



What is ZOCS?

ZOCS is a non-Governmental, Non-Profit making, non-partisan organization committed to working with communities in both rural and urban areas for the welfare of the orphans and vulnerable children (OVC).

Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS) is a NGO registered in Zambia. It provides free basic education to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). ZOCS focuses on OVC aged between 9-18 years (and to special needs children aged 6-8 years) with a stated preference to girls in promotion of inclusive education and early childhood care and development.

The twin pillars on which ZOCS builds its approaches are those of enhanced educational opportunities for children (through a Human Rights approach to programming, which entitles every child the right to education), and increased community capacity to provide such opportunities.

ZOCS has been in existence since 1992 and currently its schools host approximately 11,500 children attending its 17 schools (12 in Lusaka, 4 in Kafue and 1 in Kabwe Districts) and a further 16 affiliated schools which are situated in rural areas and city compounds. These OVC are under the supervision of 250 teachers some of whom are trained. Our current programmes involve the provision of quality education, community development and empowerment of PCSCs, teacher training, micro-finance, advocacy, administration, monitoring and evaluation. In some schools, vocational skills' training for pupils is also offered. ZOCS gets its support from both local and international organizations.

ZOCS provides a 4-year primary education programme that is set up in levels (7 years of primary education compressed into 4 years) and a 5th year SPARK – Class for livelihoods/skills training. ZOCS relates health education to schools with community involvement and on serving 'needs of people now' as well as 'needs in later life'.

Our Vision

“ZOCS envisages being the trendsetter in the provision of quality basic education and life skills in Zambia to most needy children – orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), especially girls, through sustainable organizational, teacher and community empowerment”.

We envision a future where:

- We ensure the provision of sustainable demonstrations of community schools education, on behalf of MOE throughout Zambia.
- All sectors of the community in Zambia will participate in the provision of the basic right to quality education, through their involvement in community schools.
- Community school education and the training provided to teachers will be granted official accreditation, through a certificate of completion for all pupils and a community school teacher qualification.
- Community school teachers will be ensured remuneration by the joint efforts of government and the community at large through financial commitment.

Our Mission

ZOCS exists to enable some of Zambia's most needy children – orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), especially girls -access quality education through increased enrolment and retention rates, teacher training, advocacy and micro-finance support to families. This will enable them acquire knowledge and skills they need to develop to their full potential, hence giving them hope for the future.

Why Community Schools?

According to Zambia Community School Secretariat (ZCSS) approximately 300,000 Zambian children of school going age were not in school in the year 2004 due to the impact of HIV/AIDS and poverty.

Community schools emerged as a response to the unmet demand for school places among the poor and other marginalized groups. These community schools are inexpensive, close to home, less demanding in entry requirements and are managed by communities. In tuition, community schools emphasize inculcation of literacy, numeric and problem solving skills.

Basic characteristics of a community school include the following:

- Serve children aged between 9 and 16 who are either drop-outs or "never been to school";
- Use predominantly untrained volunteer teachers from the community.
- Uniforms not a school requirement
- Managed by parent school community committee;
- Have small classes up to a maximum of 35 and funding comes from a variety of sources.
- In 1996, there were about twenty organizations involved in community schools in Zambia.

In urban areas, community schools can be seen as interventions by agencies whose constituencies are the poor, children of HIV/AIDS affected families, orphans and girls. Volunteer teachers, usually chosen by the agency itself, normally run the schools.

The Curriculum: Skills, Participation, Access to Relevant Knowledge (SPARK)

SPARK is a special curriculum that was written for community schools. It follows the government curriculum and focuses on the relevant topics within English, Mathematics, Environmental Science, social studies, Physical education and Zambian languages, with a life skills component integrated through out all subject areas. The SPARK curriculum places health education at the heart of the primary circle. It prioritizes literacy, numeracy and life skills which are recognized as having to serve a nation in crisis due to the young people who will have to survive and assume early responsibility of heading a family due to AIDS.

SPARK, been a simplified form of the government curriculum was developed because the parents or guardians could not afford the user fees in government schools. Children in community schools have to learn as much as possible in a short time thus the syllabus is written to enable children learn the most useful things in four years.

Community school has a four-year course with levels for years instead of class or grade. There is no exact relationship between levels and grades but we can say that level 1 is same as grade 1 and 2 together; level 2 is equivalent to grade 3 and 4 and so on.

Programmes and Service Delivery

ZOCS is working with communities in providing:

Zambia Teacher Education Course (ZATEC): Education

On behalf of the Ministry of Education, we provide ZATEC training to community schoolteachers, with a minimum requirement of Grade 12 full certificate who come from the local communities and are not formally trained by GRZ. In-service training of teachers in HIV/AIDS prevention and life skills as well as child focused activities empowering with skills for HIV/AIDS prevention, through peer education and Education Sport (Edusport).

Community Development:

Every school has a Parent Community School Committee (PCSC) that works with us to provide training in community mobilization, school management, financial sustainability, income generation, transparency and accountability to children and school resources.

Technical Assistance: Micro-finance

We provide support to those communities that are willing and able to build their own school structure, ensuring their school is safe and built to last. We provide support to community schools demonstrating specific innovations such as utilization of teaching and learning materials and in community development, through training for transformation, HIV/AIDS and life skills programme.

Material Support:

We help communities by providing technical support and materials such as teaching and learning materials, building supplies, drilling of boreholes, classroom furniture as well as sports equipment and transportation.

Governance and Programme Development:

ZOCS undertakes Lobbying and advocacy for the community school movement policy development as well as advancing the interest of teachers such as inclusion in government payroll as well as increased allowances. We are also working towards strengthening existing partnerships and networks as well as creating new ones geared towards addressing the plight of OVC.

The Need for Support

Help us spread the message and educate our future together through:

1. Acting as an individual advocate on behalf of community school education, in addressing OVC needs, particularly girls.
2. Joining our Corporate Development Board to act as a voice within the business community to contribute to community education.
3. Joining us in holding workshops to reach out further into the community especially in rural areas, for “excluded and invisible children”
4. Helping us spread the word through campaign events such as Edusport (Education and sport), peer education, and child to child activities.
5. Providing financial and material commitment to help us to work towards sustainability of the organization’s vision, in addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS and reducing poverty.

Contact Details:

Join us in “Educating our Future”

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**“Education is the pillar for human life”
(By: Estelle Daka, a ZOCS pupil).**