

# ANNUAL | FY REPORT 2024

*"We can build on our successes and create an even brighter future for the children of Zambia".*



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## VISION

**"A Zambia where all Community School Learners, especially Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), girls and Learners with special education needs, obtain quality and equitable education that enables them to realize their fullest potential."**



Happy learners in Central province



# FOREWORD FROM THE BOARD CHAIR PERSON

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Dear friends & partners,

It is with immense pride and satisfaction that I, along with the Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS) Governing Board, present our FY24 report, showcasing our impactful efforts in transforming the lives of vulnerable children across Zambia.

This past year, guided by our organisational motto “Hope through quality education”, we have journeyed together through initiatives in children's education and resilience, protection and participation.

We have reached the most vulnerable children and have contributed to positive change, paving the way for brighter future for our young people. The Board, unwavering in its commitment to Zambia's children, especially the underserved, has played a vital role in providing governance, strategic oversight, and insightful guidance.

We have motivated staff, engaged partners donors and supporters that actively support our FY21-FY25 strategic models, which prioritize the well-being of the OVC in accessing quality education.

With deep humility and profound gratitude, we thank everyone who supported us throughout the year 2024. We celebrate the organization's unwavering commitment to ensuring a “Zambia where all Community School Learners, especially Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), girls and Learners with special education needs, obtain quality and equitable education that enables them to realize their fullest potential.”

Throughout the year, the Board, alongside staff making field visits witnessing firsthand the stories transformation and resilience of our staff and the communities we serve, has been a privilege beyond measure.

We are proud of management's dedicated stewardship and the impactful lives changed across communities. As we continue implementing the FY21-FY25 Strategy, we are proud to report reaching over 44 322 through our program in the FY2024.

Additionally, ZOCS' advocacy and policy influence efforts have indirectly impacted close to 10242 children, amplifying their voices and empowering them to become champions for change.

Entering the final year of our strategy, we remain committed to taking stock of our contributions and deepening our impact. Our primary focus is on reaching and improving the well-being of 63,875 children by 2025, ensuring that they are in school.

Recognizing our core value of partnership, we call upon all Zambians of goodwill, corporations, partners, donors, foundations, and businesses to rally around ZOCS' noble cause. Local resource mobilization has become critical in driving focus areas such as education and sponsorship initiatives, water and sanitation projects, and emergency response needs for vulnerable children. Every bit of support, be it through cash, or gifts in kind make a tremendous difference.

Despite the significant achievements of FY24, we cannot ignore the challenges. Natural disasters leading to cholera outbreak delaying the opening of schools, the current global economic climate, and drought continue to pose substantial obstacles.

Despite the challenging landscape, we have faith and unwavering confidence in God's grace needed for our leadership and staff to keep bringing hope to children and transforming their future for the better. This remains our unwavering commitment. In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the Ministry of Education, the Board of Trustees, my fellow Board members, Management & staff, communities, and everyone dedicated to the mission, vision, and values of ZOCS. Your support and selfless contributions have been instrumental in our successes, and I salute you all.

**Victor Koyi**

**BOARD CHAIR, ZAMBIA OPEN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**



## MISSION

"ZPCS exists to brighten prospects of Community School Learners by empowering Community Schools, building partnerships, influencing policy, supporting learners and creating conducive learning environments."



# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Dear Reader,

As we reflect on the year 2024, with a grateful heart and a mindful spirit, I take this moment to celebrate the remarkable progress made by Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS) in its work.

This past year has been a testament to our unwavering commitment to empowering children; the year saw ZOCS engaging in high level dialogue with among others, the Ministry of Education, Members of the Parliamentary Committee on Education, Science and Technology, and the commissioners for the Teaching Service Commission, amplifying the vital role we play in championing education for Orphans and Vulnerable Children and improving livelihoods across our beautiful country.

We were privileged to host different donors and partners supporting our work, all united in their commitment to tackling education challenges for the OVC. These visits serve as a testament to the recognition of our impactful work as a local NGO changing lives of the underserved children.

Through collaborative efforts, we made significant strides in education. The completion and graduation of 50 volunteer teachers sponsored to pursue a diploma in primary school education at Malcolm Moffat College, training of 852 Community School teachers in pedagogical skills, and training of 443 school managers in governance, advocacy, and entrepreneurship demonstrates our dedication to ensuring equitable access to quality education for all, particularly in marginalized communities.

Our development approach to promoting Early Childhood Education also bore fruit as the Ministry of Education expressed interest to pilot our School Readiness Initiative (SRI) Early Learning Kiosk (ELK) sustainable model, a tablet loaded with assessment tools and other key materials for children aged three to six.

Recognizing the critical threat of children dropping out of school amidst the introduction of the Free Education Policy, ZOCS took a leading role in community engagements sensitizing parents/guardians on the importance of education, child protection, and safeguarding.

Our participation in the Zambia Teacher Development Symposium (ZDTS), ensured that on behalf of the children we serve, their voices were heard and their priorities recognised. Advancing issues around improving the quality of teacher education is in line with our five-year Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

We remain committed to the education agenda and we continue to provide boreholes in Community Schools, contributing to clean water access and healthier environment for children and communities.

One of the highlights for 2024 was the sponsorship programme which enabled our learners to continue their studies at Secondary and tertiary levels. This program did not just help individuals achieve their academic dreams, but also contributed to securing a brighter future for their communities and our country at large.

Our journey is far from completion. The need for quality education remains urgent especially in some rural/remote parts of our country. Our Government has paved way to ensuring each child has a chance to be educated through the Education For All Policy. Our role and commitment is to continue our work, expanding our reach and ensuring that no child is left behind.

Once more, I want to extend my deepest gratitude to our partners, donors, teachers, and staff whose unwavering support has made 2024's achievements possible.

Looking ahead, we are optimistic that through continued collaboration and partnership, we can build on our successes and create an even brighter future for the children of Zambia, especially the most vulnerable.

Thank you for being a part of the ZOCS journey.

**Cleopatra Chona-Muma**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ZAMBIA OPEN COMMUNITY  
SCHOOLS**



# ABOUT ZAMBIA OPEN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

## Who we are

Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS) is a vibrant and a flagship Organization of Community Schools since 1992 in Zambia that empowers communities to provide quality basic education to approximately 224,847 learners (112,433 Boys and 112,414 Girls) in 1,285 demonstration Open Community Schools across 97 selected Districts in all the 10 Provinces of Zambia. ZOCS has used a three-pronged approach and structured its work around three pillars:

**Advocacy & influencing:** Approaches aimed at influencing government policy and legislation to benefit OVC's access to quality education;

**Capacity Building:** Increasing teacher and community capacity to provide quality education to OVC; and

**Service Delivery:** Supporting the development of schools, providing teaching and learning materials, bursaries, school feeding and communities to create an enabling environment for enhanced educational opportunities for OVC.

**Aspiration** Our aspiration is to ensure that Orphans and Vulnerable Children have the following.

Access to quality education Rights are protected and safeguarded Good health, Communities support education, Communities' lives improved.

## Values

- Accountability
- Commitment
- Integrity
- Professionalism
- Respect for Human Rights





*Driving our agenda for community school education in Zambia*



# OUR STRATEGY (2021-2025)

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Zambia Open Community Schools has operated in Zambia since 1992 and is currently operating in 97 districts of the 10 provinces of Zambia.

## GOAL

Community School learners, especially Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), girls and children with Special Education Needs, Achieve Improved Learning Outcomes.

## FOCUS AREAS:



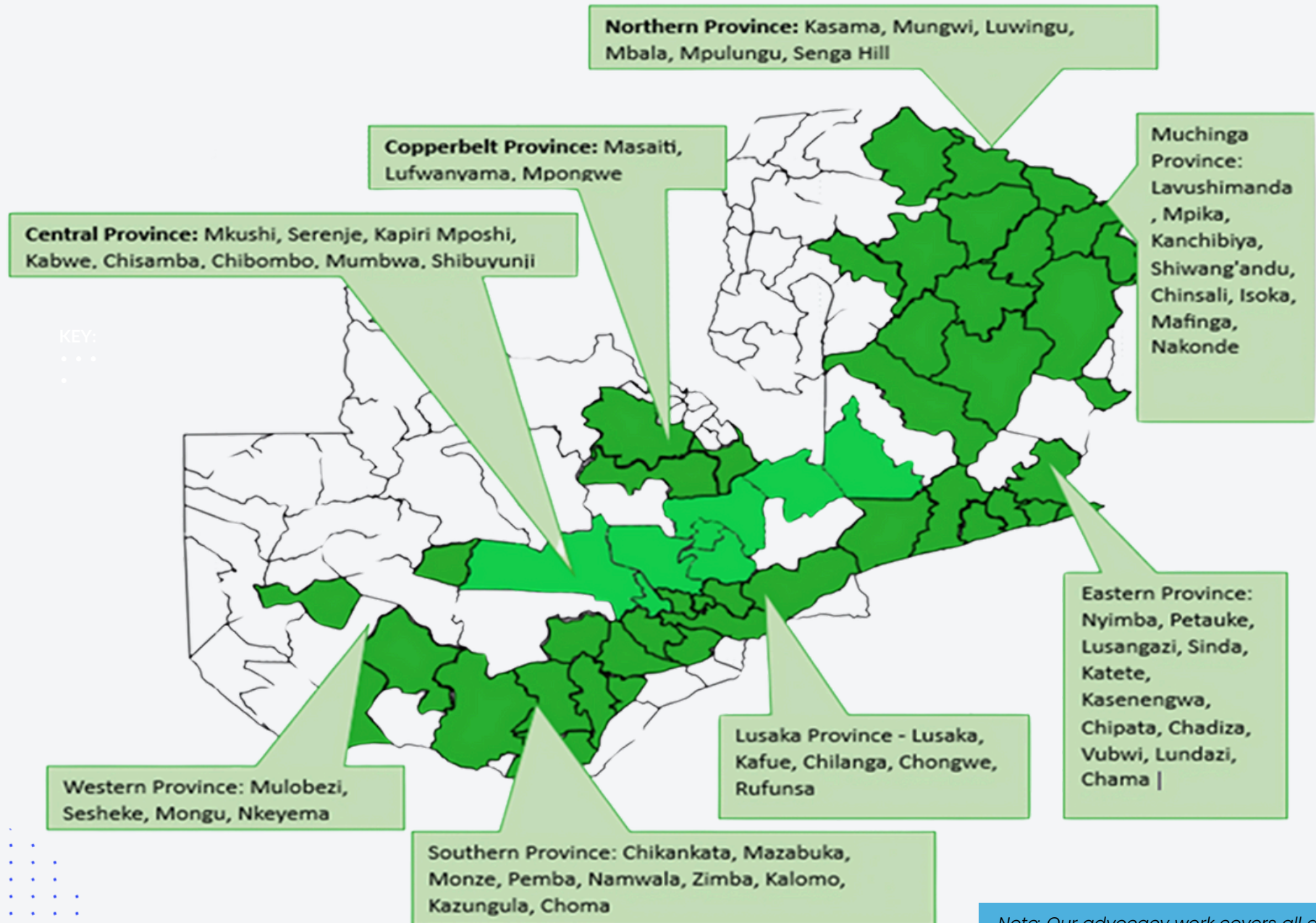


**Play in school helps create a stimulating environment that attracts children to attend and remain in school**



# OUR OPERATIONAL AREAS

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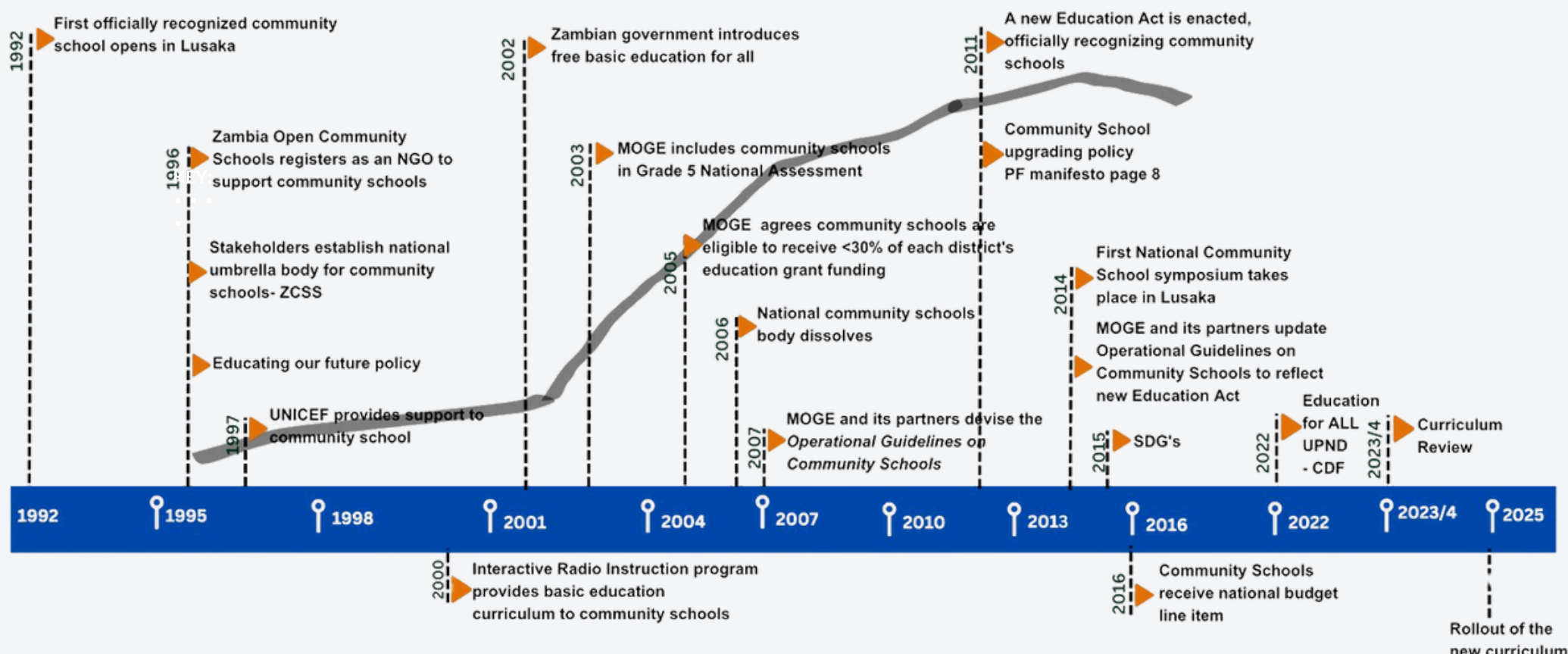


*Note: Our advocacy work covers all districts in the country*



# KEY MOMENTS IN THE GROWTH OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN ZAMBIA

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Source: Adopted from Time to Learn





Advocacy is an essential element of ZOCS work, along with long-term community development. As we work alongside communities to provide quality education access and opportunity for every child, our advocacy reviews the policies, systems, structures, practices and attitudes that make it difficult for vulnerable children to enjoy their right to education.

By addressing the systemic contributors and causes of lack of access to education, advocacy work ensures that Community Schools receive the much-needed support especially from Government through the Ministry of Education.



## DATA & EVIDENCE DRIVEN POLICY ENGAGEMENT

**The major outcomes of continuous policy engagement with the duty bearers on policy review and implementation**

Recognition of Community Schools - allocation of Funds to Community Schools

Infrastructure Development (Constituency Development Fund)

Incentives for volunteer teachers and deployment of Trained Teachers to Community Schools (27% of volunteer teachers deployed in Central Province)

Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials

Inclusion of Volunteer Teachers in the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme

Monitoring of Community Schools by the DEBS office



ZOCS continued to advocate for increased resource allocation to Community Schools. Some of the positive results included, improved infrastructure, provision of grants, teaching and learning materials, and deployment of qualified teachers.





The School Readiness Initiative aims "to secure a good start into primary education for vulnerable children to access quality pre - primary schooling in community schools."





# BUILDING CAPACITIES OF TEACHERS AND COMMUNITIES

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## PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS TRAINING

ZOCS invested in the capacity development of volunteer teachers. Through Pedagogical skills training, a total of 852 (448M, 404F) volunteer teachers from various districts improved their competencies.

### RESULTS

With 85% of the 2024 target in building teacher capacities, there has been improved: -

- Learner outcomes
- Learner retention
- Learner progression
- School – community relationships

## PARENT COMMUNITY SCHOOL COMMITTEES TRAINED

Building the capacities of school managers including community structures remains key in the management and smooth running of Community Schools in the country. Critical areas remain those of ensuring that children understand their rights and are able to demand for them, ensuring that there is a conducive learning environment for these children and that community members understand how best to cater for the children for education. In this year, 261 PCSC members received training in school governance, child protection, Early Childhood Development (ECD) management, and Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH).





# PROMOTING SCHOOL READINESS – A HOLISTIC APPROACH

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## ENGAGING COMMUNITIES

ZOCS conducted community sensitization meetings with the objective of raising awareness among communities about the critical importance of ensuring a strong foundation in primary education for vulnerable children, achieved through access to quality pre-primary schooling. The community sensitization meetings were achieved as planned and received full support from the DEBS offices across all project areas. Communities demonstrated enthusiasm to collaborate with ZOCS towards enhancing ECE provision in the 142 Community Schools targeted for sensitization.

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## OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN SCHOOL READINESS

District Stakeholders' Meetings were conducted across all ten districts participating in Cohort 3 of the School Readiness Initiative (SRI) project. These meetings provided crucial platforms for addressing challenges, clarifying roles and responsibilities, enhancing collaboration, and evaluating the progress of SRI implementation. Key stakeholders from various government departments were invited to contribute their insights and support the initiative.

## WASH AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

To enhance sustainability and retention of volunteer ECE teachers in Cohort 4 Schools, 360 (222 Males & 138 Females) PCSC Committee members in the Copperbelt (Lufwanyama, Masaiti, Mpongwe), Southern province (Mazabuka and Chikankata) and Central province (Serenje and Mkushi) were trained in entrepreneurship, mindset change, financial management and income generation activities (IGAs) and record keeping. The skills and competencies to which the PCSC members were exposed to would help them mobilize resources required to actualize activities on the School /ECE development plans thereby making their schools self-sustaining. The training targeted PCSC chairpersons and head teachers.

## TRAINING OF TEACHERS ON THE EARLY LEARNING KIOSK (ELK)

In order to be effective, teachers need to continually reflect on their own practice and employ a combination of instructional strategies to meet the needs of learners. For this reason, ZOCS always works with district level structures of the Ministry of Education to capacitate teachers in ECE and early primary grade lesson delivery methods. A total of 540 Cohort 4 teachers (327 Male; 213 Female) were trained in October 2023 on the components of the Early Learning KnowHow Kiosk (ELK), the KnowHow course and Child Assessment and Continuous Development (CACD) tool which is a Child Steps Application for use to assess children's developmental milestones. Of the 540 trained, 180 were ECE teachers male 114 and 66 female, 180 Grade 1 teachers male 87 and 93 female and 180 headteachers 126 male and 54 females were head teachers from the target schools. To enhance ownership and sustainability, head teachers were included on this training because the success of this intervention is dependent on school leadership. This has resulted in continued support and mentorship to the ECE teachers in the project schools. Head teachers are helping in strengthening implementation of the KnowHow course by providing on-site coaching and mentoring during monitoring and zonal Continuing Professional Development (CPD).



Round Huts for ECE Learning. Communities without grass, roof the huts with iron sheets





# COST OF INACTION REPORT LAUNCHED

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ZOCS participated in the Roger Federer Foundation (RFF), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, launch of the “Cost of Inaction” research report. This report, conducted by DNA Economics of South Africa, examined the costs and benefits associated with implementing comprehensive universal Early Childhood Education (ECE) services for children aged 3 to 6 in Zambia.

The platform allowed ZOCS to engage with the private sector in the process attracting more investment for ECE sector.

The report highlighted several challenges including;

- High teacher-to-child ratio: Currently at 1:80, which is four times the international norm.
- Low access to ECE services: Only 29% of Grade 1 entrants had any ECE experience in 2022, down from 40% in 2021.
- Lack of understanding of the ECE curriculum among teachers.
- Inadequate nutrition: Resulting in stunting and undernourishment, which affect children's learning and contribute to high dropout rates.
- Inadequate infrastructure: Leading to overcrowding and affecting the quality of ECE.
- Insufficient education expenditure: Despite being the third largest government spending category, it consistently falls short of internationally recommended targets and:
- Insufficient funding towards the ECE sector compared to the Primary and Secondary sector

## RECOMMENDATIONS/AREAS OF FOCUS

- Nutrition and Health: Supplying nutritious food, ensuring proper sanitation facilities, and providing access to clean water and cooking utensils. For example, implementing school meal programs that provide balanced diets and installing handwashing stations.
- Quality Early Learning: Prioritizing teacher and caregiver training, increasing the number of educators within schools and ECE centres, and equipping both teachers and learners with necessary learning materials. Specific examples include offering professional development workshops for teachers, recruiting additional qualified educators, and distributing age-appropriate educational resources such as books, toys, and learning aids.





*They are happy when in school*



## A MAN WITH A HEART OF GOLD



Meet Mr. Jonah Mudenda, an extraordinary individual whose impact on his community is nothing short of remarkable.

In the rural district of Choma, located in the southern province of Zambia, there is a beacon of hope for vulnerable children in the form of Simeno Community School. This school was founded by an extraordinary individual named Mr. Jonah Mudenda, an 80-year-old Early Childhood Education (ECE) teacher. With a heart full of compassion, Mr. Mudenda has dedicated the twilight years of his life to ensuring that young learners in his community have access to quality education.

The school is situated 40 kilometers away from the District Education Office, making it quite isolated. The school grapples with a shortage of qualified teachers, inadequate infrastructure, and lack proper teaching and learning materials.

In 2011, Mr. Mudenda established Simeno Community School with just 35 ECE learners. Over the years, through his unwavering dedication and commitment, the school has grown to accommodate learners up to Grade 4, with a total of 137 learners. What is truly inspiring about Mr. Mudenda is that he voluntarily teaches learners from ECE to Grade 3, taking on the responsibility of multiple grade levels. With only one other volunteer teacher assisting him, the Grade 4 learners receive the education they deserve. Despite limited resources, Mr. Mudenda has shown incredible generosity and selflessness. Simeno Community School has only two shelters, which posed a challenge for housing the ECE learners. In a remarkable act of sacrifice, Mr. Mudenda removed iron sheets from his own house to roof a small 2 by 2 shelter, providing a safe and conducive learning space for the young ECE learners. This gesture demonstrates his deep commitment to the education and well-being of the children, putting their needs above his own. The story of Mr. Jonah Mudenda deeply touches the hearts of all who hear it. Many individuals, upon hearing of his dedication and sacrifices, reflect upon their own contributions and wonder how they can do more to make a positive impact in the lives of Zambian children. His story serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative power of education and the potential for one individual to change the trajectory of an entire community. In expressing his gratitude, Mr. Mudenda acknowledges the support and training provided by the Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS). Their assistance has undoubtedly played a vital role in his ability to provide quality education to the children in his community. His heartfelt thanks to ZOCS is a testament to the importance of collaboration and the impact that organizations can have when they work together to uplift communities. The story of Mr. Jonah Mudenda and Simeno Community School is one of resilience, selflessness, and hope. His dedication to teaching and ensuring that vulnerable children have access to education is an inspiration to all. May his noble efforts continue to inspire others to make a difference in the lives of Zambian children, and may the work of organizations like ZOCS be blessed as they strive to create a brighter future for communities in need.



# SERVICE DELIVERY

## CARBON TAX PAYS FOR GIRL EDUCATION

Each child has a right to education! Unfortunately, not all children have access due to many limiting factors. The partnership between ZOCS and So Green sells carbon credits as a solution to reduce emissions and increase resilience of vulnerable communities at the forefront of the climate crisis. ZOCS continued in 2024 supporting the most vulnerable children under its Bursary Support Program. A total of 289 learners in various districts SERVICE DELIVERY received that support. The sponsored children included those in boarding and day schools in their own districts. They received full uniforms, books, sanitary towels, and other necessities. Learners eligible for the Bursary Support are those in Secondary Schools and are supported until they have completed their education. Depending on their school achievements and aspirations, this could mean vocational training, diploma or university provided by other players in the education sector whose mandate covers that.





# VOLUNTEER TEACHERS OBTAIN QUALIFICATIONS

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## JUBILATION AS THEY GRADUATE

*They came without any knowledge of being in a college. Yet, against all odds, they worked and proved that nothing is impossible for those who believe.*

*Their story serves as a powerful reminder that graduation success is not solely determined by initial perceptions or circumstances. Through their unwavering commitment, resilience, and resourcefulness, these students defied expectations and triumphed over significant obstacles. Their journeys inspire ZOCS to believe in the transformative power of education and the capacity for personal growth and achievement, regardless of the challenges one may face", Petronella Sibeene- ZOCS Communications & Advocacy Manager*

OCTOBER 17th, 2024, it was smiles all around at Malcolm Moffat College of Education in Serenje District as 37 out of 50 ZOCS sponsored volunteer teachers graduated with a Diploma in Primary Education.

These are among the teachers who have tirelessly offered their teaching services in Community Schools without expecting a reward. They rise to the occasion offering teaching services to the OVC especially in rural Zambia, at a time, volunteering is not fashionable.



As the adage goes, kindness is good for you and everyone else, the volunteer teachers met kindness when ZOCS through the partnership with Hei Verden secured resources that allowed them secure places at college pursuing a two-year diploma course in teaching.

The graduation ceremony witnessed an impressive turnout- graduates, their families, faculty members, distinguished guests, and college staff members. The venue was filled with an air of excitement and anticipation as the graduates prepared to embark on the next phase of their lives. The long walk was finally over. All that was heard were words of gratitude and an assurance from the teachers to go and make a significant difference in their schools and lives of the OVC they served. But one of the best highlights of this group of teachers was the resilience and determination to succeed.

*'We thank ZOCS, Hei verden and government for the opportunity and everything you have done for us. We will forever be grateful and it remains our sincere hope that through your influence as an organization ZOCS, you will speak on our behalf for government to consider us during deployment exercise', graduated volunteer teacher Mr. Saboi Namitondo.*





## VOLUNTEER TEACHERS PAID INCENTIVES

The story of Community Schools and ZOCS can never be completed without the mention of Volunteer teachers. These have remained at the centre of quality education delivery to Orphans and Vulnerable Children receiving education in Community Schools in Zambia. For years, they offered their services with little appreciation.

That prompted ZOCS to allocate valuable time into advocating for financial support that would be channeled towards volunteer teacher payment.

For nine consecutive years, ZOCS has offered an incentive from funds received from Government. The incentive calculated based on the developed formula is aimed at motivating the teachers to engage more deeply in their service and remain to serve the less privileged children who should equally enjoy their Right to Education. While working with other stakeholders such as ZANEC, this year, ZOCS disbursed a total of over ZMW4 000 000 to 2980 teachers in Lusaka (Chongwe, Rufunsa, Kafue), in Muchinga (Chinsali, Isoka, Kanchibiya, Lavushimanda, Mafinga, Mpika, Nakonde, Shiwangandu) provinces. ZOCS will continue to

advocate for a consideration by Government to increase the amount allocated to Community Schools. As it is, the funds are limited and only allow for a once off payment for a selected group of teachers in a particular province in a year. It takes three years to complete the circle of payment before returning to the initial group.



## HOPE THROUGH SCHOOL FEEDING



The World Bank defines school feeding programs as a targeted social safety net that provides educational and health benefits to vulnerable children, aiming to increase enrolment rates, decrease absenteeism, and improve nutrition at the household level.

With severe drought experienced this year, starvation rates reached new highs. This immense need prompted ZOCS to enhance its response with food support/school feeding program benefitting 2683 OVC, thanks to the support from Zambia Project-USA, Shoprite and So Green.

These feeding programs not only alleviate starvation, they create opportunities for us to work with communities to develop programs that solve ongoing social problems and promote self-reliance. Such interventions were accompanied by trainings of PCSC members in home grown school feeding. We continue in our commitment to empower local leaders to care for orphaned and vulnerable children— empowering communities to be founded in and driven by hope.

School Feeding Programs have several benefits:

1. They promote higher school attendance and reduce dropout rates.
2. Institutional feeding programs are carefully selecting balanced meals to improve children's nutrition. Careful selection promotes children's health and growth since malnutrition among children is a contributing cause of premature deaths.
3. It improves concentration and educational performance in school. The food provided in schools improves students' energy levels, which helps them focus on class and perform much better in their assignments.





Information & Communication Technology (ICT) is known to help rural schools improve access to information and skills for learners. However, there are challenges to implementing ICT in rural schools, including a lack of electricity and trained teachers. ZOCS procured and distributed 12 solar-powered computers to Community Schools in Nkeyema, Mongu and Sesheke. the aim was to reduce the digital gap.



# ZOCS CROSSES SAND & RIVERS FOR OVC EDUCATION

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In pursuit of ensuring quality education access for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Zambia, Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS) forged river and crossed sands in Western province to keep the education message alive in rural communities.

This time the team visited Nangalata Community School located 90 kilometres South East of Mongu district. The aim was to meet the locally formed Community Action Group (CAG) members to deliver branded t-shirts that would serve as an identity when out there performing one of their roles, which is to identify the Out of School children, and enrol them in school.

In the rural and remote Mongu district most people earn their livelihoods through fishing in local rivers, cultivating cassava and maize alongside raising goats, chickens and cows. Early morning and afternoon, children trek the sandy terrain and flooded plains to attend Nangalata Community School. ZOCS team members, others visiting the province for the first time, indeed experienced firsthand the obstacles children face, and the perseverance required for them to obtain basic quality education. Different from what is experienced in none-drought years, the Zambezi River floods the plains preventing motor vehicles from passing through.

It's an estimated three kilometres before reaching the school, the team meets the Lui river. Though the plains may not be fully flooded, the Zambezi tributaries never cease to flow. The ZOCS team in the company of the DEBS official was stuck. The only banana boat was reportedly down and the Hilux could not rave through the waters. Standing there trying to devise the next move, the team was joined by a group of Grade 7 learners with their teacher. They were from a nearby school to register for examinations since Nangalata has no centre number.

The learners were quick to encourage the ZOCS team that there was a way to meander through the waters to the other side. The team had no option but to follow the route paved by the brave learners and made it to the other side. With a short-lived sigh of relief after crossing the river, the journey through the hot sand begun with the team still keeping their humour intact. Finally, the team arrived at Nangalata. The CAGs were addressed, gifted with t-shirts, and the school received a solar powered computer-installed and teachers oriented, compliments of Hei verden.

To remain true to the ZOCS vision "A Zambia where all Community School Learners, especially Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), girls and Learners with Special Education Needs, obtain quality and equitable education that enables them to realize their fullest potential," ZOCS team is proud to cross rivers, sand and forests, to fulfil just that! #HopeThroughQualityEducation



## Disability got nothing on Rita's education

Rita is always 'on the go'. She loves to explore and learn how things work. ZOCS met Rita Kaluwe at Kashembe Community School, reception class. She is 6 years old and has a disability. When she enrolled in school last year after being identified by a Community Action Group (CAG) member as ripe for school, she did not talk much and did not know any signs.

The class teacher Dorothy Chikongo started teaching her concepts and helped her develop her language skills. Today Rita can combine words to communicate more complex messages. She already knows preschool concepts such as colours, numbers, shapes, letters and sounds. She touches the appropriate symbol or object whenever the

The class teacher Dorothy Chikongo started teaching her concepts and helped her develop her language skills. Today Rita can combine words to communicate more complex messages. She already knows preschool concepts such as colours, numbers, shapes, letters and sounds. She touches the appropriate symbol or object whenever the teacher requests her to. The staff is proud of Rita and ZOCS through the vibrant CAG members, forproviding support resulting in such an incredible opportunity.



*Children with disabilities are dear to ZOCS as disability is not inability. Communities are sensitized on the importance of education access for children with disabilities*



*Rita playing with friends at school*

According to her teacher, Rita did not interact with others and she was very slow at anything. Now she has blossomed and able to participate in all activities. Her concentration span has also improved tremendously.

The fact is, children with down syndrome can be taught. The fact is, they all learn to take their first steps and if helped, they learn to kick a ball, they laugh, they cry and that to ZOCS, means they can and do reach the milestones enjoyed by other children.

ZOCS vision remains, "A Zambia where all Community School Learners, especially Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), girls and Learners with special education needs, obtain quality and equitable education that enables them to realize their fullest potential."



# HUMAN RESOURCE

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Dear ZOCS staff,

I'm writing to thank you for your dedication and commitment to ZOCS' mission and vision in the year 2024. Your work is commendable and we at ZOCS sincerely appreciate your contribution to our growth and longevity. Your hard work and effort have directly and positively impacted the lives of our Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) we are called to serve. Again, we want to offer our appreciation and thanks for your hard work. You're a truly valued member of our team. Sincerely, HR Department.





# MONITORING & EVALUATION ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2024

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## Introduction

The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) department had an impactful year in 2024, focusing on the systematic assessment of project effectiveness and ensuring compliance with best practices. Through rigorous monitoring and evaluations, the department has enhanced the organization's capacity for informed decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and continuous improvement. Here is a summary of the key achievements of the M&E department and highlighting the overall success of our initiatives during the year.

## Key Achievements

### 1. Successful Monitoring of All Projects

The M&E department established a comprehensive monitoring framework that allowed for the effective tracking and oversight of all ongoing projects throughout 2024. The department conducted Regular Monitoring Visits to ensure alignment with project objectives, providing on-the-ground insights and support.

### 2. Midline Evaluation of the Education Action for Marginalized Children project (EAMC).

A significant milestone for the M&E department was the successful completion of the midline evaluation for the EAMC (Education Action for marginalized children) project. This evaluation provided critical insights into project progress and areas needing adjustment, influencing future strategies and interventions. The midline evaluation served as a pivotal assessment point, conducted approximately halfway through the project's implementation phase. It aimed to measure progress against baseline indicators, evaluate the effectiveness of strategies, and provide data-driven insights necessary for informed decision-making and future intervention planning.

## Objectives of the Midline Evaluation

1. Assess Progress: To evaluate the extent to which the project objectives are being met compared to baseline measurements.
2. Identify Challenges: To pinpoint obstacles hindering progress, particularly in context-specific barriers faced by marginalized groups.
3. Refine Strategies: To provide insights that will inform modifications to project strategies and interventions, enhancing their relevance and effectiveness.
4. Stakeholder Feedback: To gather perspectives from beneficiaries, educators, and community leaders about the project's impact, allowing for adaptive management.

## Methodology

The midline evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative research methods:

- Quantitative Surveys: Conducted with a representative sample of beneficiaries to gather statistical data on educational attendance, performance, and retention rates.
- Qualitative Interviews: Engaged stakeholders through focus group discussions and key informant interviews to explore experiences and perceptions related to the project.

## Key Findings

The midline evaluation generated crucial insights, categorized as follows:

1. Educational Access and Enrollment:
  - Increased enrollment rates among marginalized children, demonstrating the effectiveness of outreach initiatives.
  - Notable challenges in regions with persistent socio-economic barriers that hinder school attendance.
2. Quality of Education:
  - Improvement in teaching practices, with a marked shift towards more inclusive instructional methodologies.
  - Variability in classroom conditions and resources such as water access, affecting the consistency of educational quality across different regions.
3. Student Performance:
  - A positive trend in academic performance indicators, although disparities persist, particularly among children with disabilities.
  - Enhanced engagement in learning activities, attributed to revised curriculum and teaching techniques.
4. Community and Parental Involvement:
  - Increased parental engagement in educational processes, fostering a supportive environment for children's learning. However, some communities expressed the need for more awareness programs to further enhance participation.
5. Psychosocial and Emotional Well-being:
  - Reports of improved self-esteem and school enjoyment among marginalized children, linking positive educational environments to emotional well-being.
  - Continued stigma and bullying experiences were reported, indicating a need for targeted interventions.

The midline evaluation of the EAMC project not only highlighted the progress made in addressing educational disparities but also illuminated areas requiring additional attention. These findings will inform the project's future strategies, ensuring continued support for marginalized children and laying a stronger foundation for inclusive education initiatives. By adapting interventions based on data, the EAMC project can more effectively achieve its goals and positively impact the lives of vulnerable children.



### 3. Enhanced Data Management and Protection

The department implemented data management practices to ensure the integrity and security of project data which is critical for Informed Decision-Making, with a focus on accountability and transparency, the M&E department emphasized evidence-driven decision-making with Data-Driven Insights. The department also gave Regular feedback to stakeholders, ensuring they were informed about project progress and facilitating a two-way communication process. The M&E department also ensured that they successfully produced impactful reports that synthesized data into actionable insights.

### 4. Effective Endline Evaluation of the SRI Project

The endline evaluation of the SRI (School Readiness Initiative) project was conducted efficiently, measuring the project's overall impact and effectiveness. The evaluation assessed the extent to which the project goals were met, providing valuable insights for future initiatives and cohorts. Stakeholder participation in the endline evaluation enriched the findings, ensuring diverse perspectives were captured. The department also prioritized a culture of learning and adaptation, facilitating ongoing project improvement. The endline evaluation of the School Readiness Initiative (SRI) project was conducted with a focus on efficiency and thoroughness, providing a comprehensive assessment of the project's overall impact and effectiveness. This evaluation aimed to measure the extent to which the established goals and objectives were achieved throughout the project duration.

#### Key Features of the Endline Evaluation

- **Impact Assessment:** The evaluation measured key indicators to determine the project's impact on children's readiness for school, including cognitive, social, and emotional development. **Goal Achievement:** It assessed whether the SRI successfully met its predefined goals, analyzing various outcomes related to educational readiness and community engagement. **Stakeholder Participation:** A significant aspect of the evaluation was the active involvement of stakeholders, including educators, parents, and community leaders. This collaborative approach enriched the findings by capturing diverse perspectives and experiences related to the initiative. **Insights for Future Initiatives:** The evaluation provided valuable insights that will inform future programming in the other Cohorts, helping to tailor interventions based on what worked well and what challenges were encountered. **Culture of Learning and Adaptation:** The SRI project emphasized a culture of continuous learning and adaptation throughout the evaluation process. This commitment to ongoing improvement allowed for the integration of findings into future project strategies and enhancements.

The endline evaluation of the SRI project effectively highlighted the overall successes and areas for improvement, utilizing stakeholder engagement to ensure a well-rounded analysis of the initiative's impact. These insights are essential for guiding future cohorts and fostering a responsive educational framework that promotes school readiness among children, ultimately enhancing their long-term educational trajectories.

The M&E department's achievements in 2024 reflect a year of significant progress and success. By successfully monitoring all projects, conducting meaningful evaluations, and fostering a culture of learning and adaptation, the department has greatly contributed to the organization's mission. As we move forward, the insights gained and the systems established this year will serve as a foundation for continued excellence and impact in the future.

### Successful Disbursement of Funds for Volunteer Teachers in Lusaka

In a significant effort to support Volunteer Teachers, a successful disbursement of funds was conducted in Lusaka for volunteer teachers who had previously been excluded from the MoE funds disbursement. This disbursement targeted a total of 187 teachers (138 female 49 male), aiming to recognize their contributions to deliver quality education in community schools. Volunteer teachers play an essential role in the educational landscape, particularly in underserved communities where formal teaching positions may be limited. However, many have historically been overlooked during funding disbursements, limiting their access to resources necessary for effective teaching. The recent initiative sought to address this gap by ensuring that these dedicated educators received the financial support they deserve.

#### Objectives of the Disbursement

1. **Support Educators:** To provide financial assistance to volunteer teachers to enhance their ability to teach and fulfill their responsibilities.
2. **Recognize Contributions:** Acknowledge the significant efforts of volunteer teachers in improving educational outcomes in their communities.

#### Implementation Process

The disbursement process was meticulously planned and executed to ensure transparency and efficiency:

- **Identification of Beneficiaries:** Collaborating with DEBs office, a list of eligible volunteer teachers was compiled, ensuring accurate targeting of funds.
- **Communication:** Clear communication was established with all selected teachers, informing them of the disbursement process and its significance.
- **Funds Distribution:** Funds were distributed directly to the beneficiaries via airtel money, ensuring they received the financial support promptly. This method minimized delays and ensured that teachers could immediately utilize the funds for their needs.

#### Key Outcomes

The successful disbursement had several positive outcomes:

1. **Financial Relief:** Teachers expressed relief and gratitude for receiving the funds, which helped alleviate some financial burdens they had been experiencing.
2. **Enhanced Teaching Conditions:** Access to additional resources allowed volunteer teachers to improve their teaching conditions, procure necessary materials, and better support their learners.
3. **Strengthened Community Ties:** The initiative strengthened ties between community members, local authorities, and the education system, emphasizing the importance of supporting volunteer educators.



## ZAMBIA OPEN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As at 31 December 2024

|                               | NOTES | 2024<br>ZMW              | 2023<br>ZMW              |
|-------------------------------|-------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>ASSETS</b>                 |       |                          |                          |
| <b>Non-Current Assets</b>     |       |                          |                          |
| Property, plant & equipment   | 2.    | <u>5,254,974</u>         | <u>5,568,787</u>         |
| <b>Current Assets</b>         |       |                          |                          |
| Receivables & prepayments     | 3.    | <u>1,422,846</u>         | <u>3,861,558</u>         |
| Cash & cash equivalents       | 4.    | <u>14,957,528</u>        | <u>19,314,476</u>        |
|                               |       | <u>16,380,374</u>        | <u>23,176,034</u>        |
| <b>Total Assets</b>           |       | <u><u>21,635,348</u></u> | <u><u>28,744,821</u></u> |
| <b>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b> |       |                          |                          |
| <b>Capital and Reserves</b>   |       |                          |                          |
| Accumulated Funds             |       | <u>11,408,817</u>        | <u>8,015,427</u>         |
| Revaluation reserves          |       | -                        | -                        |
| Capitalised grants            | 5.    | <u>769,255</u>           | <u>1,083,068</u>         |
|                               |       | <u>12,178,072</u>        | <u>9,098,495</u>         |
| <b>Current Liabilities</b>    |       |                          |                          |
| Unutilised funds              | 7.    | <u>4,760,917</u>         | <u>16,029,023</u>        |
| Payables & accruals           | 6.    | <u>4,696,359</u>         | <u>3,617,303</u>         |
|                               |       | <u>21,635,348</u>        | <u>28,744,821</u>        |



**ZAMBIA OPEN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**  
**STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME**  
for the year ended 31 December  
2024

|                             | NOTES      | 2024<br>ZMW             | 2023<br>ZMW           |
|-----------------------------|------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Income                      | Appendix I | 38,521,872              | 37,103,124            |
| Expenditure                 | Appendix I | <u>(35,128,482)</u>     | <u>(37,110,665)</u>   |
| Surplus/(loss) for the year |            | 3,393,390               | (7,540)               |
| Other comprehensive Income  |            | <u>-</u>                | <u>-</u>              |
| Surplus/(loss) for the year |            | <u><u>3,393,390</u></u> | <u><u>(7,540)</u></u> |



# DONORS AND FUNDING PARTNERS

Dear donor/partner,  
We believe all children deserve access to quality education. Your unwavering support in 2024 brought stability and cheer to the Orphans and Vulnerable Children we serve.  
And as we look forward to 2025, we have big plans. Your continued support will help us achieve the best for the underserved children.  
To all our donors and partners, thank you for joining hands and being part of our journey!

On Behave of OVC,  
ZOCS Family





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