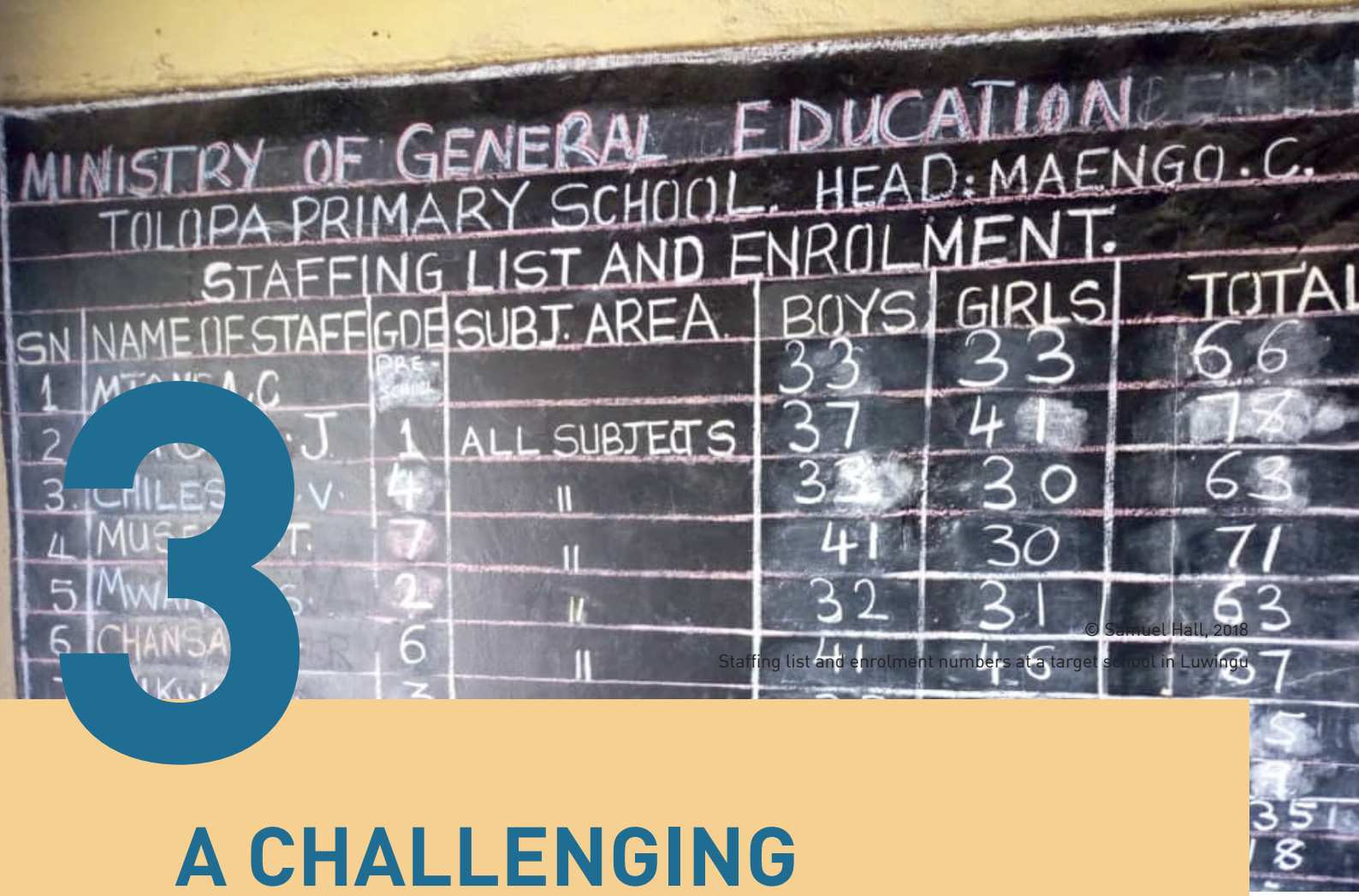


© Samuel Hall, 2018
Influencer Mapping (boys) from a Round Robin session in Petauke



© Samuel Hall, 2018
Vignette responses from a Round Robin session in Luwingu

© Samuel Hall, 2018
Age & Gender Timeline from a Round Robin session in Rufunsa



© Samuel Hall, 2018

Staffing list and enrolment numbers at a target school in Luwingu

3

A CHALLENGING EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE EXISTING LITERATURE

This study follows calls by education advocates who have urged the GRZ to consider the quality and availability of education at all levels, including the socio-economic push-pull factors impacting students and their families when weighing decisions on whether to continue schooling.

The existing literature on the question[31] highlights that while several known factors – such as early marriage, school fees, bullying – do in fact influence decisions on whether adolescents stay in school, these are often viewed from a perspective that does not incorporate all nuances on the broader position of education in Zambia. This research builds on the existing evidence and explores the specificities of the Zambian context, not least key educational statistics and findings on education-influencing factors from the literature. It addresses the gaps on individual dropout/retention journeys and decision-making processes regarding schooling in Zambia.

Figure 6 - Gross-enrolment-rates in Zambia in 2016

Source: Ministry of General Education, 'Educational Statistical Bulletin 2016.'

3.1 Mapping the school journey: Overview and statistical challenges

Education in Zambia is divided into five levels: 1) pre-school, 2) primary school (Grades 1-7), 3) lower secondary school (Grades 8-9), 4) upper secondary school (10-12), and 5) tertiary. While gross enrolment rates (GER)[32] are high for most of the primary education levels, these start dropping by Grade 5 and see a significant decrease by Grade 8, the start of secondary education (see Figure 6).

National exams are required to move from primary to lower secondary and from lower secondary to upper secondary. These are administered at Grades 7, 9 and 12. **UNESCO argues that national exams suggest that "not all children are expected to proceed to secondary education"**[33] – this notion is supported by the fact that these exams are considered as barriers to further education and is reflected in the dropout (push-out) rate observed at these transition points. In an effort to increase the number of examinees, Grade 7[34] and 9[35] exams are free of charge. This measure has had little impact on the rates, in large part owing to the **introduction of school fees** and the **limited places available to students**. Not all those who pass Grade 7 or Grade 9 exams are able to progress,[36] since Zambia has a "limited supply of secondary schools", according to the World Bank, and is anyway able to take in only about 30% of students in Grades 1-5.[37]

This section compiles education data from the most recent available reports, mainly from UNESCO and the MoGE (both from 2016).

31 The review extends, but is not limited to, institutional reports/grey literature, GRZ policies and plans, reports from NGOs and academic articles. For a detailed description of the desk review methodology, see Annex 2. For a detailed description of the desk review methodology, see Annex 2.

32 "The GER indicates the total enrolment of learners in a specific level, regardless of age, in a given year, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population for that level. GER is widely used to show the general level of participation in a given level of education. It indicates the capacity of the education system to enroll learners of a particular age group" (Ministry of General Education (Zambia),

33 UNESCO, "Zambia: Education Policy Review", p. 52.

34 Ibid.

35 Examinations Council of Zambia and UNICEF, "Research Study on Learner Absenteeism from Public Examinations: An Inquiry into the Extent and Causes of Absenteeism at the Primary and Junior Secondary School Level".

36 Education Sector Analysis MoGE 2018, p. 63

37 Saeki et al., "Education Public Expenditure Review in Zambia." p. 55.

Comparing these two sources is challenging because the categories used are inconsistent: whereas UNESCO differentiates between lower and upper secondary school, the MoGE treats it as an undifferentiated category. **The lack of, and inconsistency in the data available is indicative of the difficulties in accurately assessing the Zambian educational sector.**

That said, the following statistics, taken from UNESCO's 2016 *Zambia: Education Policy Review*, offer quantitative insights into the issues that form the focus of this study.

- Between 56.0% (2009) and 66.2% (2016) of students transition from primary to lower secondary school, according to the MoGE;[38] UNESCO sets this number at 89.4% for 2014.[39]
- Lower secondary school enrolment rates increased by 93% between 2004 and 2013.
- Lower secondary school completion rate increased from 25.9% in 2000 to 62.4% in 2012.
- Upper secondary school enrolment rates have decreased, from 50% in 2007 to 33% in 2013.[40]
- As of 2011, only 28% of "all children who enter the school system go on to complete secondary education".[41]
- Enrolment rates in Zambia for primary and secondary education differ significantly between provinces; enrolment of boys and girls in primary is the highest in Central province (NER boys: 114.6%; NER girls: 116.8%), while it is lowest in Lusaka province (NER boys: 64.8%; NER girls: 69.9%). For secondary, the highest enrolment rates are reported for boys in North Western province (38.0%), and the lowest for girls in Northern province (12%).

Figure 7 provides a visual overview of some of these key figures.

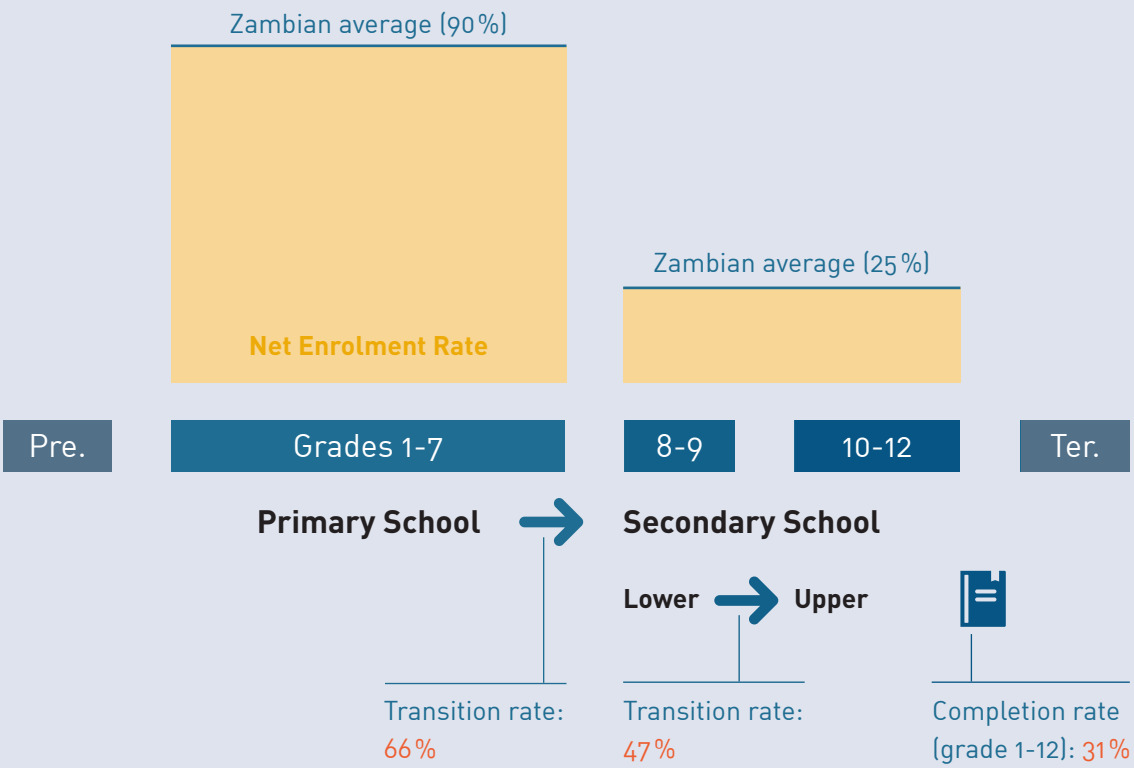
Past approaches to the issue of enrolment and the student's journey in Zambia have emphasised low exam scores and high exam absentee rates. On the latter, these studies indicate that the rates and causes of exam absenteeism varied depending on the student population demographic and geographic setting. Overall, girls were more likely to be absent than boys. The number one cause of exam absenteeism in the (more urban) Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces was teen pregnancy, while early marriage was the prime factor causing exam absenteeism in the rural provinces.[42] Lusaka, Copperbelt and Southern provinces had the lowest absentee rates, while the Western and Northern provinces recorded the highest.[43] Exam absenteeism is often caused by structural – social, economic and political – factors that "have little to do with the learners themselves or their schools".[44]

Zambia has enjoyed impressive gains in primary school attendance and completion. However, "an estimated 195,582 children were not in school in 2013", indicating that the country is still some way off achieving universal education.[45]

As of 2011, only 28% of "all children who enter the school system go on to complete secondary education."

38 Ministry of General Education (Zambia), "Educational Statistical Bulletin 2016", p. 22.
39 UNESCO, "Zambia: Education Policy Review", p. 17.
40 This divergence from trends in other areas — decreasing rather that increasing enrolment — deserves further scrutiny.
41 UNESCO, "Zambia: Education Policy Review", p. 61.
42 "Examinations Council of Zambia and UNICEF, "Research Study on Learner Absenteeism from Public Examinations: An Inquiry into the Extent and Causes of Absenteeism at the Primary and Junior Secondary School Level". This report focuses almost exclusively on girls. More information on why boys miss exams is needed.
43 For a complete breakdown of exam absenteeism factors by region, see Examinations Council of Zambia and UNICEF.
44 Examinations Council of Zambia and UNICEF, p. 33.
45 UNESCO, "Zambia: Education Policy Review", p. 18.

Figure 7 - Overview of the education sector



3.2 Education-influencing factors in Zambia

The relevant research has focused primarily on factors tied to school decisions. These can be summarised by the following three broad categories of factors that play into decision-making on whether students stay in, or leave, school:

1 The quality and availability of schools

2 The cost of secondary school

3 Socio-economic push-pull factors

Quality and Availability of Schools

The school environment is a key factor impacting whether a student remains in, or leaves, school. Observers have noted the allegedly low quality of Zambian schools, including facilities (e.g. buildings and toilets), supplies (e.g. textbooks and access to computers), curriculum and teachers.

Facilities

During adolescence especially, schools, and the facilities and services they do or do not provide, are integral to a child's physical, emotional and intellectual growth. To that end, the following facility-related factors have been attributed to student success (or lack thereof) in Zambia:

- Limited supply of secondary schools: Zambia has a limited supply of secondary schools. Data from the MoGE notes 8,823 total primary schools and 851 total secondary schools as of 2016.[46] The average pupil to teacher ratio (PTR) for secondary schools varies significantly between years and sources, but is generally high, ranging from a lower secondary PTR of 48:1 for 2013,[47] to a lower secondary PTR of 56:1 for 2014.[48] UNICEF identifies overcrowding as a bottleneck to enrolment.[49] The current government has taken steps to address this issue, but the effect of this policy cannot be determined at present.

- School geographic location: Historically, fewer schools have been built in rural areas. Accordingly, rural students often must travel long distances each day to and from school, and this represents an additional deterrent for students to attend.

- Availability of toilets and hygiene facilities: Recent studies show that Zambian girls miss up to 36 days of school a year due to "menstrual-related challenges".[50] To deter menstruation-related absences, schools are encouraged to maintain clean toilets, "menstrual [hygiene] materials", and clean water.[51] There are clear indications that school-related gender-based violence negatively influences school retention of girls in Zambia.[52]

- Availability of resources and supplies: The World Bank notes that there is a shortage of textbooks in Zambia.[53] While its impact on student dropouts (in Zambia or elsewhere) is unclear, the MoGE found in its 2016 report that "the shortage of books and other facilities continue to constrain the quality of education, thereby adversely affecting educational outcomes".[54]

- Availability of school meals: Schools are important sites for feeding, which is widely regarded as contributing to "school attendance, cognition and educational achievement".[55] In 2017, Zambia announced a nation-wide school feeding program,[56] modelled on a pre-existing World Food Programme effort.[57] A comprehensive program evaluation is currently being conducted, according to UNICEF, and may yield Information relevant to further explore the program's potential impact on school enrolment/retention.

Teachers

Overcrowded classrooms, low wages and lack of resources create a tough environment for teachers.[58] While the GRZ has successfully increased enrolment rates across all three levels of basic schooling, Zambian schools are now largely overcrowded. Given the uneven supply and demand of teachers and students, some schools chose to "double-shift", meaning the

46 These data vary from the World Bank's statement in the previous sentence, as there is only 1 secondary school for every 10 primary schools. However, it may be that schools are of differing sizes, so it is unclear if there is a contradiction with the World Bank's data. Ministry of General Education (Zambia), "Educational Statistical Bulletin 2016".
47 UNESCO, "Zambia: Education Policy Review".
48 Education Policy Data Center, "National Education Profile", 2014.
49 UNICEF, "Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Zambia", p. 36.
50 Republic of Zambia, "Advancing Girls" Education Through WASH Programs in Schools: A Formative Study on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Mumbwa and Rufunsa Districts, Zambia", p. 2, accessed 11 April 2018, https://www.unicef.org/zambia/Menstrual_Hygiene_Management.pdf.
51 Republic of Zambia, p. 13.
52 Parkes et al, "Addressing School Related Gender Based Violence in Zambia", 2017.
53 Saeki et al., "Education Public Expenditure Review in Zambia", p. 60–61.
54 Ministry of General Education (Zambia), "Educational Statistical Bulletin 2016", p. 49.
55 World Food Programme, "Home Grown School Feeding Program", 2011.
56 "School Feeding Programme to Be Implemented throughout Zambia-Tukombe", Lusaka Times (blog), 28 March 2017, https://www.lusakatimes.com/2017/03/28/school-feeding-programme-implemented-throughout-zambia-tukombe/. World Food Programme, "Home Grown School Feeding Program".
57 World Food Programme, "Home Grown School Feeding Program".
58 Lisa Cliggett and Brooke Wyssmann, "Crimes against the Future: Zambian Teachers" Alternative Income Generation and the Undermining of Education", Africa Today 55, no. 3 (2009): p. 25–43.

school day is split in two, with half the students attending in the morning hours and the other half in the afternoon.[59] Although double-shifting has allowed Zambia to increase its primary school enrolment, UNESCO has raised questions over its impact on student learning and teacher burnout.[60]

While teacher salaries make up the largest expenditure within the national education budget,[61] teacher absenteeism remains a serious issue in Zambia. **Causes of teacher absenteeism range from personal health issues to family care and, most importantly, the pursuit of additional employment.** Studying teachers in the Southern Province in the early 2000s, Cliggett and Wyssmann found that low wages pushed many teachers to find additional income-generating work:[62] **teachers in both rural and urban areas reported that the salary was not enough to meet their needs and that they required additional income.** The UNESCO report described a range of income-producing strategies, from the common – "farming, gardening and raising livestock" – to the more controversial, such as "selling packets of class material, running small businesses" and sex work.[63]

Low wages and the subsequent time spent seeking additional income means that teachers have limited time to pursue further training and accreditation. This is a concern especially at the secondary school level where "only 14.6% of teachers [are] qualified to teach (e.g. they [have] bachelor's degree qualifications)". In contrast, about 92% of primary school teachers have necessary qualifications, "a Form 5 or Grade 12 certificate".[64]

The need for teachers combined with low formal employment opportunities has resulted in some employed teachers having false accreditation – a phenomenon known as "fake teachers".

"Zambia not only performs below average in international and regional comparisons, but also fails to meet to its own national standards."

Curricula and student performance

The GRZ distributes official syllabi for subjects including English, social studies and sciences, across primary and secondary schools.[65] While both government and, largely, community schools follow these syllabi, Zambia's students sit the same national exams at Grades 7, 9 and 12. Looking at national examinations alongside other national large-scale assessments (e.g. G5NA) and international large-scale assessments (e.g. SACMEQ), "results clearly show that Zambia not only performs below average in international and regional comparisons, but also fails to meet to its own national standards".[66] These shortfalls are widely seen as a reflection of the system,[67] with some experts arguing that a more relevant curriculum is needed, especially for ruler learners.[68]

The Cost of Secondary School

While primary school is both free and compulsory in Zambia, from Grade 8 students must pay annual fees. Fees differ by school. According to a 2015 study by the World Bank, the average

59 UNESCO, p. 66.
60 UNESCO, p. 18.
61 Cliggett and Wyssmann, p. 21.
62 Cliggett and Wyssmann, "Crimes against the Future".
63 UNESCO, p. 33–38. In 2015 the GRZ announced a 4 to 19% salary increase for government teachers – a strategy about which there is little information yet to show whether it has met teachers' needs.
64 UNESCO, "Zambia: Education Policy Review", p. 66.
65 Please see UNESCO's database of primary and secondary school syllabi: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/country/zambia.
66 UNESCO, "Zambia: Education Policy Review", p. 90.
67 Examinations Council of Zambia and UNICEF, "Research Study on Learner Absenteeism from Public Examinations: An Inquiry into the Extent and Causes of Absenteeism at the Primary and Junior Secondary School Level".
68 On ideas for future curricula, see Banda and Morgan, "Folklore as an Instrument of Education among the Chewa People of Zambia".

secondary school fees for government and grant-aided secondary schools combined are about 275 Zambian Kwacha (ZMW) (about $29) per year. The study also indicates that about 60% of students pay fees (others are covered by scholarships).[69] However, recent reporting suggests fees are much higher. In 2016, the MoGE mandated that fees for government boarding schools must fall between 750 and ZMW 1,000 (about $78-$105) per term, and day (non-boarding) schools between ZMW 250-500 (about $21-$52) per term;[70] anecdotal evidence from others studies even points to annual fees of ZMW 2,700 at some schools.[71] Fees can create a significant barrier in Zambia, where the national average monthly household income is ZMW 1,801, with "the top 10% of households earning 56% of total household incomes" as of 2015.[72]

Studies on the subject agree that school fees are prohibitive, especially amongst families who do not see the benefits of sending their children to secondary school.[73] A UNICEF study, carried out between 2010-2014, sought to understand if and how a small increase in monthly income through the provision of cash transfers would improve health and educational outcomes amongst highly impoverished families.[74] After four years of the program, the study found that cash transfers helped increase enrolment for children age 11-14.[75] This is significant, as 13 is the age when most students should transition to secondary school.

School fees are prohibitive, especially amongst families who do not see the benefits of sending their children to secondary school.

Socio-economic Push-Pull Factors

As studies by Day and Evans on interdependence and Clemensen on the mythology of formal education have persuasively argued, socio-economic factors may weigh on the decision of whether a child stays in school.[76]

Geographic and Regional Differences

The Republic of Zambia is divided into 10 provinces, with Lusaka and Copperbelt considered as "predominantly urban" and the rest as "rural" (with urban administrative centres).[77] Poverty rates vary significantly across provinces. In 2015, "rural poverty was estimated at 76.6%, which is three times higher than what was obtaining in urban areas, at 23.4%".[78]

Such differences are also observed in relation to school quality, access, attainment and success, with urban areas registering better outcomes. Government data and a 2013 UNICEF report on exam absenteeism show that Lusaka and Copperbelt provinces both regularly record the lowest dropout, grade repetition[79] and exam absenteeism rates.[80] However, across all provinces,

69 Saeki et al., "Education Public Expenditure Review in Zambia".
70 Chomba Musika, "Revised School Fees Relief to Parents", Zambia Daily Mail, 19 January 2016, https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/revised-school-fees-relief-parents/.
71 Republic of Zambia, "Qualitative Study of Child Marriage in Six Districts of Zambia".
72 Central Statistical Office, "2015 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey Report", p. xv.
73 Nana Clemensen, 'Staging an Educated Self: Linguistic Displays of Schooling among Rural Zambian Children', Anthropology & Education Quarterly 46, no. 3 (1 September 2015): 244–59, https://doi.org/10.1111/aeq.12105.
74 Republic of Zambia Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare, "The Child Grant Program: A Comprehensive Summary of Impacts (2010-2014)", 2016, https://www.unicef.org/zambia/Policy_Brief_CG_final.pdf.
75 Republic of Zambia Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare, p. 7.
76 Day and Evans, "Caring Responsibilities, Change and Transitions in Young People's Family Lives in Zambia"; Clemensen, "Staging an Educated Self", p. 247.
77 Examinations Council of Zambia and UNICEF, "Research Study on Learner Absenteeism from Public Examinations: An Inquiry into the Extent and Causes of Absenteeism at the Primary and Junior Secondary School Level", p. 17.
78 Central Statistical Office, "2015 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey Report", p. 104.
79 Ministry of General Education (Zambia), "Educational Statistical Bulletin 2016".
80 Examinations Council of Zambia and UNICEF, "Research Study on Learner Absenteeism from Public Examinations: An Inquiry into the Extent and Causes of Absenteeism at the Primary and Junior Secondary School Level", p. 17.

more girls drop out of Grades 1-7 than boys. The same is true for Grades 8-12, with the exception of Lusaka Province, where a near equal number of boys and girls drop out of secondary school.[81]

Lastly, students living in flood-prone areas may face particular difficulty getting to school. For example, in the town of Malabo (Western Province), many schools stay closed six months of the year due to flooding.

Health and Social Considerations

Sex, health, gender and social relations factor into decisions around schooling. Given that girls are more likely to drop out of both primary and secondary school across Zambia,[82] the phenomenon is of special concern for education advocates, with a focus on early marriage and pregnancy as key issues.

Early marriage is generally identified as an important factor when asking why Zambian girls leave school at higher rates than boys. Early marriage is the number one cause of exam absenteeism in rural provinces.[83]

Statistics concerning when children marry and what types of marriages they enter into are limited, making it difficult to understand the prevalence and context of the phenomenon.[84] Two UNICEF reports discuss aspects of child marriage in Zambia and its impact on adolescent education. The 2016 *Qualitative Study of Child Marriage in Six Districts in Zambia* found that the most common marriages in the districts sampled were "between peers – girls (from age 12 or 13) and boys (from age 14), usually with an age difference of about two to three years".[85] In line with the age of child marriage identified by UNICEF in 2016, a separate report focusing on education noted that "the peak of dropouts owing to early marriage in absolute and proportional terms happens at Grade 7, exactly at the end of primary education".[86] As this timing may overlap with the onset of menstruation, it turns the spotlight onto the relationship between education, school dropout, and early marriage; it also gives rise to questions about the actual role of marriages in individual dropout journeys and whether decisions about marriages are made for other reasons. For instance, rather than marriage causing dropouts, fees might cause the dropout and the dropout in turn may make marriage more attractive. UNICEF's report on Zambia's adolescents contends that "children's agency" should be included in conversations around early marriage, as many (but not all) children seek out arrangements on their own.[87]

The World Bank's report observes a strong connection between early marriage and pregnancy. According to the latest ZDHS (2013-2014), the number of girls that have begun childbearing increases drastically between age 15 (5%) and 19 (59%),[88] and many reports cite pregnancy as one of the top reasons Zambian girls (but not boys) drop out of school.[89] Given the high number of girls leaving school after becoming pregnant, the GRZ established several policies to encourage re-enrolment. Thus far, there is little research on their efficacy. One MoGE report shows that re-entry rates decreased from 2002 to 2014 but offered little explanation.[90] Although girls have the right to return to school, pregnancy can continue to contribute to dropout for diverse reasons.

81 Ministry of General Education (Zambia), "Educational Statistical Bulletin 2016", p. 23.
82 Ministry of General Education (Zambia), "Educational Statistical Bulletin 2016".
83 Examinations Council of Zambia and UNICEF, "Research Study on Learner Absenteeism from Public Examinations: An Inquiry into the Extent and Causes of Absenteeism at the Primary and Junior Secondary School Level".
84 For instance, a 2015 study by UNICEF suggests a 42% "national prevalence" rate of "female child marriage," one of the highest on the African continent, while the World Bank estimated in 2016 that 28.5% of Zambian adults marry before 18 years of age. The actual prevalence of child marriage seems to be unclear, as Zambia's most recent Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) reports that – for 2013/14 – 16.5% of girls age 15 to 19 were currently married as are 1% of boys in the same age group. See: Republic of Zambia, "Qualitative Study of Child Marriage in Six Districts of Zambia"; Male and Wodon, "Basic Profile of Child Marriage in Zambia"; Central Statistical Office, "Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013-14", 2015.
85 Republic of Zambia, p. 24-25
86 Republic of Zambia, "Qualitative Study of Child Marriage in Six Districts of Zambia", p. 20.
87 UNICEF, "A Report Card of Adolescents in Zambia", 2014, iv, https://www.unicef.org/zambia/A_Report_Card_Of_Adolescents_In_Zambia.pdf.
88 Central Statistical Office, "Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013-14", 2015.
89 The World Bank, "Adolescent Girls in Zambia".
90 The World Bank, p. 1.

Outside of marriage and early pregnancy, other social and health factors likely contribute to dropout rates but, for many of them, little data specific to Zambia is available. Large-scale research by UNESCO and a study in South Africa identify bullying, corporal punishment and verbal abuse as factors that may contribute to increased school absences and dropouts.[91] UNICEF Zambia also attests that violence at school or at home can contribute to dropouts.[92]

Likewise, HIV/AIDS status – both at the individual and household level – is shown to contribute to dropouts in various other sub-Saharan African contexts.[93] Other health issues and disabilities are reportedly clear barriers to participation in education as well as drivers of illiteracy and school dropouts in Zambia.[94]

Finally, hunger and malnutrition are key issues. While the standard number of meals in Zambia is three per day, at the national level only 52.2% of households report having an average of three meals per day.[95] A recent Save the Children report registers significant rates of both wasting and stunting across the country, with the lack of adequate nutrition undermining a child's ability to do well in school and contributing to dropout decisions.[96]

Household Income and Opportunity Costs of Schooling

Academic and development sources differ in how they approach measuring the perceived value of schooling. While it has long been understood that different societies hold different societal norms and expectations for boys and girls,[97] this alone cannot describe why some children do or do not stay in school. Other important push-pull factors include:

- The perceived value of schooling[98]
- The availability of formal employment[99]
- Family income and opportunity costs of children attending school instead of working[100]
- Parental involvement/education level
- Other obligations for adolescents (including marriage and children)[101]

91 Loraine Townsend et al., "The Relationship between Bullying Behaviours and High School Dropout in Cape Town, South Africa", South African Journal of Psychology 38, no. 1 (April 2008): p. 21–32, https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630803800102; UNESCO, "School Violence and Bullying", 2017.
92 UNICEF Zambia, "Analytical Papers – Children Aged 11-18".
93 Francis Emson Dakwa, Chrispen Chiome, and Raphinos Alexander Chabaya, "Poverty-Related Causes of School Dropout – Dilemma of the Girl Child in Rural Zimbabwe", International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development 3, no. 1 (19 April 2014), https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v3-i1/792. Conversely, staying in school has been seen to be correlated with a reduction in HIV acquisition. See: Marie C.D. Stoner et al., "The Effect of School Attendance and School Dropout on Incident HIV and HSV-2 among Young Women in Rural South Africa Enrolled in HPTN 068", AIDS 31, no. 15 (September 2017): p. 2127–34, https://doi.org/10.1097/QAD.0000000000001584.
94 UNESCO, "Zambia: Education Policy Review;" UNICEF, "Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Zambia".
95 2015 Zambia Living Conditions Survey
96 Save the Children, "Malnutrition in Zambia", p. 8-9, 26.
97 USAID, "Meeting the Different Needs of Boys and Girls in Services for Vulnerable Children", June 2013.
98 Day and Evans, "Caring Responsibilities, Change and Transitions in Young People's Family Lives in Zambia".
99 Clemensen, "Staging an Educated Self".
100 Central Statistical Office, "2015 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey Report".
101 Clemensen, p. 248.

Key findings and gaps from the literature

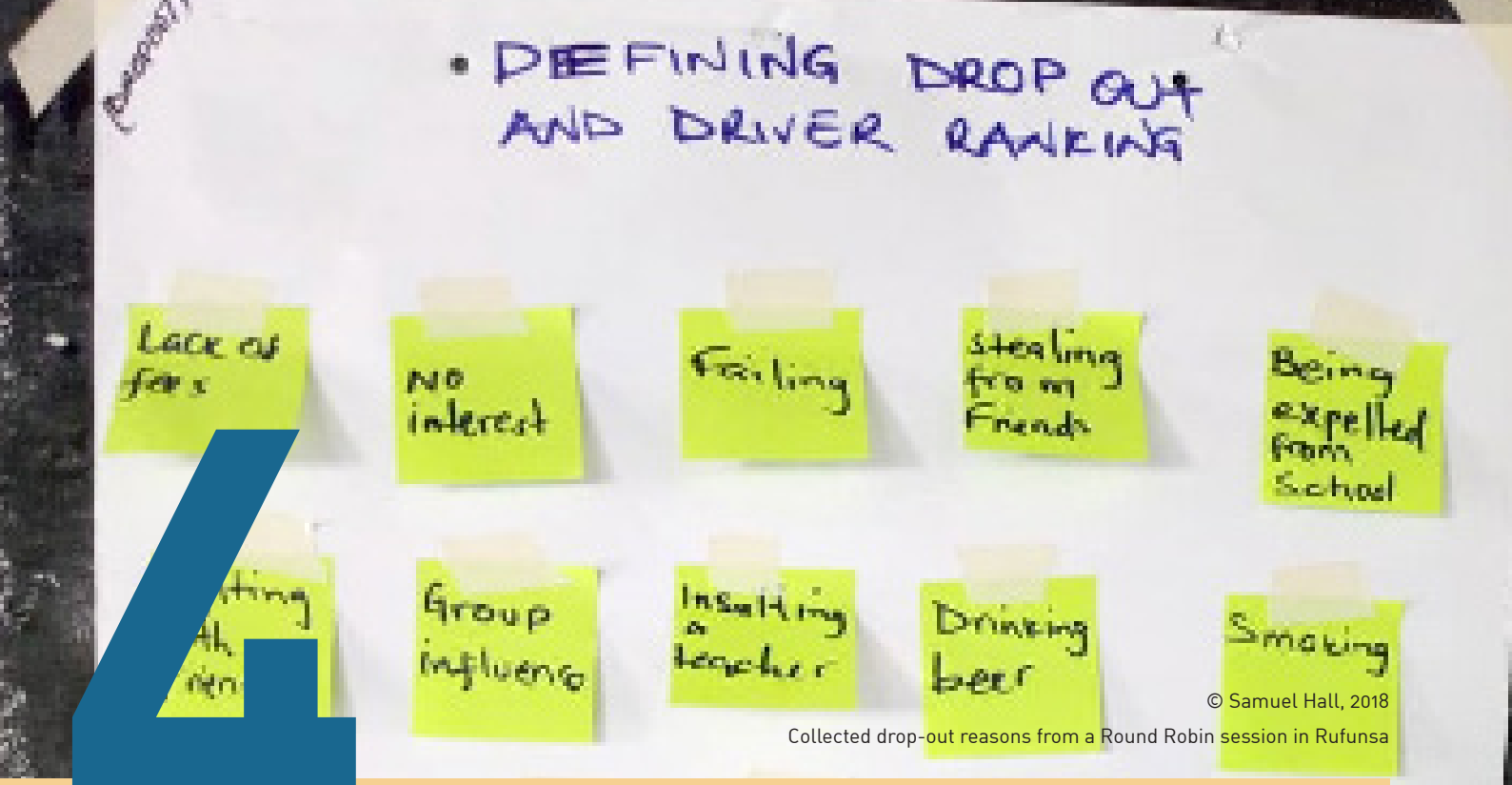
The above review of the literature identified key themes and lines of enquiry on decision-making processes and individual school dropout/reception journeys in Zambia. These include early marriage and/or pregnancy, cultural practices in particular provinces, school/exam fees for (secondary) education, peer pressure and discrimination at schools and the low availability/accessibility of schools, amongst others.

The appraisal also highlighted significant evidence gaps in the Zambian context:

- Little evidence exists that specifically focuses on the key actors and processes involved in decision-making, in particular on the agency of adolescents and other actors.

- While past studies have identified factors influencing decisions on whether adolescents stay in school, these are often viewed from a single rather than multi-variable perspective, and thus do not consider a more holistic picture of these journeys.

The greatest gap to address is thus the interaction of factors and agents in school journeys as well as the complexity of these decisions.



© Samuel Hall, 2018

Collected drop-out reasons from a Round Robin session in Rufunsa

4

SETTING THE STAGE

THE CONSEQUENCES OF STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

"You need to stand on your own and fight."

I worked as a maid. The whole term, I never came to school. I did things that I had never done before. I was told to wake up at five hours [5 am] to prepare a child I cared for for school. I went through a lot when I was working.

I started questioning myself, "why me?". There is no one who can support me. I remembered those words from my father, when I was in Grade 2, "you need to stand on your own and fight."

Then I said I will be educated, no matter what happens. Even if things were bad, I just said. I will complete school. That's how I managed to get money to pay for my school fees. My mom wanted to help but she never had anything to give me.

- Faith, Age 17, Rufunsa

Faith's school journey was one of starting and stopping school as she moved between the households of various family members – her father and stepmother, her mother, an uncle – and working as a maid to earn money for her school fees. She loved school, being with friends and winning a literature competition in Grade 3, but she also struggled in school and had to repeat

Grade 8. Faith found herself in a context and an education system that did not make it easy for her to complete secondary school, particularly coming from a poor household; she had to figure out how to do it on her own.

This research posits a more comprehensive approach to understanding decisions around school attendance by considering the "interdependence" of children; families; life events; and socio-cultural, socio-economic, political and historical realities.[102] Yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, there are very real structural barriers that need to be overcome, and these are highlighted repeatedly by respondents as dominant factors that contribute to adolescent dropout. While Zambia has achieved near universal primary school enrolment, its standardised testing scores are consistently some of the lowest in the region.[103] Such statistics suggest that rote systems and standards place less focus on *learning* than output, which limits a student's emotional, educational and creative development[104] and undermines the dream of an education for adolescents like Faith. With regard to economic challenges, in Zambia, the impacts of poverty on the education system itself and subsequent decision-making around education are felt at multiple levels, and from multiple fronts.

Key findings for this chapter are presented below as they answer the study's main research questions.

Actors/ Agency - Chapter Key Findings

- Teacher engagement with students – both their ability to provide quality education and a positive educational environment – is critical to adolescent perceptions of school.
- Government efforts to address school attendance through policy is only partially successful due to uneven application.

Factors/ Journeys - Chapter Key Findings

- A strong valuing of education emerged from all respondents, in rural and urban locations alike. However, that value is often challenged by the frequent assessment that it will not lead to employment opportunities
- Financial difficulties support the continuation of unhealthy coping mechanisms by families – in particular, child marriage.
- Difficulty in accessing school, poor facilities and equipment, and high costs discourage prioritisation of schooling at the household level.

102 Caroline Day and Ruth Evans, "Caring Responsibilities, Change and Transitions in Young People's Family Lives in Zambia," Journal of Comparative Family Studies 46, no. 1 (2015): p. 137–52.

103 US Agency for International Development (USAID), "Education Project: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy 2012-2017," 2013.

104 Dennis Banda and W. John Morgan, "Folklore as an Instrument of Education among the Chewa People of Zambia," International Review of Education 59, no. 2 (2013): 197–216. p. 205.

4.1 Endemic poverty

Considering economic challenges at a broader level

All types of respondents, across all locations visited, emphasised poverty as the "leading cause of school dropouts among adolescents". It is impossible to disconnect this broader context from decision-making – or lack thereof – around schooling, as many respondents felt forced by the very severity of their financial circumstances. The next chapters underline how, at the individual level, poverty can cause adolescents to seek employment rather than education, and can limit the quality of their education due to financial responsibilities; at the household level, parents are forced to decide how to allocate limited available funds, with education not always coming out as the top priority. At the community level, respondents detailed the impacts of secondary effects of poverty on education quality and therefore attendance, as well as culturally common coping mechanisms such as early marriage, which frequently contribute to dropout decisions.

At a very basic level, households may be forced to choose between school and necessities, such as food, and even adolescents attending school may find it difficult to concentrate due to hunger:

Most of the Zambians are below the poverty line. They cannot afford to pay for their children. Even health sometimes, if the children are not well fed, they fail to stay in school because of hunger. Most of the children are very vulnerable. – Government official, Luwingu

This was emphasised by teachers and repeated by adolescents themselves. When asked to recommend ideas to improve retention, adolescents themselves were most likely to call for feeding programmes – a lesson perhaps built on their own experiences.

Financial difficulties support the continuation of unhealthy coping mechanisms by families, in particular child marriage. Among adolescent girls, 16.5% of those aged 15-19 are married (for boys, this figure drops to 1%); 31.4% of married 20-24 year old women were married before age 18.[105] These rates vary by province (with Western province having the lowest female child marriage rates and Northern and Copperbelt the highest) but, overall, these are high by worldwide standards. Several past studies delve into the rationale for child marriage. These highlight the economic linkages which this research also raises.[106] Even in cases where families do not explicitly push daughters to marry for the bride wealth, the girls themselves can view marriage as their only option.

If the man is rich and you are poor, you can't refuse because when you are married, you will enjoy using whatever he has. – Adolescent, Petauke

And early marriages, it's the parents. Some children will be forced to go into early marriages because parents feel they have to rip benefits from their children as they might die anytime. Because of the poverty levels, parents tend to think the number of girl children I have is the more money I receive. – Teacher, Mufulira

Because of poverty and hunger, parents end up marrying off children at tender age. This is so because they may want to use that bride price to resolve other problems or even to shift responsibility to the man marrying. – Adolescent, Luwingu

UNICEF's recent research on early marriage in Zambia explicitly includes transactional marriages as one of the seven types of early marriages it identifies, noting, "such marriages are generally frowned upon from a moral or social point of view yet tolerated from an economic perspective because they can bring a series of financial or material benefits to a girl and her family".[107]

105 According to the 2013-14 ZDHS as cited in: Population Council et al., "Child Marriage in Zambia"
106 Steinhaus, et al., "She Cannot Just Sit Around Waiting to Turn Twenty: Understanding Why Child Marriage Persists in Zambia", p. 3
107 Republic of Zambia, Qualitative Study of Child Marriage in Six Districts of Zambia, p. 25

Child marriage has a disproportionate impact on female adolescents. **Boys may be more impacted by child labour as well as other more traditional activities (such as cattle herding and fishing).**

"Some people would say, 'even if you get educated these days, you won't find a job'."

Weighing the value of education

A pervasive narrative emerged across all respondents, in rural and urban locations alike, around the intrinsic value of education and its necessity to succeed in life.

Without good grades, you can't go anywhere in the society, you can just end up burning charcoal. – Adolescent, Luwingu

Even out-of-school adolescents who expressed the position that dropping out was the right decision for them often articulated strong feelings of regret as they talked about their schooling journeys. On deeper exploration, however, **problematic and contradictory views around education as a solution to poverty emerge.** On one hand, education was presented as the only way to get employment:

You need to work hard because when you go for "fast money," it has an expiry date. So when you work hard in the exams, it means you are building your future until you reach the top. – Adolescent, Luwingu

Interviewed parents and guardians generally reported valuing school, regardless of their own educational background and whether their children are in school, and generally expressed a sense of responsibility or regret with regard to their children's education.

My role is to encourage my children and tell the importance of school. – Parent/guardian, Senanga

The weight of teachers' influence, and even that of local leaders, in continuing this narrative is clear. However, on the other hand, a concern raised was unrealistic expectations around the impact of school (that it would lead directly to white collar jobs) making it more difficult to promote education when it is quite clear that these expectations are not being realised. A teacher in Lusaka described the situation as follows:

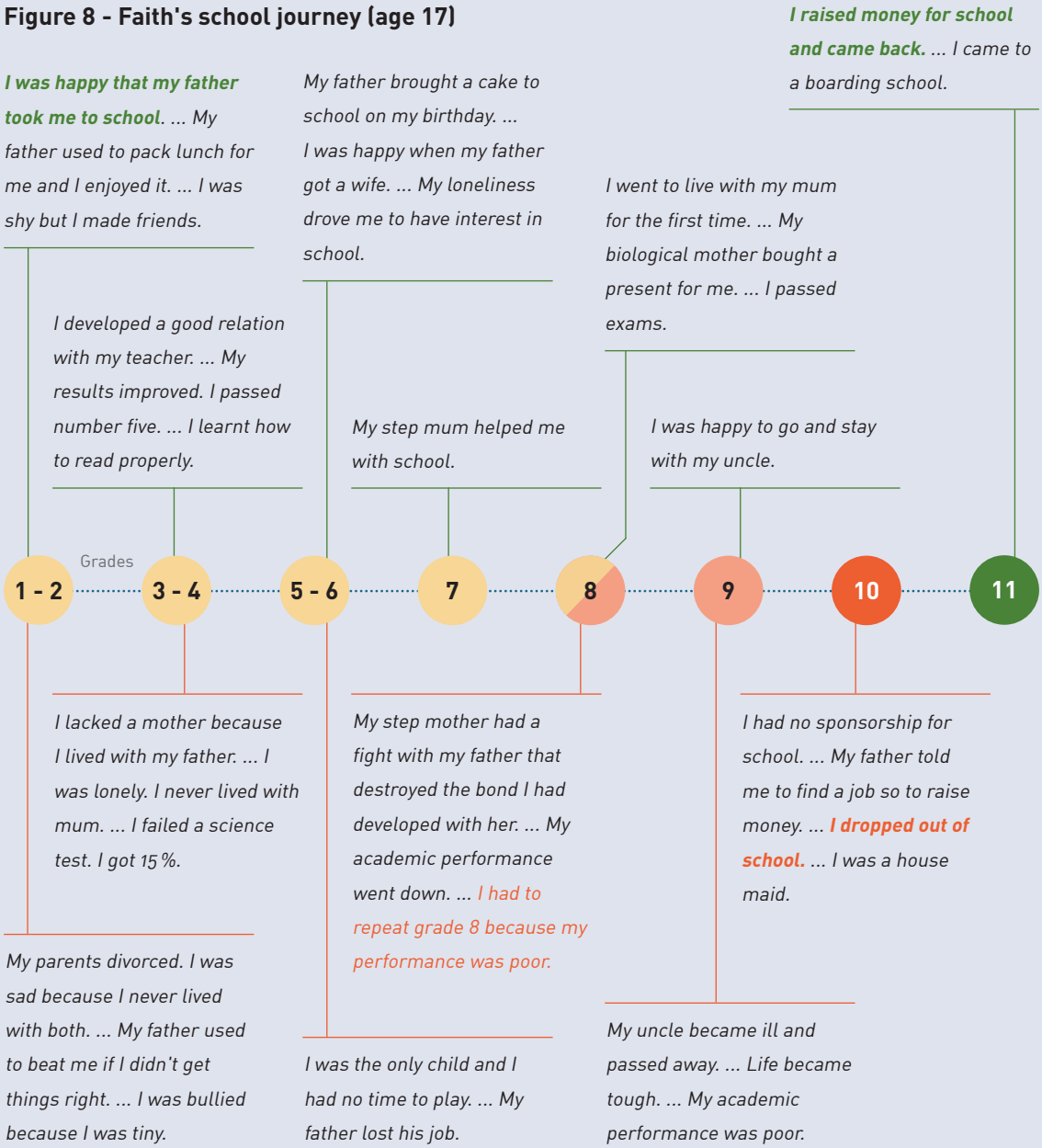
Some people would say, 'even if you get educated these days, you won't find a job'. Hence, when a child is going to school, he/she will think to themselves that, 'even if I continue with school, in the end I will not find a job, so it is better to just drop out'. – Teacher, Lusaka

This view was often expressed as "others might think that …" on behalf of parents and guardians as opposed to personal views, which is likely a reflection of understanding the "right thing" to say during an interview.

In her study on student aspirations in Zambia, Bajaj explored the persistent inter-generational belief that schooling will lead to employment, a belief that began during independence when education was seen as a vehicle for government employment.[108] Bajaj contends that this belief has persisted despite evidence otherwise. Critical voices from experts and adolescents have questioned the actual value and role of formal (secondary) education in Zambia, in particular the often normative understanding of formal education as a driver for individual and societal progress. Discussed in Chapter 6, lack of motivation for young people to continue school has been attributed to three key sources: the lack of desirable jobs for secondary school graduates, the irrelevance of subject matter to localised job

108 Bajaj, Monisha. "Intergenerational Perspectives on Education and Employment in the Zambian Copperbelt." Comparative Education Review 54, no. 2 (May 1, 2010): 175–97. https://doi.org/10.1086/651138. p. 183.

Figure 8 - Faith's school journey (age 17)



markets, and the temptation of income-earning opportunities outside of school for adolescents from lower-income families. Essentially, while education was previously seen as a "key to success", it is no longer believed to result in the opportunities dreamed of.

Faith's timeline (Figure 8) exemplifies some of the concerns voiced about the valuing of education by parents; she ended up having to find employment to pay for the last years of her schooling. While rarely discussed so explicitly, the weight of these factors on decision-making processes outlined in this report indicates that a more realistic assessment around the value of education is being made at all levels.

4.2 Infrastructural limitations

The realities of individual schools themselves also contribute to adolescents' leaving school. Key to this is to consider the various ways adolescents experience and perceive schools and schooling and how it might influence their school-related decisions. Within education and development literature varying definitions of school quality exist,[109] but critical is the relevance of the educational experience and pedagogy to individual learners.[110] Among respondents, there were clearly concerns about the quality of schools themselves and the education provided.

Distance to school

Respondents were more likely to note the distance to school as a problem in rural areas, but even in certain district town centres, it is an issue. While in Lusaka distances to school were less frequently named, there too some adolescents complained.

Very few parents are able to afford transport money to give their children. This discourages children from going to school as it might take some four hours to get there and also when school is done for them to walk home in the evening is very risky. – Community leader, Lusaka

Distance to school poses a number of challenges, highlighted by respondents, which can contribute to dropout decisions.

- Complicated access: In many districts, children simply walk to school. These distances can range as far as 10-15 kilometres (as detailed in Rufunsa). Weather conditions further complicate this, seasonally blocking access to school for many adolescents. A teacher in Rufunsa detailed, for example, that there is a stream in the area which children must cross in order to get to school.

[During the rainy season] the bridge is carried away so there is no way a child can come to school. So, during rainy season, we experience absenteeism almost the whole season. – Teacher, Rufunsa

In Lunga, the secondary school draws children who come in canoes from as far as Nsalushi Island.

We have noticed many adolescents who come from these far areas stopping to come to school as they are discouraged with distance and transport costs. They are also told by their parents to just stay home. – Teacher, Lunga

- Fatigue/ lack of concentration: Unsurprisingly, adolescents who walk long distances to school are tired on arrival, and thus likely to perform less well in school. In some cases, teachers' active punishment of tired or late children further discourages them from attending school.

Because of the long distances from home to school, you find that you get tired before you reach school and by the time the teacher will be teaching, you are dozing. Sometimes they beat and punish at school if you come late. – Adolescent, Mufulira

"We have noticed many adolescents who come from these far areas stopping to come to school as they are discouraged with distance and transport costs."

109 Lee and Zuilkowski, "Conceptualising Education Quality in Zambia".
110 Lee and Zuilkowski, p. 561.

Box 2 - Disability and education in Zambia

The 2014 Zambia *Out-Of-School Children* Report finds that disability is a strong barrier to attending school in Zambia. "While the Zambian policy framework takes into account the needs of children with special need (Educational Reform GRZ 1977: 23, Focus on Learning MESVTEE 1992, and the 1996 Educating Our Future from 1996), disability still remains a barrier to education access. One of the main reasons why this is the case in Zambia, as elsewhere in the world, is that persons with disabilities are 'invisible'".[111] Past research on disability in education has highlighted 1) this "invisibility" and 2) the resulting lack of specific programming and infrastructure to allow children with disabilities to attend school.

This research confirmed these findings. Limited concerns around disability and/or special education needs were evidenced by respondents when discussing dropouts. The few points flagged focused on lack of access to school (inability to walk long distances), a disability stigma (leading to mockery which would cause one to drop out of school, discrimination or an "inferiority complex"). Only one teacher underlined questions of appropriate infrastructure for disabled children when asked about current school quality. The invisibility of disabilities in the Zambian context is thus reflected in the lack of consideration accorded to them by most respondents and perhaps even the lack of language to identify and discuss disability in the schooling context.

- Real and/or perceived dangers on the way to school: Reported risks of long journeys to school ranged from the above-mentioned "natural" problems due to flooding, to wild animals and more human risks. **The long distance to school had a clear gendered impact, with respondents, particularly parents and guardians, more commonly noting the trip as dangerous for girls.** Respondents also noted distance as a specific access challenge to disabled adolescents, who may not be able to walk the required distances (see Box 2 for discussion of findings regarding disability).

  The problem of access is not limited to students: in Luwingu, a religious leader flagged infrastructural challenges forcing teachers to live far from school.

  The teachers have no houses within the school [area]. The teachers are walking long distances to come to school. – Pastor, Luwingu

Facilities and equipment

The MoGE noted a total of 851 secondary schools in Zambia as of 2016.[112] Given that the 2013-2014 Zambia Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS) places 25% of the population between the ages of 10 and 19 for a population estimated at 16.4 million in 2017 by the Central Statistical Office, there are not enough schools for eligible students.[113] Despite the clear inability to cater for the number of eligible pupils, this issue was raised only at the national level, not locally. This could reflect the fact that push out factors, such as the cut-off points for Grade 7 and 9 exams, are attributed more to adolescent performance than to government efforts to cull the eligible population for Grade 8 and 10.

However, the lack of schools comes with a corresponding limited number of teachers, with the result that classrooms may be overburdened.

111 UNICEF, Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Zambia, p. 32
112 Ministry of General Education (Zambia), "Educational Statistical Bulletin 2016"
113 NB: a larger age range has been considered here due to the limitations of the population breakdown by range in the ZDHS. However, these numbers come out to an average 4,761 students per school – clearly high, even if cut in half.

The first challenge that we have is teachers. The teacher to pupil ratio is not the best. What is happening is that we have less teachers and more pupils. So that's the biggest challenge. Because normally back in the day what we knew was that they were supposed to be 40 pupils in a class, but this time we have a teacher having 90 children in one class. Some of them have 100, 130 to 150, so there's congestion and because of that there's a lot of overburdening of the teachers. – Religious leader, Petauke

The schools which do exist are often too small, old or face challenges due to broader infrastructural insufficiencies. In Senanga, for example, one parent highlighted that the school was [said to have been] built in 1935, and had not changed since then. While the infrastructural challenges detailed below do not generally[114] constitute an insurmountable barrier to attending school, they contribute to a less effective and comfortable school experience, and may thus indirectly impact dropout decisions. The lack of infrastructure can directly impact the quality of education received, as flagged by a religious leader in Luwingu.

Generally, we have few classroom blocks [...] we have got double classes and so I can conclude to say infrastructure-wise we are still lacking. This makes learning difficult because learners who report in the afternoon have few hours of learning and teachers will be tired by that time. – Pastor, Luwingu

The Round Robins asked children to describe and draw an ideal school; the selection of elements on which they focused highlights the gaps at their current schools. While some points, such as playing fields and libraries, are expected, a focus on more "basic" infrastructural elements makes clear that these are not currently always present (Box 3).

Beyond the condition of the schools, the equipment inside them is often also lacking.

Generally, we have few classroom blocks [These schools don't have enough materials like tables, desks, chairs and so on. Children sit on the floor during lessons at times. – Parent, Petauke

Finally, in particular in more rural areas, both electricity and water supply may be limited, which has both educational and health implications, as highlighted by all respondents. Schools depend on boreholes or shallower wells and streams for water. The lack of running water, combined with limited toilet facilities, was reported to have a clear negative impact on girl students' school attendance.

For the sources of water in case of our school, we draw our water from the well down the stream there. It is not very safe. – Teacher, Luwingu

Some schools also don't have running water or changing rooms, hence girls tend to miss school when they are attending. Because of this a child can spend the whole week at home, and just imagine this occurs every month. So, eventually someone will just quit. – Community leader, Lusaka

Further, lack of consistent electricity both challenges lesson preparation and makes skills like ICT difficult if not impossible to teach.

Staff quality and related concerns

Across the board, respondents offered mixed reviews of teachers. It is clear that while parents, adolescents and community members had sympathy for some of the constraints under which teachers operate – poor living conditions, large class sizes, and insufficient equipment and poor facilities – teachers also came under criticism for unprofessional behaviour and teaching and disciplinary approaches which do not motivate students and can directly drive dropouts.

114 With the exception of cases where school lack appropriate latrines, which can lead girls to stay home during menstruation. Republic of Zambia, "Advancing Girls' Education Through WASH Programs in Schools: A formative Study on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Mumbwa and Rufunsa Districts, Zambia"

Box 3 - Building an ideal school

During the Round Robins, adolescents were asked to design an ideal school. What was proposed by older adolescents in Petauke underlines some of the infrastructural challenges faced. When told that the school committee would only be able to fund six "activities" in addition to the facilities and teachers' salaries, they selected teaching materials, desks, electricity, a borehole, school buses, and general workers (ie janitorial staff), reflecting some of the most common elements currently missing in schools, as discussed in this section.

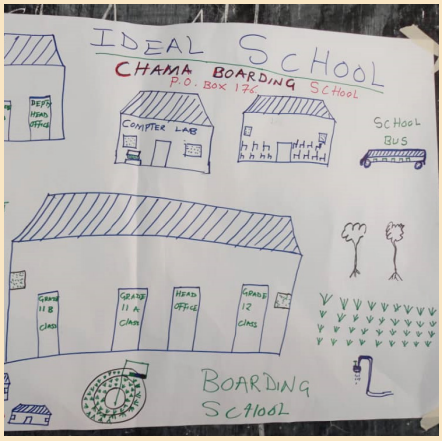


Image: © Samuel Hall, 2018 - Ideal School drawing from a Round Robin session in Rufunsa

The role of teachers in decision-making around school attendance will be further discussed subsequently; it is clear that they can play a strong role in retention. Parents and key informants did note, generally, improvements in the quality of teachers. However, their role in dropout decisions is similarly clear: in multiple districts, respondents flagged harsh disciplinary methods as well as inappropriate fraternisation with students, especially in more rural areas.

- Harsh disciplinary approaches: In Rufunsa, some adolescents report harsh punishment by teachers, for example being beaten for making noise, being asked to clean the toilet or dig pits or being punished for arriving late to school. Adolescents said that this leads to frustration with school and, sometimes, dropout. In Lusaka, students who had dropped out gave "being beaten by teachers" and "being insulted by the teachers" as reasons for dropping out because "it brings fear in a learner and [they] even lose interest".

- Inappropriate behaviour toward students: In Luwingu, one student told the story of her sister, who stopped school in Grade 7, "because she slept with the teacher so she could pass her exams". A number of examples were discussed across districts and locations.

  Sometimes the teachers makes them [students] pregnant as they have left their wives far away. – Parent, Lunga

  Even the teachers themselves have an impact on the children. For instance, when they start getting attracted to students like girls and makes them pregnant then stops school. – Teacher, Senanga

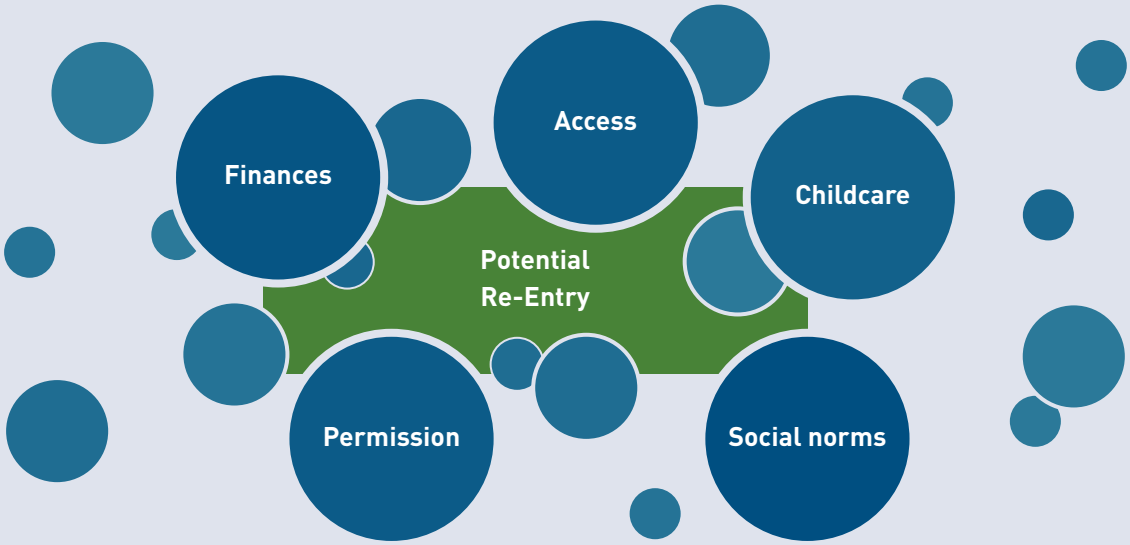
Governmental policy and school-related programmes

Two main school-related programmes were discussed with regard to student dropout decisions:

The Re-Entry Policy for pregnant girls

Despite the Re-Entry Policy allowing pregnant girls to return to school, pregnancy continued to be one of the key reasons given for

Figure 9 - Selected obstacles to re-entry for post-partum mothers



school dropout by interviewed respondents. In particular, they frequently raised the potential social judgement which they may face from peers and teachers on returning to school. While the Re-Entry Policy was generally supported because, as one teacher in Katete put it, "everybody sins", the very use of the word sin underlines some of the judgement which in some cases comes along with teenage pregnancy. This was further reflected in Lunga and Katete, in particular, where several respondents expressed concerns that the Re-Entry Policy can promote teenage pregnancy, as it is perceived as essentially removing the negative consequences. Research on gender norms in Western Province has found the same. "[The School Re-Entry Policy is] generally viewed by focus group participants as a positive educational reform, as it has enabled adolescent girls or young women to return to school after giving birth. However, some parents in the focal communities claimed the Re-Entry Policy creates an environment whereby students feel they can return to school after giving birth, and thus contributes to early pregnancy".[115]

School feeding programmes

The GRZ, with the support of the World Food Programme, has over the past few years been "transitioning its school feeding programme to a national Home-Grown School Feeding Model".[116] Respondents noted such programmes in several districts as strong draws for school attendance, in line with existing evaluations of school feeding programmes which underline positive impacts of the school feeding component on attendance.[117]

Apart from learning and school fees being cheaper here at Senanga day [school], there is a feeding programme which makes most parents comfortable to bring their children here. – Teacher, Senanga

Where they do not exist, respondents sometimes gave feeding programmes as a recommendation to improve retention rates.

A feeding programme in school is one of those vital incentives that can motivate children not

115 Rajaratnnam et al. Social and gender analysis report: Barotse Floodplain, Western Province, Zambia.p. 42
116 WFP, Zambia Brief, 2015.
117 Prifti and Kangasniemi, "Evaluation of Zambia's Home Grown School Feedinng Program". 2018

to abscond [from] school. In another sense, for orphaned and vulnerable children, they will at least not be learning on an empty stomach and will have a meal in a day and will not go hungry the whole day. This will motivate young children to keep coming to school. This will help alleviate cases of dropout. – Parent, Luwingu

School fees and other attendant costs

While primary school is both free and compulsory in Zambia, from Grade 8 onwards students must pay annual fees to attend school, as detailed in the previous chapter.

Given the challenging economic situation in Zambia previously presented, it comes as no surprise that for many, school fees (see Figure 10) – in conjunction with other attendant costs – were seen as prohibitive, especially for households with multiple children. Figure 11 shows how significant an outlay the annual school fees (schooling fees only; excluding boarding, books, uniforms, etc) can be for one child, as a percentage of average annual income.

For families with multiple children, then, or below-average incomes, the rationale for the cost-benefit calculations which some parents describe become clear.

Paying school fees is the main challenge I face in parenting and I try to solve this by doing pieces of work. – Parent, Senanga

The secondary school costs, including day school fees, boarding school fees, and uniform and other required costs, were collected from the catchment areas visited in this study. For one pupil, annual costs can range from an average of ZMW 2,000 ($165) for day school to ZMW 3,700 ($310) for boarding school. When taken as percentage of annual income at the provincial level, in Lusaka and Mufulira, where average income is highest, the costs are about 5% of annual income. Elsewhere, costs are 13% of income and even higher (up to 40%) for some boarding schools. When there is more than one child in school, these costs become an exponential burden on the household.

As some parents and guardians try to do what they can to cut costs or, when they need to delay payment, there is still an impact on schooling (see Box 4 for an alternative option to pay for school). There was frequent discussion of how the lack of a uniform, shoes or book bag is a source of bullying or feeling of insecurity among adolescents and often the final precipitating factor in dropout.

In addition, if it is just one or few learners without uniforms or shoes, you find that the child will feel out of place and may be mocked by friends who have. As such, you discover that the learner loses interest in school because of the mockery at school. – Parent, Luwingu

Students and parents noted being "chased" from school due to lack of payment of school fees or even adequate uniform as happening across districts.

A teacher would not allow a child to be learning without fees. This means a child has to be chased away from school. – Parent, Lunga

Most respondents presented these costs as a fact of life; when proposing recommendations, few recommended eliminating school fees at the secondary level, as has been done at the primary level. Instead, the focus was on finding alternative means to pay these (sponsors, NGO programmes, etc) (Box 4). Yet evidence from other contexts (Ghana, Kenya) does find that eliminating fees at the secondary level can have a positive impact on years of educational enrolment (see Annex 3).

"Paying school fees is the main challenge I face in parenting and I try to solve this by doing pieces of work."

Figure 10 - Main school-related fees in Zambia

Annual school fees

In 2016, the MoGE mandated that these range from ZMW 750-1,000 per term (boarding) and 250-500 (day) for public secondary schools.

Necessary supplies

This includes uniforms and books, but also noted as dropout factors were the costs of shoes, bookbags, and even soap and lotion.

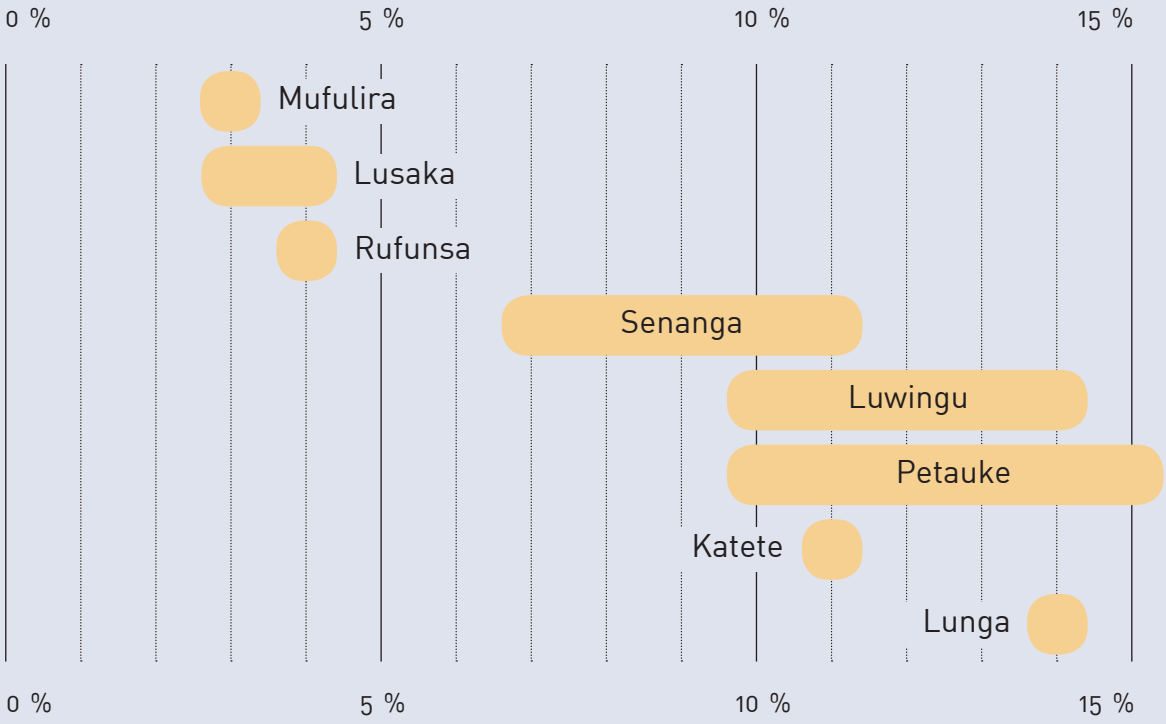
Boarding fees

The limited number of secondary schools in the country and rural nature of some districts means that, in some cases, boarding is the only secondary school option possible – costs generally more than double school fees.

Exam fees

Grade 7, 9 and 12 exams are fee-paying; failure may make families unwilling to invest in a second attempt.

Figure 11 - Annual fees of secondary schools visited, expressed as % of average provincial annual income



Box 4 - Search for a sponsor

To ease the economic burden of school fees on poor households, a common "solution" proposed by international organisations, local NGOs and civil society organisations, as well as churches and well-meaning individual donors, is sponsorships. These cover school fees and sometimes uniforms, books and supplies often for subsets of students from teen mothers to double orphans.

Respondents sometimes discussed sponsorship by an extended family member, but it was often framed as an elusive search for these external donors.

Voices and recommendations from the field

The structural constraints mentioned in this chapter were specifically addressed by some of the respondents when providing recommendations on ways to reduce dropouts in their communities. The quotations below highlight some of these voices.

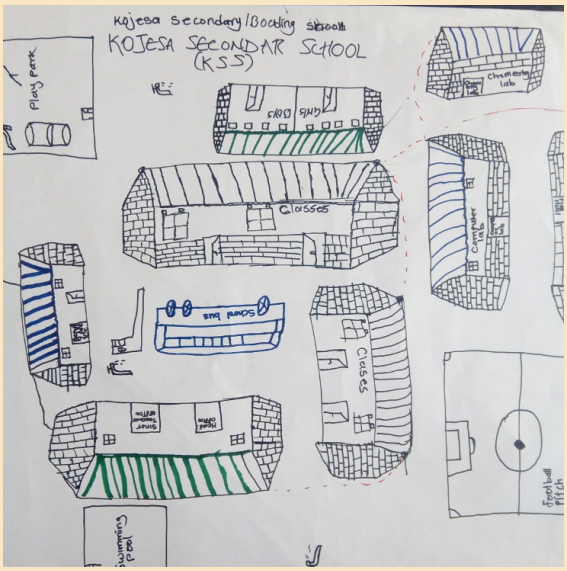
Looking at the geography of our school, we have learners coming from about 14 km and some children are unable to carry packed food. To keep them longer, the stomach has to be taken care of. You cannot force a learner to learn on an empty stomach. It's very difficult. – Teachers, Luwingu

A school feeding program will be helping parents who cannot afford to support their children with a three-course meal per day. This program will make learners stay in school and pay attention in class because they will know how important education is in life. – Adolescent, Lunga

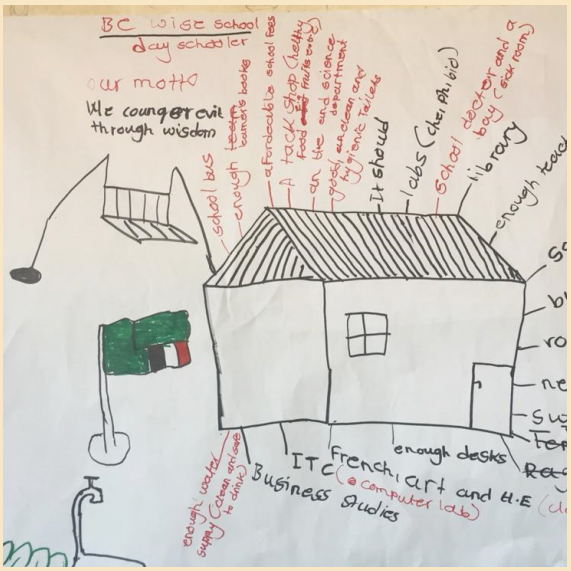
Considering the time they dropped out school, if it was out of lack of interest and you ask them if they want to go to school, they can voluntarily go. If it was as a result of financial [limitations], we need to ask government or any other organisation to help them out return to school. – Teacher, Lusaka

When there are no toilet blocks, students defecate anywhere, anyhow, and this causes diseases so they need to make sure the toilets are clean, when the pupils are healthy they won't be dropping out. – Adolescent, Luwingu

IMPRESSIONS: IDEAL SCHOOL DRAWINGS



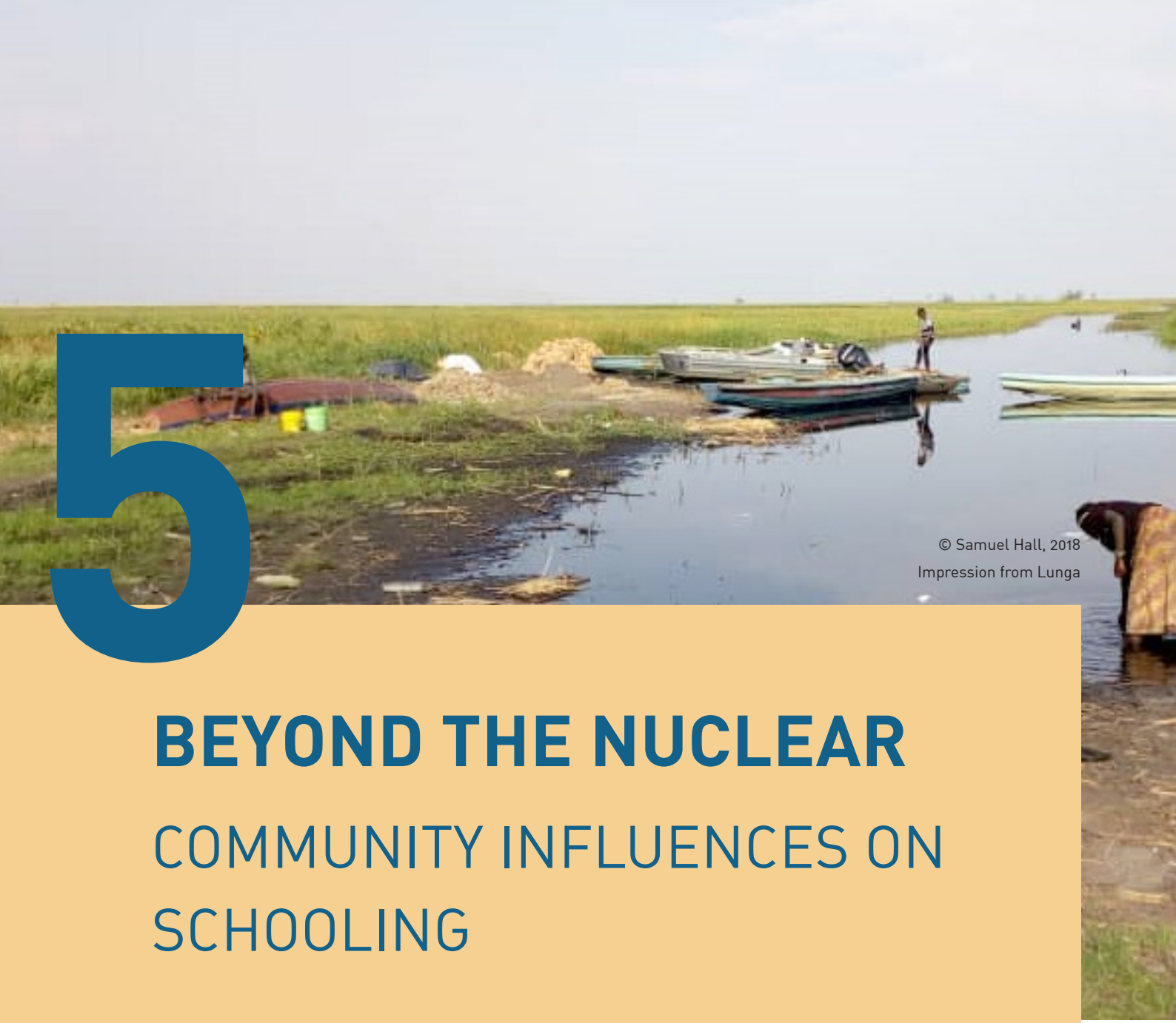
© Samuel Hall, 2018
Ideal School drawing from a Round Robin session in Luwingu



© Samuel Hall, 2018
Ideal School drawing from a Round Robin session during the pilot phase in Lusaka

© Samuel Hall, 2018
Ideal School drawing from a Round Robin session in Senanga

© Samuel Hall, 2018
Ideal School drawing from a Round Robin session in Petauke



© Samuel Hall, 2018
Impression from Lunga

5

BEYOND THE NUCLEAR

COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON SCHOOLING

Gideon, age 17, worked hard to complete his schooling, even after his father could no longer support the family after a terrible accident ended his work as fish trader in Lunga:

Since he broke his leg and spine, he went out of business and ever since life has never been the same again. No more money to continue supporting me to school.

Gideon still tried to attend after passing his Grade 7 exams, but was in and out school over the next few years as the family struggled to find money for exam and school fees. He decided to raise money on his own, working as a fisherman for two years. Yet, instead of starting in Grade 9 as he had hoped, Gideon was placed in Grade 7; he then re-evaluated whether education was necessary:

After raising little money, I thought I could pay for myself. Unfortunately, I found myself going back to Grade 7. I continued going to school until I realised ***it was taking me nowhere*** *and eventually thought of just continuing with fishing that would raise me enough money for my family and myself. I just thought I was not losing anything by stopping school. Both of my*

parents were not doing anything. Besides, I thought going back to Grade 7 would cost me a lot of time and money, and just the idea of being a repeater frustrated me.

Even though his mother pushed him to try to continue, Gideon left school for good. Steeped in the fishing industry, many in Lunga saw no livelihood alternatives and eventually came to question the added value of education, often precipitated by their own struggles to succeed in or access school. Decisions around schooling are embedded within social expectations and norms, whether or not fully understood or acknowledged, that shape priorities.

Corresponding to the two main research questions, key findings from this chapter are presented below.

Actors/ Agency - Chapter Key Findings

- Households are embedded within their communities; advice from family, friends, teachers and community leaders and societal expectations shape decision-making around school.
- While community leaders/village elders have increasingly limited roles, traditional social practices and norms continue to influence decision-making in direct and indirect ways.

Factors/ Journeys - Chapter Key Findings

- "Human rights" and a shift from traditional culture are widely blamed for challenges in disciplining children and a general sense of adolescent "rebellion". Across the country, respondents noted cultural evolutions and shifting external influencers as impacting decision-making within communities.
- Cultural expectations around adolescent transition to adulthood and traditional gender norms clearly have a greater negative impact on schooling decisions for girls.

5.1 Community-level decision-making frameworks and influencers

As explored in detail in this chapter and Chapter 6, parents/guardians and adolescents themselves are the primary decision-makers when it comes to schooling. Yet, particularly in more rural areas, community structures consistently play a strong influencer role. The structure of households and responsibility for caring for children extends beyond the nuclear family in Zambia, and traditional practices and cultural understandings impact dropout journeys.

Households are embedded within their communities and strongly influenced by the norms that are pervasive in their environment; parents and guardians across all locations consistently reported that they seek advice from family, friends, teachers and community leaders.

I like to ask for help and advice from my family and peers in the community when making

important choices about my children. We go through similar things in our communities so consulting each other is always important. – Parent, Petauke

"Decisions are made depending on the need of the family, like the way we are living, if my brother or sister has an urgent need … we work as a group."

Extended family members play a strong role in decision-making, for example providing the needed funds to send children to school, supporting a family going through hard times or advising parents/guardians on all important matters related to their children, from how to handle teen pregnancies to schooling decisions. For some, decisions are described as collective.

Decisions are made depending on the need of the family, like the way we are living, if my brother or sister has an urgent need … we work as a group. – Parent/guardian, Luwingu

Relatives, especially grandparents, are regularly consulted when it comes to any "decisions on how we can raise our children".

They [grandparents] grew up way back and have vast experience so they manage to give guidance so that the children can have a brighter future. – Parent/guardian, Katete

Other family members – especially uncles and aunts – play a big role in decision-making processes. Adolescents also describe extended family – commonly mentioning aunts, uncles, grandparents and, less often, their siblings – as playing an important role in their lives. Grandparents, in the past, have been the ones advising children on "how to do this, how to do that". Although bringing-up responsibilities are shifting more to parents these days, grandparents often continue to play an enormous role.

I can go to my grandmother. She is old and knows how to live with other people. I can say anything to her and she can understand. I can even talk to her about relationships, especially on the girl I like. – Adolescent, Katete

Girls often reported turning to female family members, such as sisters and aunts, for advice on friendships, relationships, pregnancy, difficulties in school and more. Particularly in Katete, boys named uncles as persons they would reach out to for money or advice because, for example, "he is the one who tells me the right things".

Extended family members have both positive and negative impacts on school decisions.

I wasn't refusing but my aunties and uncles told my parents to put in more effort and ensure that I go back to school. I used to give them constant reminders about school and they would tell me "let me try to find money, you will go back" until a point where it seems money became hard for them to find. – Adolescent, Katete

When my parents were around, I used to go to school, but after they died, my sister was telling me not to go to school because I just stay at home, you should be drawing water for me, doing the dishes. If you go to school, then you won't eat nsima *at this house and you should leave this house. You should find somewhere to go.* – Adolescent, Petauke

Within this orbit, **local traditional leaders**, particularly in rural locations like Luwingu and Lunga, and **religious leaders** play an influencing role, for example giving input on how to raise children. However, they were not explicitly discussed as shaping actual final choices around dropout journeys.

Church leaders have a positive influence on parents. We have seen some parents that have come here. Yes, the churches influence the parents positively to some [extent], but it is the culture that is more dominant than the church teachings. – Teacher, Mufulira

Parents highlighted **teachers** as highly influential, but almost entirely as it relates to in-school issues. They were generally seen as best placed to advise parents on their children's education because teachers spend time with adolescents and understand their performance in school.

On the education of my children, I go at the school to see the head teacher for assistance. – Parent/guardian, Luwingu

Parents rarely considered teachers as direct influencers on decision-making on dropout and retention issues. Teachers are best placed to encourage parents to allow their children to attend school or support them at home.

Even us teachers can influence parents through the interactions we have with them. – Teacher, Petauke

Adolescents, on the other hand, specifically said that they seek the insight of teachers in cases when they drop out and want to return to school or request to re-take an exam they have failed. Adolescents also noted trying to speak with teachers when their families are not able to cover school fees. Adolescents and teachers reported cases where teachers intervened and encouraged pupils not to drop out.

Teacher madam can help us. I know a good teacher who helps me and advises me on school things. She helps other people as well and encourages them to go to school. – Adolescent, Petauke

I can do household chores then, when I finish, I come to school. If parents are against it, that is when I can go to teachers or others for them to help me. – Adolescent, Petauke

Occasionally, adolescents mentioned that they might also go to teachers about more personal issues. Some boys stated that they would turn to their teachers should they have difficulties at school, especially to guidance teachers. Girls would primarily turn to female teachers and some consider them "the best advisers. They are always with us at school, they know us". A lack of encouragement by teachers can be a reason for dropouts, according to some adolescents.

Decisions around school cannot be separated from the communities in which individuals live; adolescents and their immediate decision-makers, mainly parents and guardians, are clearly influenced by these connections and social norms. The following sections highlight the specific factors that contribute – at a community level— to choices regarding schooling, particularly the ways the value of school is weighted, the struggle to make sense of cultural changes and their impact on the younger generation, and the ways that tradition continues to be exerted.

5.2 An evolving context: Cultural changes in adolescents' worlds

Lusaka was the only district where **traditional practices** were virtually never discussed as a driver or factor in schooling decisions, although one local leader complained that "the current generation has lost our African tradition". **Lusaka is different in this regard. Familial and community networks have a reduced influence on parents and adolescents.** There is less of a sense of familial responsibilities.

They [family] do help me but not always. It is difficult to depend on someone on decision-making especially that they have their own responsibilities and therefore bothering them in that way it feels too demanding. – Parent/guardian, Lusaka

In addition, the actual influence of community members and friends was noted as limited, for example providing role models or examples of how to raise children.

In general, the importance of extended family members in Lusaka was more ambiguous – particularly their role in actual decision-making around schooling. According to one key

informant, "in set-ups like the peri-urban/urban areas", such as Lusaka, other family members are usually not very influential.

Unless maybe if that child is being brought up for example by an uncle away from their mothers or fathers, then that uncle/aunty would greatly influence the child or the parent. – Community leader, Lusaka

However, a number of adolescents named family members as crucial contacts, advisors and people they admire. In this sense, the influence of extended family follows parents/guardians very closely.

"Back then a child could only get advice from a parent or relatives but these days a child can get advice anywhere, on the phone, the TV."

While Lusaka is the only location visited where traditional practices were not discussed, and decision-making had evolved to further centre around the nuclear household, across the country respondents noted cultural evolutions and shifting external influencers as impacting decision-making within communities.

The question of generational conflict and what Zambian culture is today was frequently raised by respondents seeking to explain dropout decisions. Broadly, many associated changing cultural mores with a new, less respectful relationship between adolescents and their elders, which 1) makes teaching more difficult, as students may no longer listen to their teachers as they used to, and 2) decreases the influence of potential "pro-school" voices over adolescents. Adult actors widely blamed social media and "Western culture" for this, although some respondents also recognised positive aspects to this greater connectivity.

In Mufulira, adult actors described the current generation of adolescents (compared to previous generations) as "worse off", "more into illicit behaviour" and "uncontrollable". Similar sentiments were expressed from Lunga to Lusaka.

In the old days, the people had much desire and belief in having a brighter future. Today it looks to be so difficult. The government is now trying to help the children through education, though the children are not taking the lead in their education. Looking at the past, people would go far to just get an education, and they were managing compared to us today. Many children are not so respectful to their parents today. They don't obey what their parents tell them; as a result, we have many female children who are getting pregnant and getting into child marriage. – School staff, Lunga

In my time, there was no time for the teachers to remind the pupils what they were supposed to do. We all had our routine to do work. But this time, instead of the learners to beg for knowledge from teachers, it now teachers begging the pupils. That's how it has been. – School staff, Luwingu

Yes, you find that they spend more time on Facebook, WhatsApp and these other devices which have come. So they are spending more time on these devices other than allocating their time in studying. Yes, so these has greatly contributed to their bad performance academically. – Government official, Lusaka

Social media was blamed for some of these evolving cultural mores beyond Luwingu, a concern for parents and teachers in regard to its influence on adolescents. While some adults complained that, for example, young people spend "more of their time on *WhatsApp* and on *Facebook* than spending more time studying and doing other things" (which could lead to dropouts), virtually no direct connection between media and schooling decisions was reported by adolescents or parents. Rather, parents lamented media's negative influence on adolescents, impact on the parent/child relationship and how it undermined their authority.

Children of nowadays, when they watch movies, they want to practice and hence fall pregnant, contract diseases and maybe even die. – Teacher, Lusaka

Box 5 - The human rights trope

Corporal punishment was abolished in Zambian schools in 2003;[118] some teachers claimed this decreased the quality of teaching in schools, and that increased knowledge of "human rights", broadly, was creating attitude problems amongst adolescents. Adolescents, on the other hand, continued to note corporal punishment in schools as an element in "bad days" at school, possibly contributing to dropout.

In Lusaka, for example, some teachers complained about "human rights" which have allegedly ...

... spoiled the education system in Zambia" as teachers are not allowed anymore to use corporal punishment; thus, the quality of teaching would suffer which could cause further dropouts: "Because of human rights, it becomes very difficult to teach these children. Sometimes we require teaching in a quiet environment but on some days the pupils just become noisy such that we can't even control them. – Teacher, Lusaka

This trope has come out in other studies, with a 2018 UNICEF study on parenting stating the following: "When asked challenges in managing children's behaviour, multiple respondents from various districts complained about the prevalence of "children's rights" messaging and expressed frustration with children increasingly reporting to neighbours or the police that they had been hit. A headman from Choma illustrated this sentiment when he said, "These "human rights" are limiting us, and now we can't even control our own children, we are afraid that once we beat the child they will say that it is assault". Apart from this issue of rights, parents and caregivers complained that some children are chronically disobedient, talk back to their elders or imitate bad behaviour of other children or adults. Finally, several respondents indicated that parents lack confidence in their approaches to disciplining children and tend to give up when children's behaviour does not improve quickly".[119]

Corporal punishment has been practiced in communities for as long as people have remembered and they perceive it not to be harmful to children. – Teacher, Lusaka

Back then a child could only get advice from a parent or relatives but these days a child can get advice anywhere, on the phone, the TV, anywhere, and that advice most of the time is not good for the child. – Government official, Mufulira

From adolescent perspectives, media was an influencer in a general sense, but the impacts feared by parents were not commented on. They discussed specific media figures they admired, particularly in terms of personal aspirations. These include footballers (Messi, Ronaldo, Mbape) and international actors, actresses and musicians, such as Trevor Noah and Jennifer Lopez. The things adolescents say they learn from these people include caring for orphans, how to help people, the importance of doing their jobs "nicely," going to school and to speak English well.

The degree to which worried parental and adult voices represent a real cultural shift, versus a rose-tinted view of the past, is debatable. That being said, clear opposition

118 OHCHR notes, "Article 12 of the Education Act allowing the Minister to make regulations regulating the administration of corporal punishment was repealed by the Education Amendment Act (2003)".

119 2018 Parenting Study, UNICEF Zambia, p. 56

between Zambian (positive) cultural elements and "Western" (negative) cultural elements, influencing schools and education, was refenced by several interlocutors. In Mufulira, one teacher argued that the current education system does not reflect Zambian culture because it is too "Western"; on the other hand, a government official in Lunga noted,

I think the education system of Zambia reflects the Zambian culture because we learn about history, things of the past where we see where we have come from in order to know where we are heading to. – Government official, Lunga

"Human rights" were specifically flagged as a new introduction to Zambia negatively impacting culture and community (see Box 5 for more).

I find that the laws of the government today have spoiled our children. Even in the punishments given to children today. When as a parent you beat and discipline your child, you would find yourself arrested. Many parents have fear today. The Bible even says that a parent who does not beat their child hates them. – Government official, Lunga

5.3 Traditions in practice

While there is clearly a struggle between modernity and tradition, the weight of social norms and expectations on the lives of adolescents continues to be pervasive. These norms range from the roles and responsibilities of male and female adolescents in the household to the events and conditions that facilitate the transition to adulthood. As discussed early in this chapter, community members play a strong influencing role in the lives of adolescents. This happens with regard to both schooling explicitly, as well as other practices which can directly impact schooling journeys. **In more rural areas of Zambia in particular, "traditional" norms and practices reportedly encouraged children to drop out. The importance of these norms and practices varied significantly regionally.**

Adolescence is a time of transition into adulthood, and both marriage and pregnancy are often traditional markers of adulthood. While standards of adulthood differ across Zambia, it is important to be mindful of how different communities view children versus adults. In terms of school attendance, **traditional practices** pose a twofold challenge:

- First, certain initiation rites and traditional practices may pull children from school for some time, potentially impacting their school performance, which can contribute to dropping out.

- Second, they may contribute to a perception of adolescents by adults, having completed this traditional marker of growing up, and so facilitate dropouts.

Traditional practices include initiation rites (Box 6), and also can include activities such as cattle herding or *nyau* dance troupes. Broadly, it seems that the importance of some of these traditions has decreased in recent years, as a local leader in Katete noted that NGOs and the government have been teaching local leaders about the potential negative outcomes of some of these practices (eg related to schooling). Rural interviewees were more likely to note traditional practices as a factor in facilitating dropout.

The example of Albert (Figure 12) highlights how adolescents perceive becoming involved in a traditional dance troupe as impacting school attendance. Although it does not preclude school attendance, it is clear that this activity can easily be linked to dropping out.

While initiation rites and other traditional practices were mentioned as challenging to schooling for both boys and girls, **traditional gender norms clearly had a greater negative impact on schooling decisions for girls.** The importance of traditional gender norms in dropout decisions was mixed. Undoubtedly, girls are at higher risk of dropping

Box 6 - Traditional initiation rites in Zambia

Recent academic literature on initiation rites and ceremonies in Zambia is limited; Thera Rasing describes these for girls as follows. "Girls' initiation rites are similar all over south central Africa, and usually take place just after a girl has started her first menstruation. The rite marks the passage from childhood to womanhood and the girl is supposed to behave accordingly. Initiation emphasizes reproductive roles within marriage, domestic and agricultural duties, respect for elders and the novice's future husband, sexuality and food taboos".[120] Girls may be secluded for a number of days as they receive instruction.[121] Adolescents' description of initiation rites in Luwingu are aligned with this description, with female Round Robin participants describing them as follows:

Girls are taken into initiation ceremony where they are taught a lot of things such as how to take care of a man, what do when you are on your period, how to receive visitors, how to cook traditional dishes and how to have sex with a man.

Mostly, girls are expected to know how to wash plates, clean the house, wash and cook. They are taught how to take care of a home. They are expected to dress in a certain way. When they are home working or doing home chores or when they are visitors, they are supposed to wear chitenges *[African wrappers]".* – Adolescent, Luwingu

Boys' ceremonies follow a related path. For example, in north-western Zambia, the *mukanda* is "an initiation school held annually for boys between the ages of eight and 17. At the beginning of the dry season, young boys leave their homes and live for one to three months in an isolated school. The *mukanda* involves the circumcision of the initiates, tests of courage, and lessons on their future role in society as men and husbands".[122]

out as they age.[123] However, this can be largely attributed to the fact that they are more directly affected by important dropout-linked events such as pregnancy and early marriage, discussed in this chapter and Chapter 6.

In some families, parents and even adolescents prioritise sending boys to school, when asked to choose – justifying it as an investment in the future.

A male child because he can take care of the family in the future while a female child can get married. – Adolescent, Mufulira

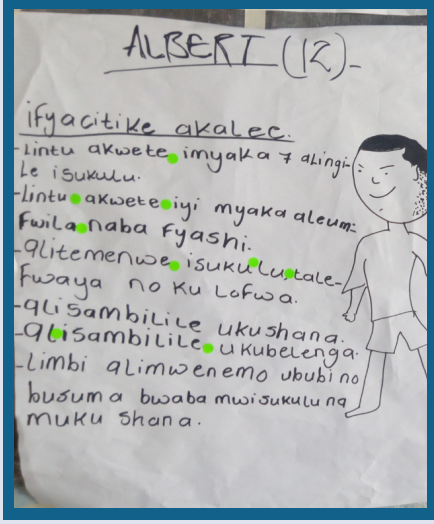
As a whole, strong voices supporting gender equality came out, noting an evolution from the past. Even in more rural Lunga, school staff described this evolution:

A long time ago people were not in support of sending their children to school because they did not see much value in education. They would rather marry off their girl child, but in recent times we have seen that drastic change in this ... where now parents have seen the importance of school and are now sending their children to school. – School staff, Lunga

120 Thera Rasing (2001), The Bush Burnt, the Stones Remain: Female Initiation Rites in Urban Zambia, p. 2
121 Mushaukwa Matale, "The Sikenge female initation rite as a means of combating HIV/AIDS", p. 97
122 Victoria Phiri Chitungu, Makishi Masquerade and Activities: The Reformulation of Visual and Performance Genres of the Mukanda school of Zambia, 2012, Contemporary African Cultural Productions
123 The Zambia OOSC Report finds, "school, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) suggests that in the lower grades (1 to 4), there are no significant differences in the risk of both male and female children dropping out-of-school. GPI of survival rate to Grade 4 is 0.98. However the gender gap widens as the grade level increases with GPI of only 0.9 for the survival rate to the final Grade 7 of primary. This means that for every 10 boys who survive to grade 7 only 9 girls do". (p. x)

Figure 12 - Vignette: Traditional dancing

Albert's story: Albert (12) lives in a rural community that has a long and strong tradition of dance groups. Albert's uncle and other family members want him to join a group, but Albert has always struggled to get good grades in school. His parents told him that he is old enough now to decide for himself.



Good events

- Becomes a 'boss' at his work
- Does well in school
- After realizing that school is important, he goes back and does well
- Loves to dance
- Becomes a celebrity, goes out to many shows and makes more money in the next few years
- Makes his own decisions
- Gets a good job and does well
- Gets married and takes his children to school

Bad events

- Forced to dance when he doesn't want to
- The cultural group beats him when he does something wrong
- Starts drinking beer and smoking, becomes a drunkard
- Can't hold a job and becomes poor
- Never has peace with his parents
- Starts failing a school and drops out
- Fails to get married
- Gets sick and dies

However, social expectations around male and female adolescents in the household varied, as explored in greater detail in the chapters that follow. For example, activities like chores can impact student attendance and performance. Adolescents in Lusaka, for example, noted "doing home chores all day long" as a reason for poor academic performance. Chores generally differ by gender, with girls in Petauke noting that girls' chores often entail cooking, washing dishes and/or sweeping, whereas boys' chores may entail gathering and chopping wood. Such norms may place pressure on children to devote attention to chores, potentially impacting academic performance and thus school attendance. Past research has underlined that these norms have a disproportionate impact on girls, especially in more rural areas of Zambia.[124]

124 "Generally, parents in Africa including Zambia attach a much higher value to female domestic labour than that of males as females due to patriarchal practices perform major domestic chores such as cooking, fetching for water and firewood, caring for the siblings, sick and old, and all house work to sustain households. As a result, girls especially in rural areas attend school more irregularly and less intensively than the boys. Subsequently, gender inequities with regards to school attendance, retention and completion rates continue in Zambia." Peggy Mwanza, "The State of the Girl Child's Education in Zambia: the Case of Chongwe District", CICE Hiroshima University, Journal of International Cooperation in Education, Vol.17 No.2 (2015), p. 102

"As teachers, parents, churches, when we come together to sensitize our children, then we can build this nation."

Voices and recommendations from the field

Respondents provided recommendations on ways to reduce dropouts in their communities; many of which considered these at level of community. The quotations below highlight some of these voices.

The best I can do to stop adolescents from leaving school is to sensitize the parents, the community and the pupils themselves or the adolescents, the way they should live in the community and maybe to also urge on the church to help in talking to our young ones. In particular, I should talk to the pupils on the importance of education and its value. As teachers, parents, churches, when we come together to sensitize our children, then we can build this nation. – Teachers, Senanga

As parents we have to come together to look for the adolescents that are in the community that are not in school in order to see how best we could help one another. If it means contributing them money to set up this thing in school or outside, we have to do it for our children to also earn a living. – Parent, Luwingu

Churches can help [decision-making around school], and the social workers help children that have difficulties at school. Other people, like traditional counsellors, can teach girls on a good way of life. The chief is also involved in checking on the adolescents' school life. We punish those children that display bad behaviour. – Local Leader, Luwingu

© Samuel Hall, 2018

Influencer Mapping (girls) from a Round Robin session in Petauke

6

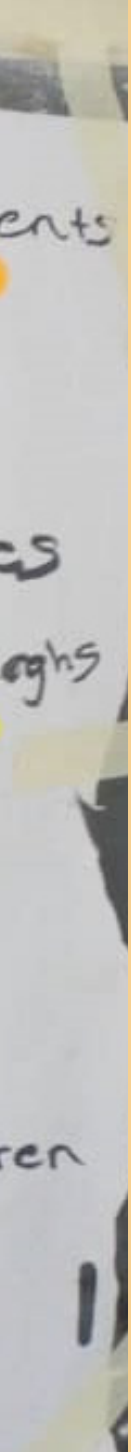
HOUSEHOLD

NEXUS OF DECISION-MAKING

The school journey of Alice (now aged 15), has been characterised by starts and stops, precipitated by the deaths of her parents and followed by support from her aunts, a move from the village to Lusaka and struggles in school.

Age 8: Parents die, Alice drops out of school → **Age 9:** Her aunt pays school fees, Alice returns to school → **Age 12:** Her aunt brings Alice to Lusaka from the village, Alice is sent back to grade 3 because she failed to read → **Age 13:** Alice drops out of school again

Compared to life in a village, Alice noticed the number of available schools and even the quality: "My friends say here they teach better than the way they teach in the village". Even though she was 12, she was sent back to Grade 3 because she couldn't read, but her return to school didn't last long. Her aunt lamented that she was the "one who got her from the village bringing her to Lusaka trying to take her to school, but my plans failed due to financial challenges". However, from Alice's perspective, it has been a matter of household prioritisation. The other children in the household were going to school, but not her.



When I came here from the village, I stopped going to school because the people I stay with only send their own children to school. I do some chores for them but when I ask them about school issues they get upset. There we are, the three of us, and it's only me who is not going to school. I asked them about it; they just said that "we have no money to pay for all of you".

Alice's role in the household is common to orphans being cared for by extended family in Lusaka, where even the minor costs associated with primary school education are not prioritised. While economic considerations are clearly at the heart of decision-making around schooling for many parents and guardians, how even meagre finances are allocated can reflect multiple factors and priorities.

At the household level, a number of findings emerged to answer the two main research questions:

Actors/ Agency - Chapter Key Findings

- Parents or guardians are at the centre of adolescents' lives, not just as decision-makers around schooling, but also as the strongest influence on adolescents themselves.
- Parents or guardians express a limited sense of agency due to poverty and economic constraints and vulnerabilities. Other actors, such as teachers and adolescents, assign them more responsibility, particularly in the allocation and prioritisation of household resources.

Factors/ Journeys - Chapter Key Findings

- While poverty and household economic decision-making play a primary role in school attendance, they are not sufficient to explain who drops out and who remains in school. Household cost-benefit analyses are shaped by socio-cultural practices and individual backgrounds.
- Parental death or economic hardship, such as job loss or poor crop yield, precipitate adolescents' dropping out of school. Alternatively, external support through extended family or a turn in the household's financial well-being advances return to school.

6.1 The central role of parents and guardians in adolescents' lives and schooling

Across all districts and reported by both adults and adolescents, parents/guardians are at the centre of the lives of adolescents, **not just often the main decision-makers regarding school attendance, but also the strongest influencers on adolescents.**

We as parents are the key in the process of making decisions, and we must be quick to understand which decisions will work best for each situation. I like to take my time before I make a final decision. Think through every possible outcome and then ask people around me for their thoughts on the matter. – Parent/ guardian, Petauke

For adolescents, in particular younger adolescents, this was framed as a given; parents should be the focal point of all major decisions, based on deference to their elders and understanding their fundamental dependence on family for their material needs – living under their roof and relying on their earnings for food, clothing and school fees.

We are too young to make decisions for ourselves. – Adolescent, Luwingu

My parents have passed through so many life experiences; they know what is good or bad for me. – Adolescent, Senanga

"The best school is home; the words that parents say to their children can either build them or destroy them."

All male and female adolescents named parents or the family members that care for them as "persons who have ever made an important decision for me". They mostly indicated either their father or mother, with some variability and ambiguity regarding their roles in the decision-making process:

- Generally, fathers often seem to have the last word and are in charge of most decisions that involve financial matters.

  When he brings money, he makes us sit together and have a budget of what we are going to buy. He normally consults of what we are going to do with the money. – Adolescent, Lusaka

- Mothers also play a strong role in decision-making. In Katete, for example, male adolescents tended to name both their parents, while female adolescents primarily named only their mothers. Rufunsa adolescents described mothers more often as the person making decisions for them. In either case, parents are strongly at the centre of the lives of adolescents, reaffirmed by teachers, community members and parents themselves.

- For questions about friendship/relationships, boys seem to consult with fathers and girls with mothers. However, many adolescents mentioned their mothers as main influencers over their fathers.

In many ways, parents' role as the decision-maker is indistinguishable from the primary influencer on the lives of adolescents. Several parents/guardians discussed trying their best to provide children with general guidance in life, such as "put in effort at school" or "not to rush into marriages". Parents and teachers emphasised the need for parental guidance.

The best school is home; the words that parents say to their children can either build them or destroy them. – Parent/guardian, Lusaka

Adolescents seemed to rely and depend primarily on their parents/guardians, with the majority naming fathers and mothers as "people they can rely on". While not all, some adolescents even said they can turn to or confide in their parents for advice or counsel when it comes to friendships and relationships.

I would go to ask my mother. She's the only one I know cannot let me down. My mother knows that I entirely depend on her and I am their responsibility, and I trust her. – Adolescent, Luwingu

I can go to my mother for advice: she is the only one who can tell me about friends, who is good and bad. – Adolescent, Luwingu

A recent UNICEF study on parenting in the East and Southern Africa (ESARO) region highlights that, "Parenting is universal in its orientation towards the well-being and best interests of children. However, it varies across cultural contexts with respect to criteria and goals for adolescent well-being and the transition to adulthood".[125] This research suggests that the

125 UNICEF Parenting, Family Care and Adolescence in East and Southern Africa: An evidence-focused literature review

Box 7 - Parental models of decision-making

Parents viewed decision-making with adolescents in different ways. Some saw value in their opinions and deciding collaboratively:

The way I make decisions with my children is, I sit down with them. – Parent, Mufulira

A child has the right to tell me what they have decided or what they want to do … after I hear their view and I see that it can help them … We parents sometimes we call them to sit them down like when they're at school … All in all, children have a right to a decision and a say, we should be able to give them free. – Parents, Mufulira

Alternatively, most parents saw themselves as the sole decision-makers. In instances of **teen pregnancy**, for example, in most cases parents and extended family decided whether a girl would return to school and who would care for the child.

Yes, we make decisions in the sense that some children will just get pregnant and tell you, "I want to get married", but as a parent you will refuse and make a decision so that the child goes back to school because we know that there is no benefit in getting married at this tender age. And they listen to what we decide. – Parent/guardian, Rufunsa

Yes, my family just told me to stop school because no one was ready to care for my child and that's what I did. – Adolescent, Mufulira

role of parenting – in and of itself an external construct – has been evolving, as the influence of the community has reduced and the role of parents (and especially mothers) in providing for children and providing general guidance increased.[126] Noted in Box 7, the nature of parental decision-making varies between households from a more collaborative approach where adolescent voices are heard to more authoritarian, perhaps traditional, methods.

6.2 Economic constraints and views of parental agency

There are several concrete factors at the household level which had significant impacts on school dropout journeys, according to respondents. Specifically, economic considerations – and practicalities around household size and structure – often contributed heavily to school attendance. The **actual agency of parents** in the Zambian context of pervasive poverty feels highly limited given the particular economic constraints; paying school fees can be a sacrifice or economic

126 UNICEF Parenting, Family Care etc, p. 17

trade-off. **The ability of parents to pay school fees or not therefore frames understanding of decision-making on schooling.**

My father and mother, they are the ones who make the decisions whether to stay or drop out of school because they are the ones who pay school fees. Meaning they are the final decision-makers. – Adolescent, Luwingu

I am in charge of the little finances that we earn as a family, I try to budget it well so it covers the home and school expense, even though it is usually not enough. It mostly goes to food. – Parent, Senanga

Across the board, respondents framed their own financial constraints, and the comparatively heavy cost of school fees, as the biggest factor in school attendance.

I sometimes fail in paying for my children's school fees and buying all the things my children need for school. I borrow money from friends to be able to pay for these things. – Parent/guardian, Petauke

Many parents, particularly with out-of-school children, reflected a sense of powerlessness due to their financial situation.

Making choices like that can be challenging, especially if you have no money. There's little you can do. – Parent/guardian, Rufunsa

This decision is framed not as a choice but an inevitability. However, the existence of variability in individual adolescent journeys – moments of dropout and return – reflect the particular precarious susceptibility of many households to external conditions – poor crops or the death of a family member affecting available funds.

Most parents in this place are not educated, so they don't have jobs. They are just peasant farmers which is not reliable, so they can't pay for their children's school. – Adolescent, Luwingu

Ways that households in similarly challenging economic situations make different decisions provide deeper insights into the decision-making process.

6.3 Structure of households

Linked to the question of household finances is that of household size and structure. The average household size in Zambia is 5.1 persons, as high as 5.4 and 5.5 persons in Luapala and Southern provinces, respectively, and as low as 4.7 in Lusaka.[127] Larger households in particular reportedly struggle to pay school fees for all children, and children living in non-nuclear households (due, in many cases, to parental death) are generally not prioritised in economic calculations. Quite simply, as a community leader in Senanga put it, "the larger the size of the family, the more expensive it is to take care of your children".

This issue is compounded when families have several children of an age to pay exam fees for. Large families are faced with deciding which children should go to school.

For instance, if you have two Grade 10 children while you are not working, you are just a farmer while the fees are ever going up. Maybe a Grade 10 [costs] ZMW 1,200 , then you have got two children, you try within your reach to send one to school and just keep the other at home because the money is not enough to support the two at the same time. – Parent, Mufulira

The impact of large families is felt beyond the financial. Adolescents noted that large families and households, in combination with limited space, make it more difficult to study at home.

127 Central Statistical Office, 2015 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey Report

It is hard to study from home because they disturb you a lot. – Adolescent, Lusaka

Respondents also flagged that **non-traditional and recomposed families** face additional financial challenges and may prioritise the attendance of certain children over others, as in the case of Alice. This rarely favours children in the household who are not those of the primary income earner.

I dropped out of school in Grade 2. My stepfather focuses more on taking his own biological children to school and refuses to sponsor me or my siblings. My mother cannot afford to take me to school, so I just stay home. – Adolescent, Petauke

Such situations are quite common in Zambia, as "35 percent of households have foster or orphan children", and 11% of Zambian children have lost one or both parents.[128]

One thing that has made me sad over the years is the separation of my parents. They divorced when I was still quite young, so it was not easy to understand what was going on. My mother took us to live with her while my father moved away to another town. I was upset because I didn't not get to see my father as often as I wanted to. Since my mother had no job and no husband to support [her], it meant that she could not afford many things, including my school fees to continue with my education. – Adolescent, Petauke

The reported impact of such familial structures is confirmed by the 2013-2014 Zambia DHS, which found that children with both parents deceased do in fact have lower school attendance rates – 0.86 rates of attendance for orphan vs. non-orphan children aged 10 to 14.[129] This is especially true in rural areas, where the ratio stands at 0.81.

"My stepfather focuses more on taking his own biological children to school and refuses to sponsor me or my siblings."

Adolescents who have suffered it flagged **parental death** as a watershed moment in the school attendance journey. Aside from other emotional impacts, the loss of a parent's income often has a significant effect on the family economic situation. Adolescents described their personal experiences in losing a parent or parents as "changing everything", including access to money to pays school fees.

The saddest story of my life was when I lost my father when I was in Grade 1. The young brother to my father was the retired teacher and he was doing well, but when I asked him to sponsor me to school, he refused that he doesn't have money to pay for my school fees. I then found another relative who said that he will sponsor me when I was in Grade 6, but he died before long. – Adolescent, Petauke

My parents died when I was in Grade 1, so there wasn't money to pay for my school fees; I dropped out of school a number of times. My guardians are unable to pay for my school fees because they also have many children they are paying for.– Adolescent, Luwingu

Staying in school remains dependent on new guardians or the ability of the single parent to pay. In some cases, entering a new household means schooling is not prioritized. The economic change in the household can cause an adolescent to "**look for piece work instead of being in school learning or studying**, which will affect their academic performance" (Adolescent, Senanga).

128 ZDHS, p. 24. Note that Just 60% of children live with both of their parents, and this percentage drops to 44% for 15-17 year-olds.
129 ZDHS, p. xxi.

6.4 Valuing education

After household finances, one of the most commonly given explanations for adolescents' attending school – or not – was how important *parents* thought school was. As discussed in the previous chapter, interviewed parents and guardians attributed strong value to attending school. Some remarks made by parents on adolescent education reflect a sense of:

- Understanding that adolescents who are educated have access to more economic opportunities later on in life, are able to care for their families and learn positive life value.
- Parental emotional investment in adolescent academic success, conveyed through expressions of joy or happiness when their children succeed in school, as well as the opposite when they do not.
- Parental pride when able to send children to school and conversely, a sense of guilt when they are unable to.

This understanding considers not just what schooling can bring to their children, but also what being in school will prevent them from doing.

School also protects and prevents children from engaging in bad activities. – Parent, Senanga

This positive view of parental beliefs on education comes primarily from parents themselves; teachers, community leaders and, in some cases, adolescents themselves painted a different picture.

For some there is an understanding that children who struggle in school are less worthy of an education.

The money will always be channelled to beer, as [the parents] don't even see the importance of education. – Adolescent, Mufulira

Adolescents and teachers acknowledged the general challenges of unemployment and lack of opportunities for parents to earn school fees; they also, however, in some cases, placed the blame on parents for perceived laziness or lack of prioritisation. As one adolescent put it,

Some parents are lazy. You find that there is nothing they want to do apart from sitting under shade or visiting their neighbours … they don't see the importance of school. – Adolescent, Luwingu

Other observations made by these participants include criticisms that parents think some children have the right to attend school and others may not (based on gender, intelligence) or simply do not view education as a priority due to other household needs, cultural norms (such as marrying girls at a young age) and/or due to a lack of education for parents themselves.

Parental education, or lack thereof, was given as a strong reason for some parents' lack of understanding of the value of school, and thus not choosing to prioritise their own children's attendance. With most parents in Katete lacking education themselves, for example, according to teachers and key informants, "parents don't know the importance of the education" (Adolescent, Katete). Children of uneducated parents, then, reportedly are more likely to drop out or not go to school at all; instead, those parents want their children, "to be at home and help out with the little subsistence farming they are doing as opposed to sending the child to school" (Pastor, Katete). These divergent views can be attributed at least partially to the fact that parents who believed more strongly in education were potentially more likely to be drawn to participate in this research, and parents may express a strong belief in education when asked because they know it is the "right" thing to say.

Contributing to this analysis of the relative value of schooling is adolescents' academic performance. Beyond student motivation to remain in school, academic performance was

specifically identified as contributing to parental decisions around whether to continue paying for school – as well as students' ability to attract sponsors when their families cannot continue to pay. There are a few mentions throughout the districts from both parents and adolescents regarding dullness.

Your friends laugh at you because you are dull. – Adolescent, Rufunsa

It seems for some there is an understanding that children who struggle in school are less worthy of an education, which may also tie back to the costs (sometimes seen as an investment) associated with putting an adolescent through school. Lusaka district evidenced a specific focus on weak academic performance as a reason for dropout, while respondents in Lunga placed the least explicit importance on examinations, focusing instead on student "dullness".

Voices and recommendations from the field

The factors at the level of the household were considered by respondents when providing recommendations on ways to reduce dropouts in their communities. The quotations below highlight some of these voices.

Encourage parents to take their children to school because education is the key to success. – Adolescent, Katete

Some people do not have anyone to support them and consequently end up in marriage. So, there is need to introduce group that will help orphans and those that can't pay to go back to school. – Adolescent, Katete

As parents, we have to come together to look for the adolescents that are in the community that are not in school in order to see how best we could help one another. If it means contributing them money to set up this thing in school or outside, we have to do it for our children to also earn a living. – Parent, Luwingu

If parents are not able to raise school fees for their children, I advocate that they pay in kind opposed to keeping their children out of school. I can hold awareness campaign meetings with parents encouraging them on the value and importance of education to their children. – Government official, Mufulira

IMPRESSIONS: PARTICIPANTS

© Samuel Hall, 2018
Round Robin participants and enumerator in Lusaka (pilot phase)

© Samuel Hall, 2018
Round Robin participants in Luwingu drawing their *Ideal School*

© Samuel Hall, 2018
Round Robin participants in Senanga receiving their *Certificates of Participation*

© Samuel Hall, 2018
FGD with parents and guardians in Luwingu

© Samuel Hall, 2018
Round Robin session in Luwingu

7

ADOLESCENTS

TESTING THE LIMITS OF AGENCY

Paul, age 18, from rural Luwingu, started struggling in school at Grade 7. After arriving at school drunk one day, he was beaten by his teacher and taken to his father.

My father was so angry with me, which he just told me that he was tired with me and he did not want me anymore. Few days later, he just told me to look for somewhere to stay. I had stopped going to school since that time.

Paul acknowledged that his father made the decision to kick him out and stop paying his school fees. However, the backdrop was Paul's own struggle in school, tensions with his teacher, getting a girl pregnant and pressure from friends.

The truth is, I never liked going to school. School was not my thing. I wished to stop going. My teacher also did not like me … I had decided to just find something to do outside school to help myself, as I also had to look for money to support the unborn baby. I was not doing anything in school. My friends and I had made a plan of starting just to do business together to help us find some money.

Peter, a 17-year-old in Lusaka, told his own story of schooling centred on his struggle to succeed in school, and how he overcame this struggle.

Before I got my good grades, I even got number 36 in class, I think that was in my 6th grade. And then after going on, and on, and on, ***I saw that failing was but a thing of the mind****, so I began to study. I studied hard, I studied with my friends, I got help from my family, and as I went into Grade 7 and wrote my exam, I passed. […] I did it myself. I sat and started thinking like, if my friends can do it, what can stop me from doing it? Since God made all equal, and we have the capacity to do anything that we want. So, I pushed myself further, studied hard, forced myself to wake up early so that I may go to school early, find myself one of the first in class, do my work, solve my math and write my notes.*

Certainly, parents and guardians consistently play a central, decisive role in the lives of adolescents. However, there are areas in which adolescents can directly or indirectly exert their own perceived or real agency. These further impact their own dropout or retention journeys, further mitigated by characteristics such as age and gender. These areas – most prominently risky behaviour by adolescents, financial imperatives, educational history and broader aspirations – were consistently identified in the majority of districts, and by respondents of all types, as primary factors contributing to dropout or retention.

To answer the two main research questions, key findings regarding adolescents are highlighted below:

Actors/ Agency - Chapter Key Findings

- Adolescent social worlds are primarily shaped by their parents/guardians and extended family, as peers grow in importance and influence in the lives of adolescents over time.
- Overall adolescent agency is limited, but age and gender are key in shaping how and when that agency is exerted.

Factors/ Journeys - Chapter Key Findings

- Risky behaviours around sex and drug and alcohol abuse and labour expectations can negatively impact adolescent performance in school.
- Adolescent employment aspirations tend to be unrealistic, and school performance a key factor in their perceptions of the relative value of school for themselves.
- Teen pregnancy, early marriage and exam failure are key precipitating events for dropout, but are generally part of a more complicated journey.

7.1 The social world of adolescents

Beyond parents, teachers and extended family/community members, adolescents in Zambia, like those around the world, create their own social world with adolescent peers – friends, classmates, neighbours and boy/girlfriends. These are undoubtedly major influencers in the lives of adolescents across all locations, genders and ages. Friendships – for boys with boys, and for girls with girls – and activities with friends (especially at school) are highly important and primarily positive for younger and older adolescents.

Being with friends at school? I feel so good about it. – Adolescent, Katete

Seeing friends at school and doing well was often a positive influence. However, peer pressure (group influence) was also highlighted as a significant general challenge in the lives of adolescents; for example, adolescents of all ages named it as one of the worst parts of being their age, and many adults agreed that "peer pressure is one of the major issues boys and girls face". Some adolescents even stated that, "having good friends is a challenge at my age because most of the friends we have, they don't have good morals".

Adolescents often mentioned that when they or their peers begin risky behaviours like sex, drinking and/or doing drugs, they do so because they see their friends doing it. Peers might influence each other to engage in activities that either impact school performance or lead to expulsion from school, such as smoking marijuana or drinking alcohol.

Group influence is another vital problem to be noted here in Senanga boma, because a lot of youths encourage their friends to drink and smoke rather than going to school. – Adolescent, Senanga

This social world was explicitly linked by respondents to a number of risky behaviours, further detailed in the next section.

- For boys in particular, respondents cited peer pressure as promoting drinking and drug abuse.

  For the boys when they reach 14, others start drinking beer because people in their groups teach them to drink beer. – Adolescent, Petauke

- For girls, respondents repeatedly named peer pressure as a key reason for pregnancies.

  Friends influence one on how you will be thinking and what you do. You find that they even tell you to have a boyfriend, then you get pregnant and drop out of school. – Adolescent, Mufulira

"I felt sad when they laughed at me. I made my own decision; I had to stop coming to school after that."

Adolescents and adults alike confirmed that peers' influence can be crucial for marriage decisions made by (female) adolescents, because some girls want to get married because "her friends are married" and others are pressured/coerced into marriages by friends and boyfriends.

Beyond peer pressure to engage in risky behaviours, the social environment of adolescents also contributes to dropout journeys through bullying. Classmates might "laugh about them" – this is particularly the case for pupils who come from poorer families and/or those who do not perform well in school. Adolescents reported that peers may have a negative influence when they make them feel "dull" in school. Some adolescents are also made to feel bad by their peers when they do not carry an adequate lunch to school or if they carry their schoolbooks in a plastic bag.

I did not know why they laughed at me. I felt sad when they laughed at me. I made my own decision; I had to stop coming to school after that. – Adolescent, Luwingu

7.2 Parameters of adolescent agency: Influence of age and gender

Given their youth, adolescents rarely make decisions highly independently from other persons in their life, particularly parents and/or other guardians. Research on topics such as child marriage and school retention, has repeatedly shown that the agency of adolescents in decision-making can vary immensely and that other actors are often more responsible for the actual decision, such as parents, religious/community leaders, social and cultural norms, and more.

"As they grow up, they want to decide on their own and thus trigger conflicts."

Most adolescents reported events and decisions (schooling and non-schooling) in which they had little to no say – this can be circumstantial (for example, cases of parental death) or directly related to low levels of agency (for example, referring to decisions simply made for them by parents/guardians. Overall, adolescents seem to experience low levels of agency in their lives. The quantitative survey in Lusaka supported this sentiment; boys and girls reported similarly limited levels of agency in important decisions, with only 16% saying that they themselves take the most important decisions in their lives.

Certain characteristics do seem to inform the level of agency in adolescents and how and when that agency is exerted; these particularly centre on the demographic influences of age and gender. Other factors, such as disability, were discussed very rarely (see Box 2). During the Round Robin sessions, boys and girls were separated into two groups to create a timeline of adolescence. Figure 13 consolidates their answers across districts and locations. It highlights the increasing influence of peers over times and the physical changes associated adolescence and moving towards adulthood.

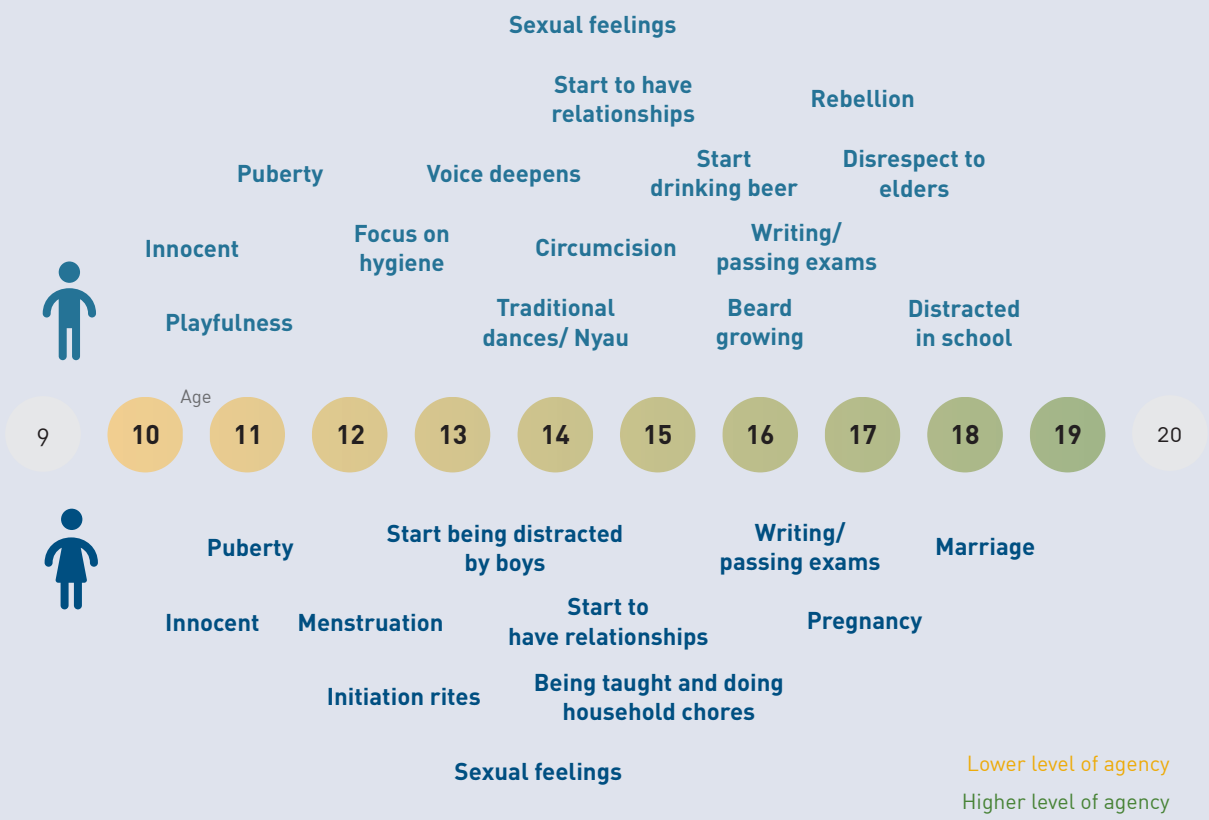
The **age of adolescents** is a clear factor, where older adolescents take on increasing responsibility in the household and able to experience more independence. While big or important decisions are generally still made by parents/guardians, many adolescents aged 15-19 said they start having "a voice" within their families; some even state that they alone make the decisions. Some older (mostly male) adolescents report that they make decisions fully on their own, but the vast majority of older and, especially, younger adolescents only make independent decisions on rather minor aspects of their lives (such as "playing soccer").

The potential conflicts occur with adolescents. As they grow up, they want to decide on their own and thus trigger conflicts: in terms of marriage, my son is married and did not consult me. – Parent/guardian, Senanga

Although less clear from data from this study, other factors may also be at play in shaping when adolescent agency is exerted. Interestingly, in the Lusaka quantitative survey, non-poor respondents comprised the highest proportion of respondents who stated that they make the important decisions in their life, at 24%. Only 13% of moderately poor and 12% of very poor respondents (based on neighbourhood) stated that they make the important decisions in their lives. Moderately and very poor respondents had higher rates of reliance on parents for important decisions, at 73% for both, compared to 63% for non-poor respondents. From the qualitative sample, this differentiation between more economically vulnerable and more stable households was less clear. However, this echoes how parents and guardians framed their level of agency as often subverted by poverty.

From the adolescent perspective, there were clear moments of agency. The agency of adolescents appeared highest in cases where they

Figure 13 - Age and gender timelines



could have – from a financial, parental permission or other perspective – stayed in school, but dropped out anyway. The research identified a variety of cases and reports where adolescents actively made schooling decisions by themselves, often in connection with other decisions (for example, marriage) or because their academic performance made them decide to stop ("just not intelligent" or "wasting money of parents"). Most of these decisions tend toward dropout; only few for retention. Some adolescents did discuss how they actively advocated for their continuation in school, involving others in the conversation to influence their parents or primary caregiver.

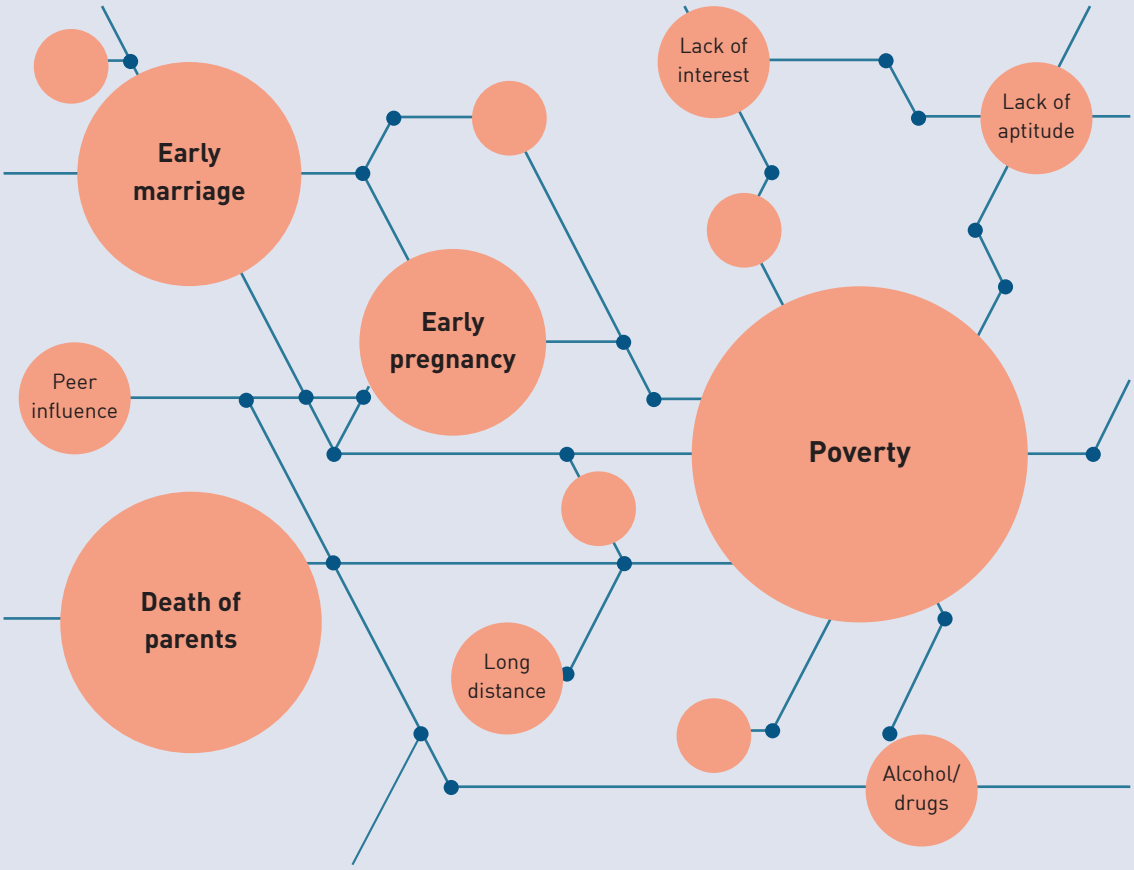
If I want to go to school and my parents say "let's go to the farm", I can refuse. If they insist, I can tell the neighbours to talk to my parents about it since I can't do anything else, they are my parents and I am young. – Adolescent, Petauke

I can do household chores; then, when I finish, I come to school. If parents are against it, that is when I can go to teachers or others for them to help me. – Adolescent, Petauke

There are a number of instances where adolescents stated "I decided for myself"; the parameters and drivers of these decisions varied significantly. A number reflected on the economic situation in their own homes and how they could support their families, from dropping out of school due to lack of funds to starting work.

I decided to drop out of school so that my mother cannot stress that much and this decision was entirely influenced by myself because I knew that no matter how much I push things it will not work out. – Adolescent, Luwingu

Figure 14 - Primary drivers of dropout identified by adolescents



I decided for myself because I had no one to sponsor me. My cousin is the one who told me that you can find something to do because there is someone who wants a maid where I'm working so you can come and be a live-in maid. So that's how I was like, instead of me staying here the whole term, and I don't know what may come next term. Maybe I won't find anyone to sponsor me, so let me just go and do it. That's how I became a maid that side. – Adolescent, Rufunsa

In most cases, adolescents decide to drop out when they want to get married, are pregnant or do not see the benefits of education for themselves (any more) – especially compared to economic activities.

7.3 Key factors framing adolescent agency

Asked to brainstorm the main drivers of dropout in the Round Robins, ranking the top three and discussing the reasons why these drivers occurred, adolescents across the country overwhelmingly identified poverty as the primary driver, denoted by the largest circle in Figure 14. This conception shapes how adolescents viewed their own positions and the extent to which they reported exerting agency. Where they did find themselves actively exerting control was on a number of behaviours which can influence parents, teachers and their own decisions around schooling.

Particularly in more rural locations, early marriage was identified as a key driver, especially for young girls who then prioritise their domestic

obligations. Early pregnancy, peer influence, lack of personal interest, lack of aptitude, distance between home and school, and alcohol/drug abuse were also mentioned as drivers, but to a lesser extent. While adults identified abuse of alcohol and drugs as a key driver, adolescents themselves were less likely to do so.

Risky behaviour

Zambia's *2011-2015 Adolescent Health Strategic Plan* included several types of '"risky behaviour" in its discussion of the main health-related problems facing adolescents. Of these, both substance abuse and early/unprotected sex were noted across nearly all districts as significant factors contributing to school dropout. Both are commonly linked to gender, with the former primarily flagged as an issue for boys and the latter for girls, although linkages between substance abuse and early sex are clear.

In the Lusaka quantitative survey, older respondents also reported more risky behaviour such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, beating others, stealing and drugs at significantly higher rates than younger respondents. Two-thirds (65%) of younger respondents have never engaged in these behaviours, compared to 40% of older adolescents. This may be due to the older respondents' exposure to such things while working – 15% of older respondents work to earn money compared to only 3% of younger respondents. A linear regression with multiple variables demonstrated that working is significantly correlated with a 13% increase in the likelihood of drinking alcohol.

Substance Abuse

Although the Central Statistics Office reported a decrease in levels of alcohol abuse for both men and women aged 15 or older between 2000 and 2009, including for adolescent boys and girls (from 23% in 2000 to 12% in 2009, and 7.2% to 6.8%, respectively), substance abuse was widely described as intrinsically linked to dropout.[130] Adolescents and other respondents frequently linked drinking and other substance abuse with both dropping out and being chased from school.

- **Drinking and smoking lead to a lack of interest in school.** Youth want to prioritise drinking and partying, or simply cannot follow along in class due to being under the influence.

  Instead of studying, they will end up going for beer drinking or smoking in the bushes. This person would start studying a day before writing a test. Some do not even go to school due to drug addiction. Others lose interest and think of dropping out. – Teacher, Lusaka

  Some children do not concentrate on their studies because of [alcohol and drugs] and group influence. – Teacher, Mufulira

- **Students found to be under the influence in school may be kicked out, or this behaviour may indirectly lead to dropout.**

  Each time my friends went to the school the teacher chased them because of them going drunk at school. – Adolescent, Senanga

  What time can you go to school when you are ever arrested? Every time you want to go to school, the police come to arrest you. Every day it's sleeping in police cells, so you stop school. – Adolescent, Petauke

- **Some also argue that drinking and smoking make young people more rebellious**, pushing back against influencers who want them to attend class.

  There are high levels of beer drinking among youths, and also a number of young people have become regular smokers. You will find that if their parents ask them to go to school, they would refuse; because of beer drinking and smoking, young people have become rebellious to their parents. – Adolescent, Lusaka

130 CSO figures, as reported in the UNICEF Zambia Adolescent Report Card, 2014, p. 41

The impact of substance use on education is felt beyond the student level. Several respondents further identified **parental substance abuse**[131] as a cause of dropouts, noting that parents who drink may use all their money to do so, not leaving enough for school fees and other costs associated with school. Beer drinking – and other forms of substance abuse – were in many cases identified as stemming from broader societal problems, including lack of employment and boredom.

I feel people are frustrated by the lack of jobs in this community, hence them resorting to abusing drugs. I have also discovered that they are too many drinking places so you find that people just wake up to drink beer and people here are very lazy. – NGO/CSO, Rufunsa

In Lunga, several respondents in the Round Robin flagged **teachers' drinking**, saying

In our area both teachers and pupils drink beer heavily together, and sometimes they even leave classes just to go and drink beer since bars are near the school. – Adolescent, Lunga

Sexuality and early sexual experience

Round Robin participants frequently noted physical evidence of sexual maturity when asked to put together timelines of key events in adolescence (see Figure 13). Although sexuality itself was rarely discussed directly, "early exposure to sexual activities" was linked by various respondents to early pregnancies as well as health factors (eg HIV/AIDS), which in turn contribute to dropouts. Often described as stemming from the substance abuse detailed above, respondents underlined engaging in sex – and, generally, subsequent pregnancy and/or marriage, as contributing to girls' dropping out, both *directly*, as they lost interest in school or were then unable to continue, and in some cases *indirectly*, as parents' fear that their daughters might engage in sex while enrolled in school – and outside of their control— caused them not to send their daughters there. The specific – and often direct – impact of child marriage and early pregnancy on school dropouts will be discussed in the next section. It can be noted that respondents linked both to the above behaviour.

While the World Bank describes a "vicious cycle" for the poorest and most vulnerable girls in Zambia "whereby girls drop out of school earlier than boys, marry too soon, become sexually active, do not use protection and become pregnant early on, are exposed to sexually transmitted infections, are unable to participate in productive activities, and eventually are unable to provide adequate care for their children or to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty", the typical paradigm presented by many respondents links sexual activity by girls to both boredom and financial reasons, rather than necessarily to early marriage.[132]

The children here have nothing to do. Sex here is very rampant at all ages and it looks like a normal thing here. Girls who are coming from poor families admire what their friends have. As a result, start hanging with men in order to have as well. In the process, they find themselves pregnant. When that happens, they feel that their friends will be laughing at them and they will be feeling shy to go to school. – Teacher, Lunga

In some cases, this behaviour was specifically called prostitution; in Rufunsa, for example a reference to female adolescents entering into sex work was cited as a reason for school dropout. In others, this seemed to be a more normalised – if not accepted – practice of older men offering gifts to young girls in return for sex. This has been

"The children here have nothing to do. Sex here is very rampant at all ages."

131 While little research exists in the ESARO region around the impact of alcohol and drug dependence on children's responsibilities, one study from South Africa does suggest that adolescents who have to take care of alcohol-/drug-addicted parents may lead to "high rates of early drinking as a way of coping amongst adolescents, and the subsequent inter-generational transmission of addiction and violence". UNICEF 2016 ESARO Parenting, p. 37, referencing Jacobs and Jacobs, 2013.

132 The World Bank, "Adolescent Girls In Zambia", p. 1-2.

previously recognised by the World Bank – among others – as a phenomenon contributing both to dropout and to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.[133]

"They think school is just wasting their time, so s/he say, 'instead of going to school, let me just start working.'"

Income-generating activities and other types of work

Adolescents expressed some agency in household decision-making around finances; they may conduct their own "cost-benefit analyses", leading them to prefer work to school. This can be observed in both rural and urban districts.

A community leader in Lusaka, for example, described adolescents as having the "the quick money syndrome".

Children will prefer to drop out of school because they see it to be taking too long in comparison to having an odd job that would give them money there and then. For example, they can pick up scrap metal and sell, and the next day they would pick up empty bottles and they would be able to make money. – Community leader, Lusaka

Several adolescents confirmed that many peers aspire to (or are have to) make money instead of going to school.

They think school is just wasting their time, so s/he say, "instead of going to school, let me just start working. I start making money because school seems not to be making sense to me, I am just wasting my time." – Adolescent, Lusaka

In Lunga, several respondents mentioned that once children have a taste of earning money (eg fishing during the holidays) they do not wish to return to school.

For instance, when a child finds little money, and keeps in business and thinks there is no need to go to school when they can have their own financial access. They would choose business over school. He would even stop school in Grade 5 when he starts going to fishing camps and gets about ZMW 500 and starts up a business. – Adolescent, Lunga

Seasonal school absences to support families can have negative impacts on school performance. For example, an adolescent in the Round Robin in Luwingu noted, "when it is time for caterpillars, they [parents] stop us from going to school and we go to harvest caterpillars with them in the bush". Discussed in Chapter 4, contributing to the family, even through chores, often reflects a normative expectation of adolescents in the household and can be prioritised over attending or preparing for school.

Adolescent aspirations and school performance

A factor at the individual level (and also strongly linked to school performance), respondents highlighted the importance of individual motivation, or lack thereof, in the schooling journey. A recent meta-analysis of over 200 studies from around the world exploring the effect of motivation on student achievement found a low but clear positive effect.[134] In the context of this research, motivation is portrayed as both intrinsic and stemming from the environment around the adolescents.

133 See, for example, https://dignitasinternational.org/2011/03/15/african-teenage-girls-get-world-bank-cash-to-put-school-over-sugar-daddies-bloomberg/ citing a World Bank proposal to give young girls in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Zambia, incentives to stay in school and not sleep with older men

134 The Factors Motivating Student Achievement, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-56083-0_3

The motivation for these particular children is drawn from their environment, where they come from, because of the lack of value being placed around school by the people around this child, he/she will fail to motivate themselves to do their best in education and hence may end up even dropping out of school. – Teacher, Petauke

Adults more frequently attributed a demotivating, negative perception of the value of education to pupils; meanwhile, adolescents themselves generally tended to recognise the importance of education, although not always as applying to their own specific case.

Teachers in Katete, for example, noted that "they feel that education is just something that their parents just want them to attend", while a key informant in Lunga noted a negative evolution here:

The difference that there is, in the past, we had that desire for education. This time the children have chosen to be playful and get into early marriages. – Government official, Lunga

When asked about professional aspirations, adolescents included both sectors requiring tertiary learning (doctor, nurse, teacher) and those attainable through apprenticeships/trainings (hairdressing, mining, etc). To a lesser extent, adolescents noted "business" jobs or more creative jobs. **Exploring the gap between these ambitions and school performance/attendance suggests that there is a need for better career counselling**, making explicit the pathways to these aspired-to jobs as well as potentially stronger linkages between schooling and the more "practical" job aspirations to avoid education being seen as irrelevant to desired future careers. One adolescent in Lunga, for example, wanted to learn how to become a doctor by learning directly from the doctor at the local clinic.

Discussed below, exam failure is a key precipitating moment in dropout. Further, when adolescents reflected on their school journeys, the dropouts often noted their struggles in school and being "dull", often revealing a belief that they not really belong in school. When other factors seem to lead to ending schooling – exam failure or pregnancy – the fight need to return to school did not seem worth it, reflecting heavily on the quality of school, but also an ongoing cost-benefit analysis being undertaken.

7.4 Watershed moments in the schooling journey

As highlighted in the previous chapters, it would be misleading, generally, to speak of a single dropout "decision" in the case of most Zambian adolescents. However, certain "watershed" moments can be underlined as very likely to lead to immediate departure from school, specifically:

- Teenage pregnancy
- Early marriage
- Exam failure
- Minor moments that tip the scale

All types of respondents identified **teenage pregnancies** as a major factor in dropouts; these were repeatedly named as one of the top three reasons for dropout across all districts. This was most clearly a moment highly indicative of dropout in girls' lives, and much less so for adolescent fathers, although still an important moment due to "pressure of having to take care of the baby or to raise a family" (Community leader, Lusaka). Early pregnancies, according to respondents, primarily cause girls to drop out because:

- Parents might "feel discouraged to continue sponsoring their child" (eg paying school fees).
- The girl's "interest in school is usually diverted to taking care of the baby".

- Girls might "fear going to school and fear that their friends will laugh at them".

- A classic sequence of events for girls is: "girl gets pregnant, girl stops school, can't afford to return".

Participants in Rufunsa seem to blame teen pregnancy on vague concepts such as being "playful," or falling "prey to illicit sexual behaviours". One teacher observed that girls meet boys who tell them that they should leave school with the intention of marriage, only to leave them once the girl becomes pregnant, while other adolescent girls meet men who agree to "help" them, but "with the condition of having sex with them."

While adolescents seem to be making the decision to drop out, there are instances where parents/guardians refused to pay school fees.

There are parents that once you get pregnant, that is the end; you will never go back to school. So you have no choice but to stop, since they are the ones sponsoring you. – Adolescent, Luwingu

In some cases, **pregnancy also led to dropout through marriage.** There is a strong interplay between location, early marriage, and subsequent dropout. Only in rural areas is marriage discussed as very important and desirable among many parents and adolescents alike.

Adolescents here mostly like marriages. – Teacher, Katete

Parents are strongly influential when it comes to **early marriages.** They can forbid or allow their children to marry.

And early marriages, it's the parents. Some children will be forced to go into early marriages ... Because of the poverty levels, parents tend to think "the number of girl children I have is the more money I receive". – Teacher, Mufulira

According to adolescents, the most important actors for early marriages are mothers, who were rated as negative influencers by one Round Robin group in Katete (meaning mothers are in support of early marriages). As seen earlier, early marriage can be an economic coping mechanism. More frequently, however, pregnancy was discussed as key driver of early marriage, further exacerbating the risk for dropout. Pregnancies can lead to marriages because parents say that

A child should just go into marriage because she does not want school but wants to be married. – Adolescent, Katete

My first-born child dropped out in Grade 10 ... What made her to drop out is that she had fallen pregnant, and while she was waiting to deliver her child, she ended up getting married in a meaningless early marriage. – Parent, Rufunsa

In Lusaka, adults flagged early marriage as a watershed moment, but adolescents never discussed it, suggesting it was not a real factor in dropout journeys in more urban locales. Generally, it would appear that, once students have married, the Re-Entry Policy and return to school are infrequently considered.

Exam failure can lead directly to dropout (for example, the Grade 9 exam). Parents might lose hope and motivation to keep their children in school. Failure can also exacerbate the financial constraints for school retention:

I have a boy child who really wanted school but when he failed Grade 9, money became difficult for me to make him repeat and help was difficult to get so right now he is just seated at home. – Parent/guardian, Katete

Note, however, that **passing a specific exam** (for example, Grade 7) can reportedly be a positive critical incident and reinforcement for (long-term) school retention, especially when passing is not assured.

In Grade 7, my performance went down, so much that people including myself were doubting if I would pass. So, I shocked them by passing because even those that used to score better grades than mine before the exam, did not do as well as I did. Some people who knew me even gave me some presents such as new clothes and money. – Adolescent, Katete

There was a time in Grade 5 when we had written a test in English. I just think that test was very simple because for the first time I managed to get everything right in English subject in Grade 5. When the results came out, my madam have announced the highest in class and my name was called out to the front. The whole class was in shock as they clapped for me. That was my best moment. – Adolescent, Luwingu

Finally, **watershed moments can appear surprisingly minor to the external eye:** more than once, for example, respondents noted using a plastic bag to carry books as a dropout reason.

I used to feel good going to school. I felt bad when I stopped going to school because that man who was buying sorghum made me stop going to school … he told me to stop. He told me I cannot be going to school carrying my books in a plastic bag. He said I should not go and I should throw away the plastic bag. – Adolescent, Rufunsa

Voices and recommendations from the field

Respondents provided recommendations on ways to reduce dropouts specifically as they related to adolescents themselves. The quotations below highlight some of these voices.

It's not everyone who goes to school so they should introduce more activities so that they should be kept busy. – Adolescent, Mufulira

When you educate children about sex, a child will be able to defend herself because she will have the information and know what to do; secondly if she is involved in sex, it's better she should use a condom, hence she will know even how to use a condom properly because of having that information. – Teacher, Katete

It depends on the interest of the child, because if you force a donkey to drink water when it doesn't want it, it will not drink, and education needs someone to have that interest. – School staff, Luwingu

The main reason I voted for [vocational training] is because the boys we have here just drink traditional beer, there is nothing that they do even after finishing school… [If these programs were implemented], even those who did not get an opportunity to go to college but have completed school, would start learning certain jobs and skills to help them. We have so many in the village that have not been to school. If they could be taken into such programs, it would help us. Other girls do not even know how to sew clothes. – Parent, Luwingu

7.5 Brief district-level overview

Below are key district-level findings. These are further explored in the district reports produced in parallel to this one.

Katete

- Adolescents were asked what made their location different or unique from others: "people said good things about this place …", "there is cooperation among people, unlike other areas", but they expressed frustration about the "lack of money to take us children to school", saying, "we are poor here and a number of my friends don't go to school." Indeed, poverty and hunger, endemic in rural areas in Zambia, are repeatedly mentioned in Katete. However, it should be noted that **"traditional", community level-factors received significantly more attention than in other areas**, ranging from dance groups to initiation rites and early marriage and pregnancy. These cause dropouts both directly – due to missed school – and indirectly – as those who participate may feel more grown up and consider that they should no longer be in school.

- *[Girls] are taken in to the* chinamwali *initiation house once they are considered to be grown. Hence you find that after that they get confused and want to practice what they have learnt, so they drop out of school. In addition, when one is taken into the* chinamwali *initiation house, instead of people teaching her about good living, cleanliness and other things health wise, they tell her about married life as though she is married, so when she comes from there, she just wants to try things out.* – Parent, Katete

Lunga

- Adolescents report that the "place is peaceful and welcoming too" but "people here have nothing to do apart from going to the fish camps to catch fish". The specificities of the dropout journey in Lunga centre on the district's remoteness and dependency on fishing. These generate a number of infrastructural factors which contribute to oft-interrupted (when not fully stopped) schooling journeys. Respondents underlined the difficulties of the situation not just for adolescents but also teachers, many of whom come from other areas and can neither bring their families with them nor communicate with them regularly. As a result, Lunga was the one district where respondents regularly highlighted not just adolescents' but also teachers' risky behaviours as contributing to dropout decisions. From the adolescent perspective, lack of clear opportunities beyond the fishing industry, combined with the perceived decline of the fishing industry itself, seems to leave many adolescents without clear ambitions for their future.

Lusaka

- Lusaka stands out in this research; while the underlying factors contributing to dropout in other districts reflect broader trends beyond the economic, the urban, connected experiences of Lusaka adolescents differ, as do some of the challenges they face. Poverty itself is present with different circumstances, less linked to farming and environmental vagaries and more to the challenges of life in an urban environment with few economic opportunities. Adolescents may face issues related to criminality, and single-parent households are more common – and linked to dropouts. Unlike

in other provinces, respondents rarely or never mention social-cultural practices, religion, early marriages and, to some degree, even teenage pregnancy, as important factors in schooling. Rather than a more broadly influenced school journey, decision-making is closely centred on the nuclear family with parents, while peers influence adolescents outside the home.

Luwingu

- When asked about the local news, adolescents mentioned problems ranging from announcements around road cleanliness to discussions of prostitution, pregnancy and witchcraft. Another primarily rural and agriculturally dependent district, respondents discussed how the "community works together during harvest period" in rural areas and how the lack of tarred roads makes travel impossible during the rainy season.

- **Household economics are presented as the primary driving factor** for school dropouts; however, households with similar economic situations make different decisions around fund attribution. The broader **dependence on agricultural income** means that it is seasonal, and adolescent schooling journeys are punctuated with absences linked to short-term lack of funds or the need for children to support parents in the fields. Although **parents and guardians are recognised as the decision-makers** around school attendance in the abstract, in reality, there were cases of adolescents themselves exerting agency in the choice to drop out, for example when they perceive that their parents struggle to pay fees. It is important to note that **adolescent agency is generally centred around pushing for a dropout rather than enabling retention.**

Mufulira

- Adolescents asked what made them happy to be from Mufulira. They talked about the "welcoming and friendly" people, the nearby border with Congo, the presence of industries, particularly mining, variety of beautiful trees and children's respect for their elders. Mufulira, like Lusaka, presents a slightly different profile to the majority of districts visited, with, in addition to farming, mining and charcoal burning as the most common types of jobs. However, job losses in the mining sector have adversely affected the predominantly urban district. High rates of poverty are pervasive and so, despite a more diversified economy than other districts visited, **poverty and school fees continue to present key obstacles** to completion of school journeys for adolescents. Furthermore, the difference in profile is restricted to the urban Mufulira location. In rural areas, the profile is close to that of other districts, with, for example, distances to school a significant barrier to attendance, in particular for girls.

Petauke

- *Almost everyone in this community depends on farming to generate some income for the survival of their families. When there is drought like in the past few years, we have nothing to sell. If we have nothing to sell, then we won't have any money for survival as well as to take children to school.* – Parent, Petauke

- Respondents across the board in Petauke lamented the heavy reliance on farming in the district, and the irregularity this implies for households' income. Rains put households at risk of hunger each year. They underlined the impact of generalized poverty on **individual choices that adolescents and their families have to make** around early marriages and pregnancies, bad influences from friends, work and stealing, which can all lead directly to dropping out. As one adolescent put it, "If the

man is rich and you are poor, you can't refuse because when you are married, you will enjoy using whatever he has". As such, Petauke appears an archetype for the average rural Zambian province, with traditional practices, poverty, the importance of community and parents in decision-making, and the lack of possibilities flagged.

Rufunsa

- Respondents in Rufunsa describe it as quiet, beautiful, peaceful – and with very limited development compared to nearby locations, and few economic opportunities. The very ruralness of Rufunsa makes life difficult.

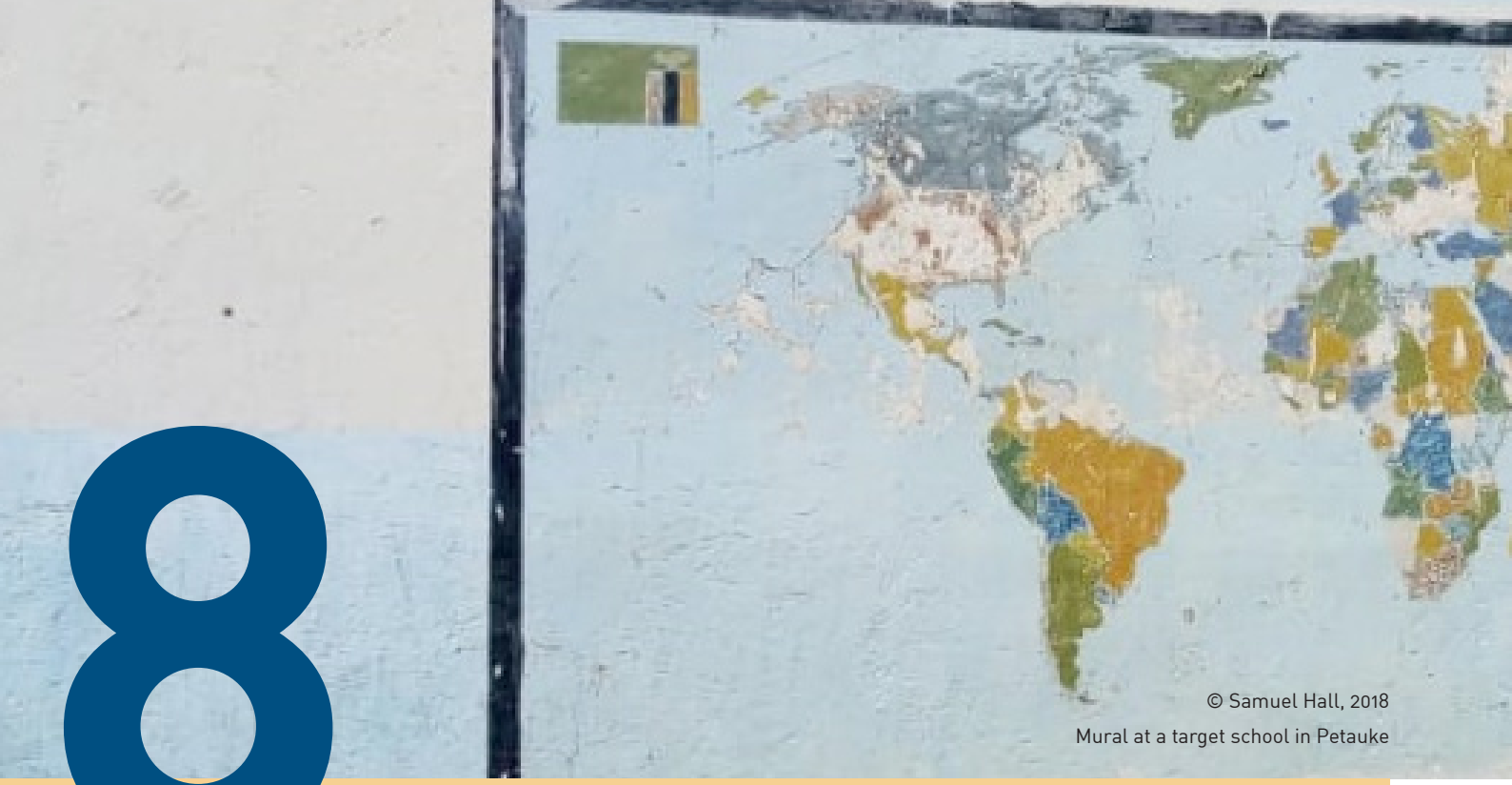
- *Some of these children are made to be selling vegetables, farm produce in the community, moving around covering long distances to just try and get something.*
  – Government official, Rufunsa

- **When considering contributors to dropout, in addition to the above, many respondents noted long distances to school** that are made more difficult by weather conditions and poor roads. When they arrive late, teachers often scold students, which is discouraging. The **quality of education** is also considered low, with poor living conditions demotivating teachers; this at least partly explains why adolescents may not succeed in school. **Traditional practices**, as in other more rural districts, and adolescent risky behaviours similarly contribute to decision-making.

Senanga

- The past decade has seen positive changes in Senanga, opening it up further to the rest of the country and education – among other developments, a new road from Senanga to Sesheke, electricity and boreholes at many schools, improvements in teacher housing and, reportedly, increases in parents valuing education. However, life in Senanga remains challenging. The impact of poverty in Senanga is wide-ranging and manifests itself in the lack of basic social services such as medical facilities and good roads to facilitate trade and economic opportunities. Farming is labour-intensive but unprofitable because of poor soil and the lack of inputs. The struggle to earn a living — or to find paying work at all — causes many to grapple with agonizing decisions about how to provide for their families. Indeed, household poverty is the leading cause of dropouts, and hunger and its effects were a common point of discussion.

- *Some households do not have enough food. You find that after a child has slept with hunger, he or she becomes weak; even participation at school goes down.*
  – Adolescent, Senanga



© Samuel Hall, 2018
Mural at a target school in Petauke

8

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

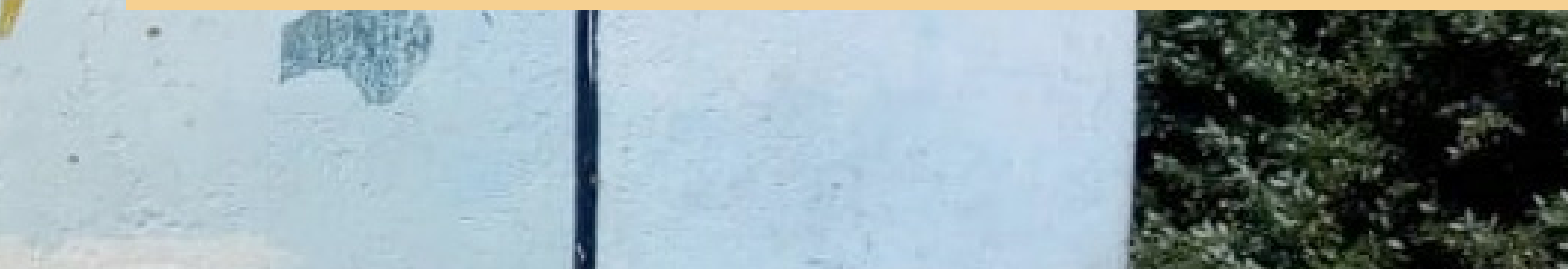
Michael's story at the beginning of this report (Chapter 1) underlines that a single-factor explanation for dropping out cannot fully explain his experience. He blamed himself for the dropout because of exam failure, but also underlined his parents' and later his aunt's economic difficulties. His school journey is a meandering one, framed by several extended school absences and re-entries rather than a single departure.

I feel that maybe my parents also lost hope in me because I failed my Grade 9 exam twice; I think if I had done well, maybe they could have also tried harder to ensure that I had stayed in school.

This explanation does not even take into account the profound structural difficulties facing the Zambian secondary education system and supreme effort needed – by students and their families – to find a spot and attend school. The existing literature has done well to consider factors that impact whether a student stays in or leave school, considering the quality and availably of schools, cost of secondary school and socio-economic push-pulls. Significantly less work has focused on how these factors influence the decision-making process(es) and actors involved.

SH conducted this highly participatory and qualitative study to explore the various factors and actors driving individual decisions. This approach understands adolescents as active in their own decisions, simultaneously acknowledging these decisions are not necessarily made by adolescents themselves, but rather often by family members and even communities.

The objective is to provide actors in Zambia, such as UNICEF and others, with solid and relevant evidence on influencing factors and networks regarding the decision-making process for school retention/dropout, allowing them to design multi-faceted approaches to programming.



8.1 Conclusions

This research finds that decision-making regarding schooling is situated in a complex web of interrelated elements and exertions of agency rather than a linear path or a single point of failure. The answers to the main research questions must be considered within this context.

1. Parents and guardians are the key decision-makers around schooling, embedded within and shaped by their extended familial networks and the communities in which they live. Adolescents exert their own limited agency within these frameworks, which is further mediated by sex and gender, household structures and the growing influence of their peers.

Parents and guardians are the major decision-makers for adolescents on every aspect of their lives, including education: "I can go to my parents because they are the ones who are responsible for my education". This responsibility is acknowledged by parents and guardians and affirmed by adolescents. However, decision-making power regarding schooling is in great part predicated on ability to pay school fees. Economic struggles and the scarcity of household resources perpetuates a feeling of limited agency among these decision-makers regarding education. Parental actions, including how funds are prioritised, cannot be divorced from the community and extended networks in which they live. Their choices are both shaped by a broader context and then overtly or tacitly affirmed (or challenged).

Within this framework, the amount of freedom, independence and opportunities for adolescent decision-making external to or directly with parents and guardians increases with age. That structure may loosen earlier, dependent on household structure, financial conditions and location. Gender clearly plays a strong role in how agency is both experienced and exerted; while boys appear to have more available options, girls can exert choice within a limited and perhaps more risky sphere.

Exertion of adolescent agency, particularly as it may affect school attendance, often happens around risky behaviour, aspirations, school performance, and household and economic labour to various degrees. These are highly framed by main influencers and **often an exercise in agreeing to external circumstance as opposed to resisting them.** Peers grow in importance and

influence in the lives of adolescents over time, both negatively, affecting feelings of inadequacy in school through bullying or encouraging alcohol and drug use and positively, providing support for and examples of school achievement.

Fundamentally, school, whether the adolescent drops out or not, is a place with mainly positive associations, a space to be with friends and learn. However, in shaping decisions around education, adolescents' own academic performance informs their own and their caregivers' perceptions of whether continuing in school is "worth it"; it can be strongly debated whether this is fully a sphere of adolescent control considering the quality of education received and other mitigating factors, such as household responsibilities and hunger.

2. Poverty and household economic decision-making play a primary role in school attendance but are not sufficient to explain the nature of the schooling journey in Zambia. Household cost-benefit analyses are shaped by socio-cultural practices and individual backgrounds. Final precipitating factors that end in dropout are indicative of a more complicated journey.

The cycles of absences and returns in many adolescent school journeys is, in one sense, a reflection of the value placed on education in Zambia. Despite obstacles such as seasonal farm work or long distances to school, there is often a repeated effort to continue until overcoming such structural barriers becomes too difficult or is no longer considered "worth it". Fundamentally, poverty is the number one explanation given for high dropout rates: parents are too poor to pay school fees, adolescents start work to help support the family or girls become pregnant and get married because of poverty.

You will find that 90% of the parents see the value [of education] but the surrounding circumstances ... like economic challenges. If you go around our communities, you find that there are few people who can afford three meals a day, so they tell their children to work to help feed the family. – Teacher, Lusaka

Rampant unemployment and limited economic opportunities, particularly in more rural districts, often require difficult choices, such as putting food on the table or taking a child to school, that cannot be ignored. The starts and stops in the academic journey may also reflect the lack of resilience of many households to poor crop yield or the death of an income-earning family member.

These realities do not even take into account the profound structural difficulties facing the Zambian secondary education system and supreme effort needed – by pupils and their families – to find a spot and attend school. Difficult-to-access schools, poor facilities and equipment and high costs discourage prioritisation of schooling at the household level.

Furthermore, school decisions are embedded within broader social norms and cultural beliefs. Traditional practices around adolescents' transition to adulthood can impact school trajectories either directly (initiation ceremonies cause adolescents to miss school) or indirectly (adolescents want to engage in sexual activity or get married after an initiation ceremony). Expectations around adolescent household contributions are also embedded in relationships; in many ways, adolescents are performing in ways expected of them.

While schooling journeys are an open process made up of multiple small decisions rather than only one major decision, a final precipitating event can end the journey. Teen pregnancy and early marriage are highly predictive of girls – and occasionally boys— leaving school, despite the GRZ's Re-Entry Policy and efforts through chiefs and local leaders to reduce child marriage. Exam failure contributing to dropout reflects concerns around the worth of education for those not performing well, in addition to the limited spaces available in secondary school. Finally, the death of a parent is highly predictive of an adolescent ending school, often adding another mouth to an already financially overstretched household or creating a singled-headed household and further economic hardship.

3. This research confirms the interdependence of factors related to decision-making around school. It is impossible to focus on one solitary factor to address adolescent retention without taking into account the complex web of actors, influencers and structural conditions. More broadly, the key focus should be on working to prioritise education systems that work holistically for adolescents – not just ones that ensure adolescents complete schooling.

A cornerstone of Zambia's Vision 2030 plan, which envisions the country as a middle-income nation by 2030, is education. According to government planners, Zambia's current educational achievements are not "commensurate with sustainable development".[135] To that end, the GRZ, along with development partners such as UNICEF, seeks to improve educational outcomes, especially at the secondary school level. This goal is aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 4,[136] which, building on Millennium Development Goal 2[137] (universal primary education), seeks to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all".

Numerous projects and policies to address what are perceived as the primary drivers of dropout have been implemented in Zambia, ranging from school feeding to the Re-Entry Policy for girls who have had babies and bursary programmes. These are aligned with the more linear narratives often proposed by respondents when seeking to explain dropouts in Zambia. Many of these have had demonstrable positive effects; however, by failing to address challenges in a more holistic way, they will not necessarily suffice to ensure pupil retention.

Furthermore, completion rates alone are not enough to measure the success of the Zambian educational system. Even with near universal primary school enrolment rates, Zambia ranks near the bottom regionally in terms of academic achievement.[138] Such statistics suggest that existing systems and standards in Zambia focus more on output than learning, which limits a student's emotional, educational and creative development.[139] Learners are central agents in education; the quality of the education includes the relevance of the educational experience and pedagogy to the individual learners.[140]

Broadly, the research thus suggests that **the key focus should be on working to prioritise education systems that work for adolescents holistically** – not just ones that ensure that adolescents complete schooling. The systematic relationship between factors demand integrated solutions that build the resilience of adolescents (and their households) to remain in schools that equally provide them with the best education to match their needs.

135 Republic of Zambia, Vision 2030.
136 "United Nations Sustainable Development Goals," accessed April 17, 2018, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4.
137 "United Nations Millennium Development Goals," accessed April 17, 2018, http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml.
138 US Agency for International Development (USAID), "Education Project: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy 2012-2017", 2013.
139 Dennis Banda and W. John Morgan, "Folklore as an Instrument of Education among the Chewa People of Zambia", International Review of Education 59, no. 2 (2013): p. 205.
140 Lee and Zuilkowski, p. 561.

8.2 Recommendations

The study's respondents – adolescents and adults – were asked to explore potential solutions and interventions to address school dropout. As highlighted at the ends of Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7, respondents took fairly pragmatic approaches to what should be done. These recommendations were often framed as bringing stakeholders together:

There is a Nyanja proverb that says one finger cannot pick lice, if you are working just by yourself you will not achieve much, but if we work as a team and also incorporate other organisations that could come on board in order to fight this, I think we would have better results. – Pastor, Katete

Respondents acknowledged that coordination – among adolescents, parents, teachers, government, NGOs and community leaders – is necessary. This research has also underlined that barriers preventing adolescents from attending school are more widespread than education. A cross-sectoral approach is critical to moving beyond looking at phenomena as isolated and independent incidents, but rather as part of larger story.

Recommendations outlined below are thus based around the key findings from this research, taking into account who has agency, and on what, in considering how to address key factors linked to decision-making around adolescents' dropout from school in Zambia, and seeking also to reflect participants' voices. They do so with a focus on the educational sector and school journeys – given the impetus for this research – whilst also keeping in mind broader challenges facing Zambian households. These recommendations have been aligned with the four social system levels considered in this report: the individual, the household, the community and the infrastructural.

"One finger cannot pick lice, if you are working just by yourself, you will not achieve much but if we work as a team a … we would have better results."

I.
Infrastructure level recommendations

1.
Address facility-linked barriers to attendance

Round Robin participant designs of ideal schools, and the key school elements underlined by them, reflect that many schools in Zambia may be missing what can be considered basic elements (eg functional toilet facilities); several of these were specifically noted as leading to absence from school, which in turn can indirectly impact dropout journeys. Beyond broader considerations around the need for more schools to address the lack of available spots for pupils and overcrowded classrooms/shift schooling approaches which have been implemented, there are smaller fixes which can have disproportionate impacts, such as building appropriate toilet facilities and ensuring sufficient water supply and electricity.

2.
Build teacher capacity around participatory teaching

Continued learning and capacity building for teachers must be encouraged, appropriate to the level they are to teach; it is not enough to promote numbers of teachers, as teacher disengagement or lack of training contributes to pupil frustration or feeling that school has limited value. Without active, engaged teachers, the other recommendations noted here will have limited success. The additional trainings can in particular consider the specificities of the Zambian context, allowing teachers to share what has been successful for them and build new approaches together. Participatory teaching approaches in particular, can build student engagement in studies through varied learning experiences.

II.
Community level recommendations

3.
Encourage school-friendly means of participation in traditional practices

Traditional practices – ranging from initiation rites to, say, cattle herding and seasonal work – have been underlined as barriers to education. Addressing them requires understanding of a broader context where oppositions between "Western" and "Zambian" culture are regularly made, with positive attributes given the latter. Pushing for the elimination of traditional practices, or attendance at school in lieu of involvement, risks creating opposition to school attendance in more rural districts in particular. Organisations should consider localized approaches to ensure that traditional practices do not conflict with schooling, and see if it is possible to integrate teaching sessions around local traditions into the curricula so that adolescents can fulfil social norms around learning important traditions without running the risk of leaving school to do so.

4.
Engage local participation in education and the school community

The research has highlighted the important role which local community members can play in influencing household-level decision-making around education. Making them education advocates is thus key to providing an environment supportive of secondary education. In particular, respondents who sought to justify dropouts often questioned the perceived value of education, given the limited opportunities in their locales and a perceived disconnect between schools and necessary real skills. This should begin at the primary school level – through, for example, parent-teacher associations – in order to ensure participation in the educational system throughout schooling.

III.
Household level recommendations

5.
Promote cross-sectoral approaches to address the "cost-benefit" narrative

Addressing obstacles preventing adolescents from attending school requires actions that go beyond the education sector. Actors addressing such sectors as health, child protection and economic development need to be linked, both at the ministerial level and to non-profit actors and the private sector. This has been done in the past through example by linking farming programmes to school feeding. Girls' education, in particular, is often addressed from the perspective of seeking to convince households of the value of school, speaking to more traditional paradigms around girls' versus boys' education evidenced by some respondents. However, the research underlines that in the vast majority of cases, these priorities cannot be separated from other household-level imperatives – in particular, financial calculations, concerns around girls' safety and the need for additional support at home. Supporting girls' education, then, must keep a broader range of arguments in mind in designing programmes.

6.
Specifically target at-risk households for support based on structure and size

There are no specific equations allowing for the calculation of a child's likelihood of dropping out; nor can specific factors be identified as single points of failure linked to dropping out. However, this research does underline some elements which are likely to contribute to dropout journeys at the household level. In particular, the specifics of household structures were raised repeatedly, identifying children as coming from larger families, and children who are orphaned or otherwise have lost a parent/guardian, as more likely to leave school.

7.
Strengthen household economic well-being

Although economics, alone are an insufficient lever to address school dropouts, sustainable change around dropouts, within the current financial models for schools requiring school fees, uniforms and tuition at the secondary level, will not be possible for many without addressing financial concerns. This can be addressed through a range of possibilities; successful past pilots have included, for example, the use of regular cash transfers to the poorest of households. Stakeholders should keep in mind the broader need for economic development which would, de facto, eliminate some of the barriers to school attendance.

IV.
Individual level recommendations

8.
Design programmes to holistically support pregnant and post-partum pupils linked to the Re-Entry Policy

Pregnancy was repeatedly noted as a key driver of female dropout in particular. While the research shows that the decision journey for pregnant girls is not necessarily as simple as suggested, pregnancy must be addressed. The Re-Entry Policy has removed administrative barriers to return to school, but complementary support is required to ensure young mothers can take advantage of this, considering the attitudes of families, teachers and other pupils, as well as financial and childcare constraints posed by parenthood.

9.
Drive realistic aspirations among adolescents

Adolescents broadly state their understanding of the value of school; however, this does not reliably translate to school attendance. While some expressed frustration around the relevance of school to their lives, others highlighted aspirations for which school is necessary (eg becoming a doctor) without understanding fully how school is necessary to get there. Further support is needed to ensure that adolescents understand how they can work to translate goals into reality (and what is necessary to do so), as well as exploring other opportunities which may be available. This could, for example, take the form of promoting internships or shadowing programmes, thinking beyond the educational sector, especially in areas with broader ranges of professional opportunities, to allow pupils to be exposed to types of jobs and professions of which they might not otherwise have been aware.

10.
Target programmes to support individuals at risk from an educational performance perspective

Teachers are well-placed to provide support to children at risk of dropping out who are impacted by negative school performances. They can, for example, track student performance and implement immediate contingency plans if students suddenly start doing worse. Engaging families as well as communities in addressing student performance can widen the support network for struggling pupils.

11.
Address perceptions and knowledge around risky behaviours to slow and eventually eliminate adolescent uptake

Respondents recommended what amounts to comprehensive sexuality education programmes. This may be challenging from a cultural perspective as strong religious values in much of the country have limited the ability to discuss, for example, contraception. Taking a public health perspective to address sexually transmitted infections may help. Linkages to the community are key to allow such programmes to succeed. Similarly, using a social influence model can broaden discussion regarding substance abuse.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ahearn, Laura M. "Language and Agency." Annual Review of Anthropology 30, no. 1 (2001): 109–37. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.30.1.109.

Bajaj, Monisha. "Intergenerational Perspectives on Education and Employment in the Zambian Copperbelt." Comparative Education Review 54, no. 2 (May 1, 2010): 175–97. https://doi.org/10.1086/651138.

———. "Un/Doing Gender? A Case Study of School Policy and Practice in Zambia." International Review of Education 55, no. 5/6 (2009): 483–502.

Banda, Dennis, and W. John Morgan. "Folklore as an Instrument of Education among the Chewa People of Zambia." International Review of Education 59, no. 2 (2013): 197–216.

Central Statistical Office (Zambia). "2014 Labour Force Survey Report," 2015.

Central Statistical Office (Zambia). "Zambia Demographic and Health Survey 2013-14," 2015.

Central Statistical Office (Zambia). "2015 Living Conditions Monitoring Survey Report," 2016. http://www.zamstats.gov.zm/index.php/publications/category/27-living-conditions.

Central Statistics Office. "Zambia Data Portal." Open Data for Africa. Accessed May 2, 2018. http://zambia.opendataforafrica.org//.

Chapoma, Cornelius, Miriam Visser, and Suzanne Tossings. "Teacher Training, Recruitment, Deployment, Management and Retention - Diagnostic Study." Ecorys, Ministry of General Education of the Republic of Zambia and UNICEF Zambia, 2017.

Chawe, Michael. "Zambia Sacks 263 'Fake' Teachers." Africa Review, February 20, 2018. http://www.africareview.com/news/Zambia-sacks-teachers-with-fake-papers/979180-4312316-17favwz/index.html.

Clemensen, Nana. "Staging an Educated Self: Linguistic Displays of Schooling among Rural Zambian Children." Anthropology & Education Quarterly 46, no. 3 (September 1, 2015): 244–59. https://doi.org/10.1111/aeq.12105.

Cliggett, Lisa, and Brooke Wyssmann. "Crimes against the Future: Zambian Teachers' Alternative Income Generation and the Undermining of Education." Africa Today 55, no. 3 (2009): 25–43.

Dakwa, Francis Emson, Chrispen Chiome, and Raphinos Alexander Chabaya. "Poverty-Related Causes of School Dropout- Dilemma of the Girl Child in Rural Zimbabwe." International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development 3, no. 1 (April 19, 2014). https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v3-i1/792.

Das, Jishnu, Stefan Dercon, James Habyarimana, and Pramila Krishnan. "Teacher Shocks and Student Learning: Evidence from Zambia." The Journal of Human Resources 42, no. 4 (2007): 820–62.

Dauphin–Tinturier, Anne-Marie. "Pleasure and Body Adaptation An Approach to Gender in Northern Zambia." Matatu 37, no. 1 (2008): 77–95. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789042030619_004.

Day, Caroline, and Ruth Evans. "Caring Responsibilities, Change and Transitions in Young People's Family Lives in Zambia." Journal of Comparative Family Studies 46, no. 1 (2015): 137–52.

Education Policy Data Center. "National Education Profile," 2014.

Examinations Council of Zambia, and UNICEF. "Research Study on Learner Absenteeism from Public Examinations: An Inquiry into the Extent and Causes of Absenteeism at the Primary and Junior Secondary School Level," 2013.

Fairclough, Norman. "Critical Discourse Analysis." In The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis, 9–20. London: Routledge, 2012.

Falconer-Stout, Zacharia J, Rebecca Frischkorn, and Lynne Miller Franco. "Time to Learn Endline Evaluation Report," 2017.

Frischkorn, Rebecca, and Zacharia J Falconer-Stout. "Ensuring Inclusive and Quality Education for All: A Comprehensive Review of Community Schools in Zambia." Time to Learn, 2016.

Gelli, Aulo, Ute Meir, and Francisco Espejo. "Does Provision of Food in School Increase Girls' Enrollment? Evidence from Schools in Sub-Saharan Africa." Food and Nutrition Bulletin 28, no. 2 (June 1, 2007): 149–55. https://doi.org/10.1177/156482650702800203.

Grover, Sonja. "Secondary education as a universal human right." Education and the Law 16, no. 1 (2004): 21-31.

Hamusunga, George. "An Analysis of the Performance of the Zambian Education System." Zambia National Education Coalition, 2012.

Hochfeld, Tessa, Lauren Graham, Leila Patel, Jacqueline Moodley, and Eleanor Ross. "Does School Breakfast Make a Difference? An Evaluation of an in-School Breakfast Programme in South Africa." International Journal of Educational Development 51 (November 1, 2016): 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2016.07.005.

Lee, Jeongmin, and Stephanie Simmons Zuilkowski. "Conceptualising Education Quality in Zambia: A Comparative Analysis across the Local, National and Global Discourses." Comparative Education 53, no. 4 (2017): 558–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050068.2017.1348020.

Male, Chata, and Quentin T. Wodon. "Basic Profile of Child Marriage in Zambia." The World Bank, March 1, 2016. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/265541468187743423/Basic-profile-of-child-marriage-in-Zambia.

Ministry of General Education (Zambia). "Educational Statistical Bulletin 2016," 2016.

Ministry of National Development Planning. "Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) – Volume 1," 2017. http://www.mndp.gov.zm/download/7NDP.pdf

Musika, Chomba. "Fake Teachers Exposed." Zambia Daily Mail, December 7, 2017. https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/fake-teachers-exposed/.

———. "Revised School Fees Relief to Parents." Zambia Daily Mail, January 19, 2016. https://www.daily-mail.co.zm/revised-school-fees-relief-parents/.

Mwalimu, Michelle. "Education and the Economy: Achievements and Shortfalls in Independent Zambia, 1964–2014." Journal of Southern African Studies 40, no. 5 (September 3, 2014): 1091–1108. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057070.2014.946820.

Nalungwe, Betty Chella. "No More Flood-Induced Absenteeism in Malabo." UNICEF (blog). Accessed April 11, 2018. https://www.unicef.org/zambia/5108_18336.html.

Okitsu, Taeko, and D. Brent Edwards. "Policy Promise and the Reality of Community Involvement in School-Based Management in Zambia: Can the Rural Poor Hold Schools and Teachers to Account?" International Journal of Educational Development 56 (September 1, 2017): 28–41. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2017.07.001.

Ortiz, Isabel, and Matthew Cummins. "When the Global Crisis and Youth Bulge Collide." UNICEF, February 2012.

Parkes, Jenny, Jo Heslop, Freya Johnson Ross, Rosie Westerveld, William Nicholas and Elaine Unterhalter. "Addressing School Related Gender Based Violence in Zambia: A Scoping Study." UCL Institute of Education, 2017.

Patriotic Front. Patriotic Front Manifesto (2016-2021) (2016).

Phiri, Chris. “Teachers in 20% Salary Increase, 4,450 More Recruited.” Zambia Reports, November 24, 2015. https://zambiareports.com/2015/11/24/teachers-in-20-salary-increase-4450-more-recruited/.

Republic of Zambia. “Advancing Girls’ Education Through WASH Programs in Schools: A Formative Study on Menstrual Hygiene Management in Mumbwa and Rufunsa Districts, Zambia.” Accessed April 11, 2018. https://www.unicef.org/zambia/Menstrual_Hygiene_Management.pdf.

———. “Basic Educational Sub-Sector Investment Programme,” n.d.

———. Educating Our Future 1996 (n.d.).

———. Education Act (n.d.).

———. Juveniles Act (2011).

———. National Implementation Framework III (2011).

———. “Qualitative Study of Child Marriage in Six Districts of Zambia,” 2015. https://www.unicef.org/zambia/Zambia_child_marriage_research_report.pdf.

———. Vision 2030 (2006).

Republic of Zambia Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare. “The Child Grant Program: A Comprehensive Summary of Impacts (2010-2014),” 2016. https://www.unicef.org/zambia/Policy_Brief_CG_final.pdf.

Rogers, Halsey F., and Emiliana Vegas. No More Cutting Class? Reducing Teacher Absence And Providing Incentives For Performance. Policy Research Working Papers. The World Bank, 2009. http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/book/10.1596/1813-9450-4847.

Saeki, Hiroshi, Seo Yeon Hong, Lauren Marie Gardner, Shinsaku Nomura, Kundhavi Kadiresan, and Sajitha Bashir. “Education Public Expenditure Review in Zambia.” The World Bank, December 1, 2015. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/431421468000590726/Education-public-expenditure-review-in-Zambia.

“School Feeding Programme to Be Implemented throughout Zambia-Tukombe.” Lusaka Times (blog), March 28, 2017. https://www.lusakatimes.com/2017/03/28/school-feeding-programme-implemented-throughout-zambia-tukombe/.

Stoner, Marie C.D., Audrey Pettifor, Jessie K. Edwards, Allison E. Aiello, Carolyn T. Halpern, Aimée Julien, Amanda Selin, et al. “The Effect of School Attendance and School Dropout on Incident HIV and HSV-2 among Young Women in Rural South Africa Enrolled in HPTN 068:” AIDS 31, no. 15 (September 2017): 2127–34. https://doi.org/10.1097/QAD.0000000000001584.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. “World Population Monitoring Adolescents and Youth,” 2012.

The World Bank. “Adolescent Girls in Zambia : Executive Summary.” The World Bank, June 24, 2016. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/835631467991930356/Adolescent-girls-in-Zambia-executive-summary.

Townsend, Loraine, Alan J. Flisher, Perpetual Chikobvu, Carl Lombard, and Gary King. “The Relationship between Bullying Behaviours and High School Dropout in Cape Town, South Africa.” South African Journal of Psychology 38, no. 1 (April 2008): 21–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/008124630803800102.

UNESCO. “Literacy for Life.” EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2006.

———. “School Violence and Bullying,” 2017.

———. “Sustainable Development Begins with Education: How Education Can Contribute to the Proposed Post-2015 Goals,” 2014.

———. “Zambia: Education Policy Review,” 2016.

UNICEF, ed. Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity. The State of the World’s Children 2011. New York, NY: UNICEF, 2011.

———. “A Report Card of Adolescents in Zambia,” 2014. https://www.unicef.org/zambia/A_Report_Card_Of_Adolescents_In_Zambia.pdf.

———. “Global Initiative on Out-of-School Children: Zambia,” November 2014.

———. “Final Report – Study on Traditional Parenting and Child Care Practices in Zambia”, 2018

———. UNICEF Zambia 2016-2020 Country Programme, “Analytical Papers – 0-5 Age group”, 2014

———. UNICEF Zambia 2016-2020 Country Programme, “Analytical Papers – 6-10 Age group”, 2014

———. UNICEF Zambia 2016-2020 Country Programme, “Analytical Papers – Children aged 11-18 (distinguishing between 11-14 and 15-18 years)”, 2014

———. UNICEF Zambia 2016-2020 Country Programme, “Analytical Paper for Cross-Cutting issues, Draft”, 2014

“United Nations Millennium Development Goals.” Accessed April 17, 2018. http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/education.shtml.

“United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.” Accessed April 17, 2018. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4.

US Agency for International Development (USAID). “Education Project: Performance Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy 2012-2017,” 2013. https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1qccgrnhpyj_mgJEmtOnui14KxIKqlt83.

USAID. “Meeting the Different Needs of Boys and Girls in Services for Vulnerable Children,” June 2013.

Wedekind, Vera, and Tomaida Milingo. “Second Chances for Girls: The Zambian Re-Entry into School Policy.” Time to Learn Case Study Series. USAID, 2015.

WHO, CDC, Zambia Ministry of Health, and Zambia Ministry of Education. “Zambia Global School Health Survey,” 2004.

World Bank. “How Can Gross School Enrollment Ratios Be over 100 Percent?” World Bank Data Help Desk. Accessed May 2, 2018. https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/114955-how-can-gross-school-enrollment-ratios-be-over-100.

World Bank, and UKAID. “What Would It Take for Zambia’s Copper Mining Industry to Achieve Its Potential?,” 2011.

World Food Programme. “Home Grown School Feeding Program,” 2011.

ANNEX 1 - Research questions by data source

The full list of research questions and the data collection tools used to address them is as follows:

'How are decision made on whether or not adolescents complete their schooling in Zambia?'

● Strongly addressed by tool/method • Peripherally addressed by tool/method

Category Question	**Sub-Questions**	Details/ Sub-Factors	**Qualitative Methods**				**Quant. Methods**
			Round Robin	Case studies	FGDs	KIIs	
Actors/ Agency Which actors either decide directly whether or not adolescents complete schooling in Zambia, or influence such decisions significantly?	Which persons are actually making the decisions to whether or not adolescents complete schooling?	Adolescents Peers Parents Teachers etc	●	●	●	•	•
	What level of agency do adolescents have in this decision-making process, and which factors define this agency?	Gender Age Family size Socio-economic status etc	●	●	•		
	Who are the major (human) influencers, including socio-cultural networks, in decision-making (regarding schooling)?	Peers Family members Community Teachers Media etc	●	●	•	•	•
Factors/ Journeys Which family/ household, socio-cultural, individual and (infra)structural factors and events contribute to choices regarding schooling in Zambia? How are these related to decisions and journeys of school retention/ dropout?	What socio-economic and socio-cultural factors (including social norms) contribute to choices regarding schooling and facilitate dropping out / retention?	Poverty Economic opportunities Costs of education Gender roles Child marriage etc	•	●	●	•	•
	Which (infra)structural push-pull factors contribute to choices regarding schooling and facilitate dropping out / retention?	Facilities/ equipment at schools Distance to schools Quality of teaching etc	•	•	●	●	

	Which individual characteristics and behaviours of adolescents and their households contribute to choices regarding schooling and facilitate dropping out / retention?	Gender Age Educational success ECE exposure Risky behaviour Health/HIV Maternity/ Sexuality (Job) aspirations/ 'Life goals' etc	●	●	•	•
	Which specific events define individual journeys of school dropout/retention? How are these related to or influenced by family/household, socio-cultural, individual and (infra) structural factors?	Successes and encouraging events Challenges and discouraging events	●	●		•
Recommendations How can findings from this study be utilized to create evidence-based interventions in Zambia's (secondary) education sector that allow for positive and empowering opportunities for adolescents?	Which other contexts, opportunities and trends need to be considered to create evidence-based recommendations?	Economic outlook (Infra) structural developments Policy developments etc	•	•	●	●
	What recommendations can be made to empower decision-making actors and facilitate factors ensuring retention?	n/a			*Synthesis*	
	What recommendations can be made to create opportunities for adolescents who have dropped out or are at risk of dropping out of formal education?	n/a			*Synthesis*	

ANNEX 2 - Detailed Research Methods

This annex provides additional detail regarding data collection tools; data collection procedures and training, sampling design and analysis of the *U-Report*.

Data collection tools

Literature review

Figure 15 - Key sources for literature review

To provide a first conceptual map for this study, a desk review was undertaken at the start of this research. It comprised of a mix of institutional reports/grey literature from development organizations (eg UNICEF, the US Agency for International Development and the World Bank), policies and plans of the GRZ, reports from non-governmental organizations and peer-reviewed articles from academic journals. Institutional and governmental reports were accessed from organizations' respective websites and documents made available by UNICEF Zambia. Academic sources were sourced primarily from two of the largest academic databases in the United States, Academic Search Premier and JSTOR. The report focuses on publicly available information

To find relevant articles, queries were limited from 2003-2018 to ensure relevancy, and relevant terms were searched for in groups, such as 'Zambia' AND 'School' AND 'pregnancy'.[141] Documents were located and screened using techniques such as abstract review, credibility (prioritising peer reviewed documents), and time period (reviewing documents from past 15 years only and prioritising the most up-to-date information). Documents specifically relating to Zambia were prioritised, but where adequate information was not available in-country, comparisons to external contexts have been made and noted. A diagram of the key sources referenced is presented in Figure 15.[142]

Qualitative tools

Round Robin

The core elements of the Round Robin Sessions conducted are as follows:

1) **Influencer and network mapping:** The purpose of this exercise is to better understand adolescents' social networks and identify key influencers in their lives as well as to understand who key influencers are for different kinds of

141 Search terms (often queried in search groups) included: absenteeism; adolescence; agriculture; boy child; bullying; child labour; Copperbelt Province; decision-making; direct costs; distance to school; dropout; Eastern Province; early marriage; economic activity; education; education policy; food security; gender; girl child; guardian involvement; guardian education; health; hygiene; indirect costs; life aspirations; life goals; Luapula Province; Lusaka Province; menstruation; Northern Province; opportunity costs; out of school; parent involvement; parent education; pregnancy; religion; risk; rural; scholarship; school; school fees; sexual health; social norms; social pressures; teacher absenteeism; traditional practices; urban; violence; vulnerability; WASH; Western Province; youth; youth labour; Zambia.

142 The diagram includes only key (not all) referenced sources, of which there are 37. Of the documents listed in figure 1, several are listed in multiple categories due to multiple authorship (one joint foreign government/Zambian government document, one joint Zambian government/UN document, one joint UN/Zambian government/foreign government document).

decisions (education in particular). This sub-tool features a group exercise that openly discusses people that are admired by participants (family members, peers, celebrities, etc), and follows this with the actual mapping of influencers and networks. For this, participants are asked, in two gender sub-groups, to draw themselves in a circle using black markers and then one by one draw lines to other circles representing everyone in their network, using types of individuals, such as 'mother,' 'uncle,' 'friend,' and 'boss.' Then participants are asked to mark these circles in: RED (difficult connections or no longer existing); YELLOW (unsure or questionable relationship); GREEN (people they can rely on); and BLUE (future aspirations). At the end, participants are asked to highlight the three most important connections for any decisions they must make in their lives (persons that make decisions for them and/or those they ask for advice).

2) Age and gender timelines: The purpose of this exercise is to understand the context around the school dropout/ retention journeys as well as to build a rich picture of journeys through adolescence (mindsets, priorities, relationships, hopes and fears across the years). This sub-tool features a (temporarily age-split) group exercise that openly discusses the best parts but also challenges of particular age brackets. Its main activity is the participatory drawing of timelines representing adolescence. For this, gender-split sub-groups will draw a timeline (age 10-19) and collect/map all crucial events along this line. These events will be discussed in terms of their overall and emotional impact on individual lives. Once a timeline of events and clear age sub-brackets emerge, mindsets, priorities, relationships, hopes and fears of each age bracket will be explored/discussed in the gender-split sub-groups.

3) Defining 'dropout' and its drivers (ranking): The purpose of this exercise is to explore the language and definition of 'dropping out' of school from adolescents' perspectives as well as to understand what adolescents see as the main causes of school dropout. First, participants are presented a series of vignettes and ask the respondents to describe the status of each subject (eg 'a girl who has fallen pregnant and misses a year to have her baby') along with their actions by using only single words (eg verbs). Building on the above, the groups will brainstorm, list and rank different causes of students failing to complete schooling.

4) Masanko: The purpose of this exercise is to explore decision-making rationales amongst adolescents. This uses a highly playful approach, based on the game 'scruples'. The game uses dilemma cards – for example, 'If you found a way to cheat in your exams without getting caught would you stop studying?' – each with a question of scruples, that will trigger/ demand reactions from the players. While being a competitive game, this tool is all about 'doing the right thing' when faced with challenging scenarios related to the research objectives. The transcripts of discussions held during the game will allow for the analysis of decision-making approaches amongst these young people.

5) Social vignettes: The purpose of this exercise is to explore the decision-making and rationales in more detail for decisions around education. For this, the facilitators of the session read selected 'incomplete' vignettes (using narrative devices i.e. hooks, cliff-hangers and pay offs) which will then be discussed in the group. Participants first discuss the most likely 'pre-stories' or sequence of events leading to each vignette. They are then asked questions that probe the quality of the decisions made and evaluate and debate the relative pros and cons of alternative choices for the vignette's future. One example of such vignettes is: "Daniel (16) is the eldest of five children. He's smart but the family cannot afford to pay for all five kids' education. His father is a successful mechanic and Daniel helps him by seeking out good second-hand parts for his father's clients. When his father gets sick Daniel is forced to make a choice. Continue school or take over his father's workshop in order to pay the medical fees and continue to support the family."

6) Ideal school: The purpose of this exercise is to use a group exercise of designing the ideal Zambian (secondary) school to reveal perceptions of the real value of current school system. In small groups of max. four participants, the adolescents are asked to draw their ideal school. They groups will receive questions they will need to answer when presenting their school to the whole group; for example, 'Will your school be mixed or single sex? Boarding or Day School?' At the end, the whole group votes for the 'best school'. This is a creative task that allows participants to offer solutions to the problems facing the existing system.

7) Intervention mapping: The purpose of this exercise is to draw insight from participants' analysis of critical pathways and the potential interventions they suggest as solutions. Using selected archetypical pathways that speak to key research questions, the group reads through each of the pathways as a complete narrative placing emphasis upon critical incidents

(eg dropout). Then participants are asked to note when alternative decisions could have been made or interventions could have been made and by whom to change the outcomes. Finally, in split groups, fill a table for a jointly selected, where important ideas/aspects of potentials solutions or interventions are specified (eg who, what, how, with whom, actual possibility of the intervention, etc).

In addition to the explicit and participatory tools above, the Round Robin Sessions included a small pool of general questions to the participants to record characteristics such as age, educational progress, family/household background, living location, gender, and others. Each Round Robin Session was closed off by an open feedback discussion with the participating adolescents to a) enhance the participatory and empowering nature of the tools, and b) to allow for continuous adaptions of the tools, if necessary.

Adolescent case studies

To overcome potential bias and psychosocial barriers of speaking freely in group sessions, additional in-depth interviews with adolescents were conducted who are either in school or have dropped out of school. These followed a semi-structured questionnaire that allowed for a narrative approach, enabling participants to 'tell their stories'. These primarily circle around life events and decision processes that resulted in choices to whether or not stay in school.

The interviews and its designed tools followed a highly child-friendly and sensitive approach and did not last longer than 60 minutes for the participating adolescent – after the actual interview, the adolescent was given the opportunity to ask questions and continue the conversation, if she/he wishes. In addition, two thirds of the conducted case studies featured additional interviews with parents or caretakers of the child, which lasted 45 minutes, approximately.

Other decision-maker consultations (FGDs with parents and teachers)

To fully allow unravelling the actual decision-making processes and factors behind school retention/dropout decisions, SH conducted additional FGDs with two important groups for this study: parents and school teachers. Being either actively involved in decision-making processes or experiencing the results of such decisions, the testimonies from these groups allowed for a deeper understanding of the topic, beyond the perspectives of adolescents themselves. In each target location three FGDS were conducted:

- One FGD with parents of adolescents in school
- One FGD with parents of adolescents out of school
- One FGD with teachers of the nearest school[143]

The FGDs followed a specific questionnaire and portfolio of questions that encourage discussion and interaction between the participants. The involvement in school retention/dropout decisions was one of the major topics as well as social norms performed by parents and teachers alike that might contribute to such decisions.

Key informant interviews

A complex phenomenon, such as decision-making regarding school retention/dropout, requires an in-depth understanding of the contextual and national/local frameworks. To allow for a more nuanced understanding, SH conducted additional KIIs on local and national level. Key informants were interviewed using a semi-structured questionnaire that primarily targets the underlying factors for potential decisions, such as socio-cultural aspects (eg social norms) and (infra)structural aspects (eg provision with education facilities, quality of teaching, etc). These interviews will also allow further clarification on how different actors view this decision.

143 Preferably secondary school teachers, but mixed groups (primary, secondary and even head teachers) are possible.

Therefore, SH conducted two to three KIIs per target locations, primarily targeted at head teachers, traditional/ community leaders and staff of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and/or civil society organisations (CSOs). Additionally, KIIs at the national level were conducted, with government officials and international organisations, CSO and NGO workers.

Quantitative tools

U-Report and in-person survey

The SMS-based software platform *U-Report* is used by UNICEF to provide confidential, free of charge, individualized and interactive counselling services on HIV, sexually transmited infections to adolescents and youths in Zambia. SH used this system to conduct a selective poll via *U-Report* that only targets adolescents in Lusaka. To overcome all potential biases that come with SMS-based polling, the quantitative part of the study was two-fold and comparative, consisting of: Quantitative *U-Report* survey and additional quantitative fieldwork (in-person survey).

Given the nature of SMS-based polling, single *U-Report* questionnaires only featured up to 4 questions; response rates drop drastically for higher numbers of questions, according to UNICEF Zambia staff. SH used 20 different questions for the in-person survey, which was then also used for 5 different iterations (each with 4 questions) of the *U-Report* survey.

Data collection procedures

A number of processes and procedures were put into place to ensure accurate application of the tools and data quality.

Selection of enumerators

The enumerators for the study came from a pool of candidates (based in Lusaka) of well-qualified university graduates with past experience in research. The 20 best candidates were selected based on their capacity to conduct field research in the respective target locations; therefore, local language skills (especially Chinyanja, Icibemba and Silozi), past experience, as well as familiarity with the respective districts were of highest priority. Those 20 were trained and participated in the pilot, but only the 16 best performing ones conducted the actual qualitative fieldwork.

Multiple enumerator trainings

Training of enumerators involved several phases. The primary qualitative training was conducted with 20 potential enumerators between 18 and 20 September 2018; an additional quantitative training was conducted for 10 of those enumerators on 24 September 2018. SH led both trainings, with the support of our qualitative research trainer. The UNICEF team provided additional support through the presence of the C4D advisor who shared feedback on enumerator strengths and weaknesses. In addition, prior to departure to the field, a one-day refresher training was led by the Project Officer and held with the trained enumerators. An additional fieldwork debrief and refresher training was conducted between Phases 1 and 2 of the fieldwork. The primary objective of this refresher was to share lessons learned between enumerators. Finally, a transcription and translation training was conducted with enumerators in 2 phases: firstly, prior to the first round of translations, and then based on lessons learned with the full translation team.

Pilot excercise

The qualitative pilot was conducted between 21 and 23 September 2018. Enumerators tested all the qualitative tools (including the round robins) in Chilenje and Mandevu (Lusaka). Each location was overseen by one supervising project staff

member. Based on the enumerator performance during this training, the top 16 enumerators trained were offered positions for the rest of the fieldwork. In total, two full 3-day round robins, 6 FGDs, 14 case studies and 6 KIIs were conducted – these numbers are above the initially planned activities for the pilots (2 Round Robins, 2 FGDs, 10 case studies, and 6 KIIs). Data was collected for the quantitative pilot test in five locations within Lusaka. Enumerators randomly selected households within these pre-identified locations, knocking on every 3rd house or household. A total of 61 surveys with adolescents (age 10-19) were conducted. These were reviewed for both completion and logic of answers; survey length, plausibility of answers, the number of surveys conducted by enumerator, GPS location, and respondent profiles were all considered. The quantitative pilot confirmed the validity and feasibility of the 20-question survey; no revision of the tools was deemed necessary after a critical review of the data and a debrief session with all 10 enumerators on 25 September 2018.

Qualitative tool revision

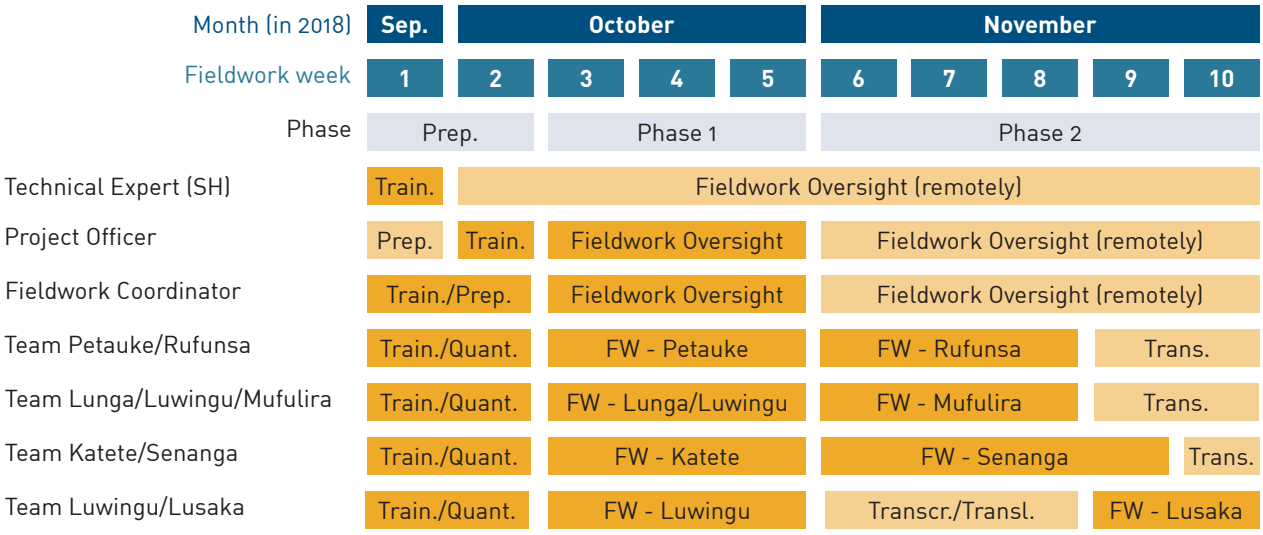
Based on the findings from the qualitative pilot test, and the feedback from participants and enumerators, some of the qualitative tools were revised for clarity, in particular when working with younger children. These changes were discussed with UNICEF, and the refresher training prior to going to the field reviewed these with the enumerators – the changes in the tools were also communicated to DRGS from which ethical clearance had been obtained prior to the training of enumerators.

Fieldwork scope and timeline

Two teams of four enumerators collected data in two districts simultaneously with one enumerator of each team as the team leader but both under the supervision of one fieldwork coordinator (one for both teams).

The first phase of fieldwork started on 09 Oct 2018, with the departure of four teams to four target districts, namely Katete, Lunga, Luwingu and Petauke. After 2.5 weeks of fieldwork, all teams returned to Lusaka and held a full debrief on 29 Oct 2018. The second phase of fieldwork started on 30 Oct 2018, with three teams departing to Mufulira, Rufunsa, and Senanga, respectively. Fieldwork in Lusaka was postponed to first finalize Phase 1 transcripts; the team started fieldwork in Lusaka on 19 Nov 2018.

Figure 16 - Fieldwork timeline



Quality control mechanisms

A number of quality control mechanisms were put in place to ensure close monitoring of field activities and regular data oversight. These included:

- WhatsApp group updates: Each team had their own WhatsApp group. They were required to check in morning and evening and provide detailed updates on daily activities and outputs. SH staff provided support and follow up as needed
- Field journals: The team lead completed a daily field journal, which includes 1) a summary of the day's activities and outputs, 2) observations, challenges, and successes in the field, 3) findings and initial analysis and 4) additional comments. This was submitted daily via the WhatsApp group.
- Photos of activities and outputs: All flipcharts and outputs were photographed daily and shared on the WhatsApp group for data review and ensure data is captured. Photos were also taken of locations and activities and shared.
- Organisation of outputs: When fieldwork was completed in each location, all outputs were organised and a summary sheet completed, which provides an overview of participant details and completed activities. These were reviewed to ensure targets were reached and approved prior to moving to the next location.

To minimize processing errors and improve data reliability, the quantitative tool, conducted only in Lusaka, was administered on mobile phones using KoboCollect. Use of phones enables extensive checking/routing restrictions to minimize interview error (response error) and automates data entry. Phone data was uploaded daily to ensure real time monitoring of data quality by SH staff; any patterns of administrative errors were communicated to the respective team.

Data transcripition and translation

Data transcription/translation began at the end of Phase 1 of the fieldwork. Outputs were primarily generated in local languages, specifically Nyanja, Bemba and Lozi; these were translated to English, and pictures of each visual output stored by SH, alongside all audio recordings. To ensure that the translations reflect the reality of the conversations conducted, and were as close to exact wordings used as possible, enumerators who conducted the research also worked on the translations. The process for producing approved transcripts included 1) attending a refresher training on producing detailed transcripts in English, 2) utilizing templates provided and 3) going through a multi-staged review process of submitted transcripts.

Sampling Design

Table 5 provides the full list of locations selected for the study by urban and rural and their relationship to the nearest secondary school.

Qualitative sampling

The selection of participants for Round Robins, FGDs and Case Studies occurred at the fieldwork locations, following three steps for sample selection:

- Identification: to get access to and information about potential candidates, SH and its research teams primarily consulted with local traditional leaders (chiefs/chieftesses).
- Snowballing: when the first candidates of a particular sub-groups were identified and selected (eg male out-of-school, female early marriage case, etc), SH applied a snowball-system to recruit further candidates by asking for potential contacts/friends of the initially selected adolescents. Only if ultimately necessary to reach the target sizes, research teams also consulted with government staff (MoGE and the Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare (MCDSW)), NGO officials or other institutions.
- Sample selection: from the persons identified above, the enumerators and field coordinators together selected an appropriately diverse group of participants.

This overall approach reduced the potential bias within the selected pool of participants, as people exposed to government or non-government interventions may have benefited from additional support than the ‘average’ adolescent. Further, as this study sought to uncover ‘unheard voices’, relying on institutional networks was counterproductive.

Table 5 - Selected locations

District	Urban	Rural		TOTAL
Location		Close to secondary	Far from secondary	
Katete		1	1	2
Chisale			1	
Katete Boma		1		
Lunga		1		1
Nsamba Village		1		
Lusaka	2			2
Kanyama	1			
Mtendere	1			
Luwingu	1	1	1	3
Luwingu Boma	1			
Tolopa		1		
Tungati			1	
Mufulira	2			2
Chibolya	1			
Luasobe	1			
Petauke	1		1	2
Mumbi			1	
Petauke Boma	1			
Rufunsa		1	1	2
Mpanshya		1		
Rufunsa Boma			1	
Senanga	1	1	1	3
Senanga Boma	1			
Liangati		1		
Songa			1	
TOTAL	7	5	5	17

Round Robin – 8 participants per target location

Described above, the Round Robin Session consisted of a mixed group of adolescents to account for the varying lived experiences regarding decision-making processes for school retention/dropout. Each Round Robin Session included 8 participants. The proposed mixture of the group is based on the goal to provide a study that is not only effective and productive but also feasible.

Adolescent case studies – 3 case studies per target location

SH targeted three adolescents to represent the multiplicity of individual situations and backgrounds regarding school dropout/retention and (possible) vulnerabilities. While the actual sampling required adaptions to the situations and realities at each fieldwork location, SH ensured the following three characteristics for each location sample:

- Gender-balanced (1/2 or 2/1 split for boys and girls)
- Age-balanced (including young adolescents, age 10-14, and older adolescents, age 15-19)
- Different schooling situations (1/2 or 2/1 split for in-school and out-of-school)

In addition, SH prioritized participants that face particular vulnerabilities relevant to this study, eg young mothers, HIV-positive persons, child marriage cases, etc. Further, for at least one of the case studies with adolescents per target location, SH conducted an adjacent conversation/interview with one parent or caretaker of the respective adolescent to increase the depth of the case study and the multiplicity of voices around single cases. Case studies with parent/caretaker involvement were selected by a) the presence/availability of those (primary criteria) and b) the potential importance of the parent/caretaker for the individual case of school dropout/retention (secondary criteria), for example cases with child marriage or in high poverty.

FGDs with parents and teachers – 3 FGDs, for a total of 9-15 participants per target location

For this study, SH worked with small FGD sizes to enable an active involvement of all participants and mitigate over-emphasizing the perspectives of non-adolescent stakeholders. The two FGDs with parents (split between: with in-school adolescents and with out-of-school adolescents) as well as one FGD with local teachers (primary and secondary level mixed) consisted of 3-5 participants. The researchers again prioritised diversity in participants, with a focus on an equal split of male and female parents/teachers and diversity in socio-economic situation, vulnerability criteria, etc.

Key informant interviews – 6 interviews per target district

In each district, a total of six KIIs were conducted, among which one each with participants form the following groups: 1) head teachers of nearest school, 2) government/administrative official (eg from the District Education Board Secretary office), 3) NGO/CSO worker (working on education-related issues), and 4) local traditional/community leaders (chiefs/chieftesses). They were also conducted with actors such as informed community and religious leaders. The specific key informants to interview in each district were selected to provide the most relevant information regarding that specific province. In addition, SH conducted additional KIIs at the national level, targeting national government officials, UNICEF staff, academics, donors and NGO/IO workers, in addition to the conducted conversations during the inception period.

Quantitative sampling and analysis

In-person survey

In order to provide a sample representative of Lusaka's overall demographics, ten target locations, representative of overall wealth demographics in Lusaka, were identified. According to the Living Conditions Monitoring Survey Report 2015, 30% (3/10) of the population in Lusaka self-report themselves as non-poor, 47% (5/10) as moderately poor, and 23% (2/10) as very poor.[144] To reflect this socio-economic distribution, SH consulted Zambian staff and experts to name areas in Lusaka that can be considered 'non-poor', 'moderately poor' and 'very poor'. The most frequent answers were then used to select final target areas, namely:

- Non-poor (3/10): Kabulonga, Rhodes Park, Woodlands
- Moderately (5/10): Chawama, Chilenje, Kabwata, Kaunda Square, Matero
- Very poor (2/10): Kanyama, Msisi

Within each, enumerators were set to collect a target of 40 interviews. Enumerators were given randomly selected starting points within each neighbourhood and branched out from there to conduct interviews, by knocking on every third building. See Figure 17 for locations of interviews conducted across Lusaka.

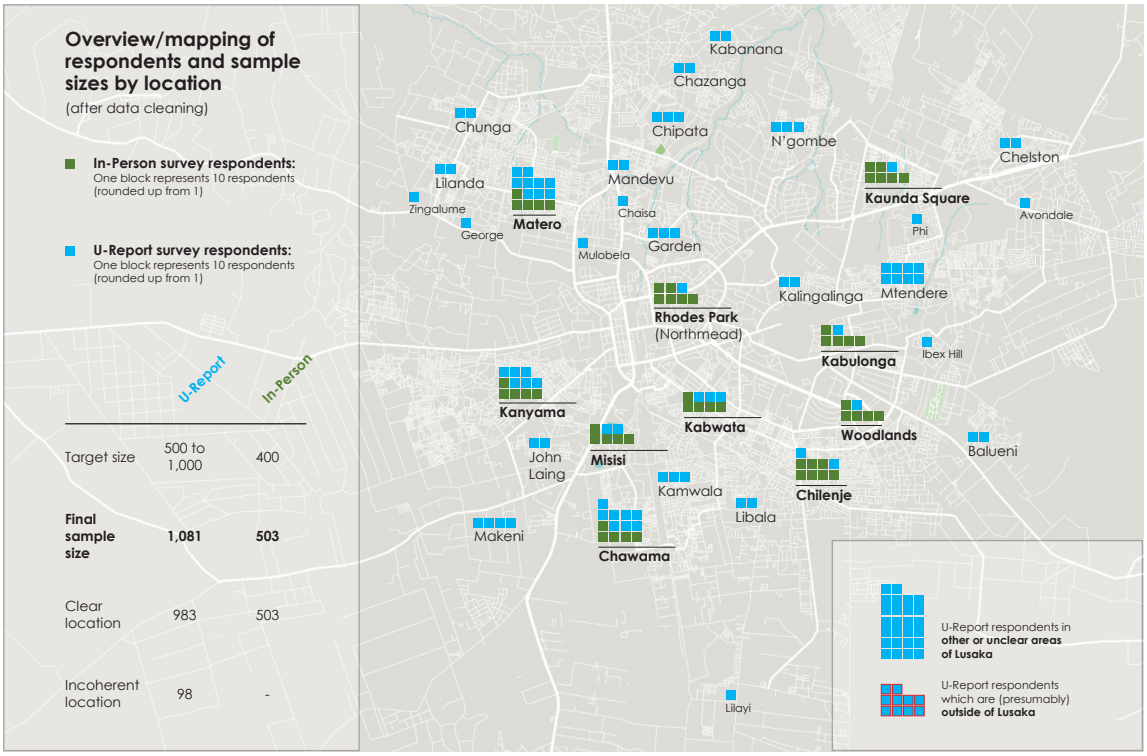
U-Report survey

The *U-Report* survey was implemented by UNICEF's *U-Report* Focal Point. 5 different sets of 4 questions (to abide by *U-Report* practical limitations) each from the overall sent of 20 questions were sent to a group of randomly selected *U-Reporters* in Lusaka. The selection was based on the list of 10,726 registered *U-Reporters* in Lusaka Province, who were born between the years 1999 and 2008 (as of 25 Sep 2018). From this list, only those registered in Lusaka District were pre-selected (total of 8,660) from which finally 7,500 were randomly selected for the *U-Report* survey – each of the 4 sets of 5 questions were sent to 1,500 *U-Reporters*. Subsequently, the *U-Report* survey targeted roughly 87% of the total *U-Reporter* population in Lusaka, born between the years 1999 and 2008. See Figure 17 for locations of respondents.

144 www.zamstats.gov.zm/phocadownload/Living_Conditions/2015%20Living%20Conditions%20Monitoring%20Survey%20Report.pdf

The final *U-Report* data set featured a total of 1,081 individual respondents/interviews – note that each respondent only answered a maximum of 4 questions. None of the respondents/interviews was dismissed due to quality concerns; however, some recoding was conducted to account for respondents not following the instructions. A significant number of cases had problematic or inconsistent information on location.

Figure 17 - Overview/ mapping of respondents and sample sizes by location (quant. survey in Lusaka)



Quantitative data analysis

The *U-Report* data set was provided by the *U-Report* Focal Point on 14 Nov 2018 – the data set from the in-person survey had been finalized in early October 2018. After the *U-Report* data set was provided, both data sets were cleaned and harmonized. Both final and cleaned data sets were harmonized and merged for further analysis in SPSS. SH's statistician first re-weighed the 10 data collection locations in the overall in-person sample to ensure that each location, no matter the final number of surveys collected there (all locations were oversampled; some more than others), is weighed equally in the in-person dataset. Afterwards, the distributions of responses along each question are compared between the *U-Report* responses and the in-person responses in order to identify where responses may differ and whether or not these differences can be consistently attributed to any demographic differences.

When triangulating the data from both tools, SH found that the *U-Report* is not a representative sample of adolescents in Lusaka due to its:

- Potential bias towards adolescents with ownership of or access to mobile phones
- Potential bias towards adolescents that have been exposed to UNICEF programmes/ interventions
- Heavily skewed imbalance towards older adolescents
- Concerns about the geographic accuracy of location information

The comparative analysis of both data sets has clearly shown reasons for concern about the reliability of *U-Report* data. Thus, SH highly recommended excluding *U-Report* data from any further analysis.

ANNEX 3 - Benchmarking programming in neighbouring contexts

Successful programming in neighbouring contexts

What successful programming examples - if any - can be pointed to in neighbouring countries specifically addressing substance abuse and cultural acceptance thereof?

There are many prevention programmes available however few have been proven effective by scientific research. Secondary school is a period of experimentation and risk taking among adolescents and for those living in poverty this is a period of often acute social and biological stress. It is also a period of opportunity to reinforce or reframe early experiences as the 'plasticity' or malleability of the adolescent brain makes young people everywhere more open to prevention interventions.[145]

School systems are effective when they 1. Supplement or replace the standard curriculum with ten or more interactive skills-based sessions that emphasise student-student activity rather than student-teacher lead activity (see Case Study 1) and 2. Provide teachers with the training and skills they need to deliver the skills-based prevention program (Case Study 2).

Case Study 1: Nigeria – 'Unplugged'

An evidence based 'universal' (for all children in a class) program to prevent tobacco, alcohol and other drugs among children aged 12-14 years old. The programme is being adapted for Nigeria and tested through a randomized control trial (RCT).

It consists of 12 x one-hour interactive sessions delivered by teachers, and is based on the social influence model, addressing social and personal skills, knowledge and normative beliefs. The objectives are to:

1. Reduce positive attitudes towards drugs.
2. Decrease the perception that many peers smoke, drink or use cannabis.
3. Increase refusal skills.

Unplugged was developed and evaluated through a large RCT (2003-2005) involving 7,079 pupils in seven European countries. The evaluation found that participating in the programme resulted in a 23% reduced risk of using cannabis, 28% reduction of weekly alcohol intoxication and 30% reduced risk of daily smoking.

Positive effects have been found to last for 18 months after completion of the programme which represents an important delay during the critical period of adolescence. Based on these positive results the programme has been adapted and implemented in 30 countries worldwide.

In Nigeria, Phase II, currently in progress, is an RCT of the adapted programme, involving 32 schools (16 control and 16 intervention). Scale up will follow the successful completion of the trial under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of Education with active UNODC involvement.

Case Study 2: Training and Certification in Kenya

A priority of the Kenyan National Authority for the Campaign against Alcohol and Drug Abuse (NACADA) is the training and certification of prevention and treatment professionals. To address the priority NACADA collaborated with the US Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) and the International Society of Substance Use Prevention

145 UNESCO (2017) Education sector responses to the use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs.

and Treatment Professionals (ISSUP). ISSUP supplied the curriculum and INL covered the costs of training manuals and training for the first local facilitators.

ISSUP has recently developed a comprehensive training package referred to as the Universal Prevention Curriculum (UPC) for Prevention Workers and Coordinators.

UPC became the basis for the Kenyan training and certification initiative. NACADA's goal is to develop Substance Use Prevention (and Treatment) as an independent and multidisciplinary field through the professionalisation of the workforce.

To achieve this aim, the Authority organized certification training for addiction professionals in five different regions of the country. Educators in secondary schools, tertiary colleges and universities are among the target professionals with more than 1000 trained to date. Training and certification activities are ongoing.

What successful programming examples - if any - can be pointed to in neighbouring countries specifically addressing teenage pregnancy - beyond and including the Re-Entry Policy?

The UNFPA's 'Safeguard Young People' programme in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Phase 1: 2014 – 16. Phase 2: 2017 – 2019) is providing Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) both in schools and in community settings.

It also offers youth-friendly health services, youth empowerment activities, skills building and other support and is estimated to have reached 5.3 million young people. 811,000 young people were reached with out of school social communication and behaviour change programs with free condoms distributed to 80.8m young people and 1.6m young people were reached with SRH health services.[146]

This CSE approach and ensuring girls both enrol and remain in secondary education with access to in-school gender sensitized health services have both been shown to be effective ways to reduce pregnancy rates in SSA.[147] However such programmes tend to flounder where they lack sustained financial and coordinated government support.[148]

Approaches that have been shown to be less effective are those that seek to increase access to SRH services via youth centres, peer education and public meetings with in school access shown to be the most effective way to reach young people.[149] Greater attention to prevention science, engagement of the private sector, and expanding access to a wider range of contraceptive methods that respond to adolescents' needs are all potentially effective ways of tackling unwanted teenage pregnancy.[150]

A number of recent publications have pointed to interventions and intervention-delivery mechanisms that have been shown to improve adolescent sexual and reproductive health.[151]

Programmes should be put in place that enable girls who are married or in a union to exercise their right to identify and understand their options to delay or limit child-bearing, and to receive support from their husbands or partners and in-laws accordingly.[152]

146 UNFPA (2016) The Safeguard Young (1) (1) People Programme: Three Years On - Addressing the urgent needs of youth across Southern Africa.
147 Ibrahim, Y. & Waliu, J.S. (2018) Determinants of adolescent pregnancy in sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review. Reproductive Health Journal.
148 Venkatraman, S.M., Lane C., and Wong, S. (2018). What Does Not Work in Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health: A Review of Evidence on Interventions Commonly Accepted as Best Practices.
149 Venkatraman, S.M., Lane C., and Wong, S. (2018). What Does Not Work in Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health: A Review of Evidence on Interventions Commonly Accepted as Best Practices.
150 Venkatraman, S.M., Lane C., and Wong, S. (2018). What Does Not Work in Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health: A Review of Evidence on Interventions Commonly Accepted as Best Practices.
151 Glinski A, Sexton M, Petroni S. (2018). Adolescents and family planning: what the evidence shows. Washington (DC): International Center for Research on Women.
152 Adolescent Pregnancy: A Review of the Evidence. (2013) UNFPA.

What creative solutions to schooling in areas of low resources have been successful, in particular addressing the challenges identified in the Zambian context (they already have TVET curriculum, but not well mobilised; long distances to school; limited secondary schools; exam fees; poor teaching and learning materials, etc)? This could involve ways to bring the community/business into schools?

The barriers adolescents face in securing an education that will help increase their access to the further education and assets they need to thrive in the Zambian job market are not unique.

A World Bank study recently outlined several solutions that will help increase the education "choices" of African youth including scaled vocational and technical schools alongside informal learning programs.[153]

Much of the literature describes the need to give students and their parents and sponsors a more tangible return on their investment by shifting the focus towards life skills training that is tailored to the demands of each specific environment.[154]

Designed to improve students' financial prospects and well-being these life skills must include, "financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills; health maintenance and management skills; and administrative capabilities, such as teamwork, problem solving, and project management."[155]

Cross sectoral cooperation is vital from both education managers and curriculum developers to align the current Zambian school curriculum with life skill modules whose objective is job creation within existing local markets with a special focus on entrepreneurial training with additional support for girls' livelihoods.[156]

1) Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Schools:

The TVET system already exists in Zambia but is subject to severe resource constraints. In 2014, the Revised 6th National Development Plan noted that the TVET system could only absorb about 5% of the 300,000 youth who leave the school system at both Grades 9 and 12 each year.[157]

2) School Feeding Programs Vs Need For Local Market Development:

Providing food through schools has proven effects on the education, health and nutrition of school children. School lunch programs have been shown to increase math scores, student concentration and general achievement.[158]

Evidence from a study in Mali suggests the value in driving policy change to ensure that a percentage of food bought for local 'home grown' school feeding programs is bought directly from small-holder farmers in rural Zambian areas.[159]

The effect could be twofold; increasing parents' income and ability to save and pay school fees while improving their children's education, health and nutrition.

3) Traditional Apprenticeships:

Evidence suggests that access to traditional trade apprenticeships remain the most effective way to provide young people with an effective alternative to secondary education.[160] Schools can build apprentice schemes in partnership with informal sector associations in order to build relationships with master craftsmen.

K.I.I.'s interviewed for this report revealed how parents are sometimes invited to school to offer 'master classes' on specific skillsets eg fishing, mechanics. Whilst this is encouraging there is a need to identify market niches that promise

153 The World Development Report 2018 (WDR 2018). Learning to Realize Education's Promise.
154 UNFPA Policy Brief, Zambia (May 2015) Accelerating economic growth & policy reforms.
155 Epstein, M.J., Yuthas, K. (2012) Redefining Education in the Developing World, Stanford Social Innovation Review.
156 Restless Development & the Guidance and Counselling Unit Intervention (2017) Zambian Girls 2030.
157 Zambia's National Employment Plan (2015).
158 MIT's Mission 2014: Feeding The World Program. 'Solutions: School Lunch Programs')
159 Masset, E. and Gelli, A. (2013) Improving community development by linking agriculture, nutrition and education: design of a randomised trial of "home-grown" school feeding in Mali.
160 Francis T., (2013) University of Oxford, UK, and IZA, Germany 'Are apprenticeships beneficial in sub-Saharan Africa?'

job creation for apprentices, "because apprenticeships impart mainly traditional skills, not new skills needed for successful innovation, they lead almost exclusively to self-employment not to wage jobs, where returns are dependent on access to physical capital."[161]

Evidence from pilots has shown that those schemes that focus upon the provision of practical skills via 6 to 12-week intensive training programs were more effective than lengthy theoretical classes.

4) Scalable Programs with specific focus upon Girls Livelihoods:

"When a girl becomes pregnant, her present and future change radically, and rarely for the better. Her education may end, her job prospects evaporate, and her vulnerability to poverty, exclusion and dependency multiply."[162]

There is a body of evidence that reveals that training girls in entrepreneurship not only improves their economic prospects but also defers the age at which they seek to start a family.

In 2012 the UNFPA concluded that insufficient programs were focused on; "developing economic alternatives that create identities apart from their roles as current or future wives and mothers".[163]

Research by The Population Council in Kenya and Uganda has shown how girls need a diverse range of 'assets' not least the baseline financial security to avoid risk taking behaviour.

"Girls need a combination of social, health, and economic assets to make a healthy transition into adulthood, which in turn will reduce poverty. Having one kind of asset (i.e., knowledge of HIV and pregnancy) is not sufficient, because often a girl's economic situation overshadows her knowledge of risky behaviour. Similarly, only having a savings account or a vocational skill is not enough for girls to take control of their health or to have the self-esteem and networks through which to capitalize on economic opportunities."[164]

Entrepreneurship training coupled with financial management capacities have been shown to increase girls' bargaining power within the family and increase their ability to justify remaining in school as an alternative to early marriage.

5) Building Agricultural Schools & Markets:

In rural Zambia the majority of those paying school fees are small holders or agricultural workers. This means that identifying ways to grow local markets and increase yields is of paramount importance.

High performing agricultural schools already exist acting as meeting places for farming communities to share skills, offering technical support, access to storage, equipment, finance, and marketing services.

Small holders linked to an agricultural school and a micro-loan scheme might pool their loans to build a grain silo so that they could keep grain after they've harvested it and then sell it at a higher price just before the following harvest.

Regional planning is essential to identify cash crops eg coffee for export and job creation.

6) Open Schooling Vs Out Of School Youth Problems & Distance To School:

The Commonwealth of Learning (www.col.org) provides an alternative model offering quality cost-efficient secondary provision at scale and is currently working with the Zambian government.

Based on existing open and distance learning models in the global north it is designed to tackle the challenges of out of the disruptive impact that out of school youth have on mainstream schooling along with the prohibitive distances young people need to travel to reach a school in remote areas.

161 UNFPA: State of World Population 2013: Motherhood in Childhood, (2013)
162 UNFPA, 2012: "Marrying too young and child marriage."
163 Austrian, K., Muthengi, E., Wambugu, A., Ghati, D., Kariuki, E. (2012) The Population Council: Smart Savings Products for Vulnerable Adolescent Girls in Kenya and Uganda: The Evolving Model, Lessons Learned, and Recommendations.
164 FMinecofin.gov.rw (2013) Strategic plan for the transformation of agriculture in Rwanda: Phase III, Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Resources.

Both systems can work symbiotically and can benefit from each other. There is no one perfect model for open schooling; individual countries can tailor the model to match their priorities.

In Namibia the NAMCOL (the Namibian College of Open Learning) accommodates over 28,000 secondary students across the country.

7) Self-Sustaining Schools:

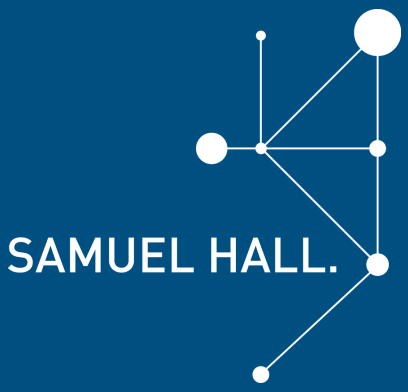
In impoverished rural communities where parents are dependent upon successful harvests in order to provide school fees more can be done to build resilience into existing schools.

Beginning in Paraguay in 2003 the first self-sustaining school became financially self-sustaining in 2007, generating about US$300,000/year.

The movement has been successfully replicated in Uganda at the Uganda Rural Development and Training Programme (URDT) by combining rural development projects with consciousness raising, training, education and information sharing to facilitate integrated, self-directed, and sustainable development in surrounding communities.

Self-sustaining schools share similar attributes:

- Combine standard curriculum with the running of small-scale, on-campus agricultural enterprises - dairy/milk processing, organic garden, roadside store, rural hotel, etc.)
- Develop technical/entrepreneurial skills.
- Enterprises earn enough income to cover costs.
- Schools become “poles of development” in local area – teach organic agriculture to local farmers, computer and entrepreneurial training to local youth, and sponsor sporting events for local schools.
- Students take their knowledge home to the family farm, teach elementary students about environmental conservation, and become reproductive health promoters in their local communities.



Samuel Hall is a social enterprise that conducts research in countries affected by issues of migration and displacement. We specialise in socio-economic surveys, private and public sector studies, and impact assessments for a range of humanitarian and development actors. With a rigorous approach and the inclusion of academic experts, field practitioners, and a vast network of national researchers, we access complex settings and gather accurate data. We bring innovative insights and practical solutions to addressing the most pressing social, economic, and political issues of our time.

Samuel Hall has offices in Afghanistan and Kenya, and a presence in Germany and the United Arab Emirates. For more information, visit www.samuelhall.org.

unicef
for every child

UNICEF works in some of the world's toughest places, to reach the world's most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit www.unicef.org/zambia.

The findings of the study 'Dropping Out? A Participatory Exploration of Adolescent School Journeys in Zambia' are presented in the following report documents:

- Final Report

- Katete: District Highlights
- Lunga: District Highlights
- Lusaka: District Highlights
- Luwingu: District Highlights
- Mufulira: District Highlights
- Petauke: District Highlights
- Rufunsa: District Highlights
- Senanga: District Highlights