

Policy Brief

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Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium
for Monitoring Educational Quality

Progress in Gender Equality in Education: Zambia

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Introduction

This policy brief deals with progress in 'gender equality' in primary education for the nine provinces in Zambia by seeking answers to the following specific questions:

- What were the changes in the **proportion of girls' enrolment** at the Grade 6 level for the nine provinces in Zambia between 2000 and 2007?
- What were the changes in the **size and the direction of the gender differences** in reading and mathematics scores for the nine provinces in Zambia between 2000 and 2007?
- What were the changes in **selected gender-related school environment information** between 2000 and 2007 that could be further investigated in order to improve gender equality in education for Zambia?

Answers to the above questions are expected to guide policy decisions regarding the gender-related interventions in education.

Zambia's Participation in SACMEQ

The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) is a network of 15 ministries of education (Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland,

Tanzania (Mainland), Tanzania (Zanzibar), Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe).

SACMEQ's mission is to: (a) expand opportunities for educational planners to gain the technical skills required to monitor and evaluate the quality of their education systems; and (b) generate information that can be used by decision-makers to plan and improve the quality of education.

SACMEQ has undertaken three large-scale, cross-national studies of the quality of education: SACMEQ I (1995-1999, reading) with seven ministries; SACMEQ II (2000-2004, reading and mathematics) with 14 ministries; and SACMEQ III (2006-2010, reading, mathematics, and HIV and AIDS knowledge) with 15 ministries. Zambia participated in SACMEQ I in 1995 (2,558 Grade 6 pupils in 157 primary schools); SACMEQ II in 2000 (2,611 Grade 6 pupils in 173 primary schools); and SACMEQ III in 2007 (2,895 Grade 6 pupils in 140 primary schools)-

The Importance of Gender Equality in Education

The importance of gender equality in education within the process of international goal-setting has been emphasized in the Education for All (EFA) Goals (UNESCO, 2000) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (United Nations, 2006).

The gender equality issue in education has been a major concern in many countries, because of its link with health and nutrition, economic development, and civic responsibilities. For the purposes of this policy brief, the concept of 'gender equality in education' follows the UNESCO (2003) interpretation, which refers to the notion of boys and girls experiencing the same advantages or disadvantages in attending school, receiving teaching methods, curricula, and academic orientation, and producing equal learning achievements and subsequent life opportunities.

Gender-Related Policy in Zambia

The Ministry of Education has taken a keen interest in providing equal access to education to all the people of Zambia. The provision of education to all children and adults must be seen in a holistic context, and should include issues of gender, education equality, as well as the quality of education. There have, however, been some factors that have impacted negatively on the education of some vulnerable groups, especially girls. The Republic of Zambia recognises the need to tackle the issues affecting the education of girls within a broader context, so as to provide quality education to all school-aged children. To this end the government, in collaboration with various partners, started the Programme for the Advancement of Girls Education (PAGE) in 1997.

Through this programme, specific actions have been developed to support successful strategies for increasing access, retention, and enhancing achievements, especially in mathematics and science for girls. In 1997, the Ministry of Education introduced the re-entry policy that allowed girls who fell pregnant to return to school after delivery. This was followed up with the 50-50 enrolment policy. The Strategic Plan embraced the equity programme, which specifically addressed gender issues within the ministry (Ministry of Education, 2003). The National Gender Policy supported these efforts (Gender in Development Division (GIDD), 2000).

Gender Balance in Grade 6 Participation

Figure 1 shows the proportion of girls enrolled at Grade 6 level for each province and Zambia as a whole in both 2000 and 2007. Throughout all the SACMEQ studies, the use of a 'scientific' sampling method with an internationally required level of sampling accuracy ensured that the proportion of girls at the Grade 6 level in the sample reflected the entire Grade 6 target population.

At the national level, there was an increase of only one percentage point, namely, girls enrolment was 49 percent in 2000 and by 2007 it was 50 percent., hence, there was no significant change in the gender balance at the Grade 6 level. At the provincial level, Copperbelt province, which had the highest proportion of girls in 2000, 54 percent, dropped to 52 percent in 2007. The proportion of girls in the Southern province increased from 42 percent in 2000 to 57 percent in 2007, becoming the province with the highest proportion of girls. The provinces of Luapula and Northern remained static at 43 percent for both 2000 and 2007 and were the only provinces where there was gender imbalance.

Gender Differences in Learning Achievements

While there was some progress in Zambia towards greater gender equality in enrolments between 2000 and 2007, policy-makers should be concerned about whether this enrolment trend was also accompanied by greater gender equality in terms of learning achievements.

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the gender and time differences in the learning achievements in reading and mathematics by province. The standardized scores with a pupil mean of 500 and standard deviation of 100 were established during SACMEQ II, based on the calibration of test items from the

SACMEQ I and SACMEQ II studies. During SACMEQ III, use of the sub-set of these test items along with the Rasch-measurement approach permitted valid comparison of scores over time.

Reading

In Zambia as a whole, the reading performance for boys did not change between 2000 and 2007. The mean score for girls, however, dropped by about 10 points. At the provincial level, the largest drop was seen in the Copperbelt province where both boys and girls dropped by 30 and 35 points, respectively. In Lusaka province the girls dropped and in Southern, it was the boys, both by 30 points. The largest increase was achieved by girls in the Central province with a 30-point increase, followed by boys in the Eastern and North Western provinces, with a 20-score-point increase. The largest gender difference, 27 score points, was registered in Lusaka province, followed by Eastern province with about 20 points in favour of boys. Central was the only province where girls had overtaken boys (by 20 score points). Overall, the achievement levels in reading for both boys and girls remained very low.

Mathematics

At the national level, the overall performance in mathematics showed no noteworthy improvements for both boys and girls. That is, the performance of boys improved by 2 points, while that of girls was by 1 point in 2007, thereby maintaining the same direction and size of the gender difference. At the provincial level, the largest increase for boys was seen in Lusaka province, with about a 17-point increase, while Luapula province recorded the highest increase for girls, 27 points, in 2007. The Southern province registered the largest drops for both boys (about 18 points) and girls (about 12 points). The provinces of Central and Western showed some level of gender equality in the performances between boys and girls, while all the other provinces showed boys performing better than girls, thereby repeating the same pattern of gender differences as seen in 2000.

Other Information through the 'Gender Lens'

The above sets of results illustrated two distinct pictures regarding gender equality in education. Firstly, Zambia has made great progress in the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies regarding access to and participation in basic education, especially for girls. Secondly, it appeared that the learning dimension of gender equality had been overlooked (Saito, 2010). To understand the context of these results, a set of selected gender-related indicators has been provided in Table 1. All the indicators shown in Table 1 should be interpreted in relation to the Grade 6 pupils.

Female Staff

Increasing the female staff has been seen as a strategy for girls' success, since female teachers and school heads are considered to be good role models as leaders. Among the SACMEQ countries, some had 'general' teachers who taught all subjects, while others had specialized subject teachers. In Zambia, the 'general' teachers teach all subjects at the basic school level (Grades 1 to 7). As shown in Table 1, the proportion of female staff in Zambia, though slightly above that of male staff, remained static over time. For example, the proportion of Grade 6 pupils taught reading by female teachers remained at 53 percent in 2000 and 2007. The same applied for female mathematics teachers, where there was a negligible change from 52 percent in 2000 to 53 percent in 2007. Although there was a considerable increase in the proportions of Grade 6 pupils attending schools run by female school heads – 19 percent in 2000 and 32 percent in 2007 – the percentages in general remained low and did not match those concerning female teachers of reading and mathematics.

School Safety

Certain school resources are very critical in order to keep girls at school. Such resources, for example, include school safety (school fences) and sanitation

measures (separate toilets for boys and girls). Table 1 illustrates that the percentage of Grade 6 pupils who went to schools that had walls/fences fell drastically over time. The situation was even more alarming in that only 24 percent of Grade 6 pupils were at schools with walls/fences in 2007, compared to 46 percent in 2000. This disparity could possibly be due to the balancing effect between: (i) those existing schools, which already had fences; and (ii) the construction of new primary schools subsequent to 2000 (within the context of EFA), without supplying them with fences.

Sanitation

- In Table 1, the average numbers of pupils per toilet in 2000 and 2007 are shown separately, namely, boys per boys' toilet and girls per girls' toilet. In 2000, 6 percent of Grade 6 pupils went to schools with no toilet at all, and in 2007 it was 2 percent. The average numbers of girls and boys per toilet reflected only those schools with at least one gender-separated toilet. If the average number of pupils per toilet had decreased in 2007 compared to 2000, this would have indicated that the situation regarding the provision of toilets had improved over time. The number of boys per toilet remained static at 46 for 2000 and 2007, and for girls, the figure fell from 46 pupils per toilet in 2000 to 29 in 2007. While there was progress in the provision of toilets for girls, there is still a lot to be done, especially for boys, where the numbers sharing toilet facilities was still high. The provision of adequate toilet facilities can help boost pupil attendance, especially for girls, consequently, a lack in the provision of such facilities can contribute towards pupil absenteeism.

Summary of Results

This policy brief focused on gender equality issues regarding the participation and learning achievements (reading and mathematics) for Grade 6 pupils in Zambia. Additional information concerning female

staff, security, and sanitary issues was also presented to understand the context.

The results indicated that:

- There was an overall improvement in the participation of girls for most of the provinces between 2000 and 2007. However, the gender gap in Grade 6 enrolments was still very wide in the provinces of Luapula and Northern.
- Concerning the learning achievements, these, in general, did not show any significant improvements, and in fact registered a slight drop for girls in reading. In most of the provinces, boys outperformed girls in both subjects.
- Though there appeared to be gender balance in the proportion of the teaching staff, at the level of school heads, women are under-represented.
- Overall, most pupils were attending schools that had no fences, while the provision of toilet facilities was not keeping abreast with the increasing school population.

Policy Suggestions

To overcome some of the above-mentioned shortcomings, it is suggested that:

- The Ministry of Education should focus its attention on the expansion of access and participation. It is also important to actively promote gender equality in learning achievements.
- The Ministry of Education, through the Curriculum Development Centre, should consider adopting gender-sensitive pedagogies and undertake a review of the curriculum, in a bid to overcome gender inequality.
- The Ministry of Education, through the Standards and Curriculum Directorate, should closely monitor the learning environments in

schools to determine gender issues related to pupil performance, especially concerning girls.

- There is a need to sustain the retention of female staff, especially in the rural schools, so as to boost the numbers of females in school head positions, thereby providing role models for young girls and a boost to their aspirations (Gender in Development Division, 2000).

Conclusion

To attain the gender-related objectives within EFA, it is necessary to go beyond gender parity. The SACMEQ III Project's research results for Zambia indicated that, though there had been progress towards attaining gender balance in the provision of access and participation, there was no corresponding progress towards gender equality in learning achievements. The Ministry of Education should, therefore, examine, review, and prioritize the policy suggestions indicated above, so as to develop targeted policy strategies aimed at improving the quality of education for both boys and girls. These efforts should be directed at reducing gender inequality in learning achievement levels.

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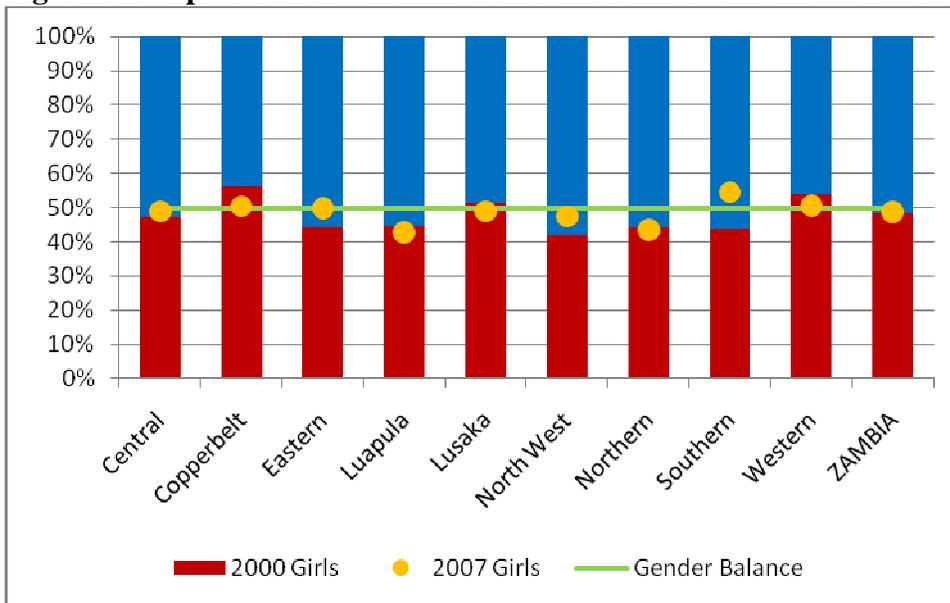
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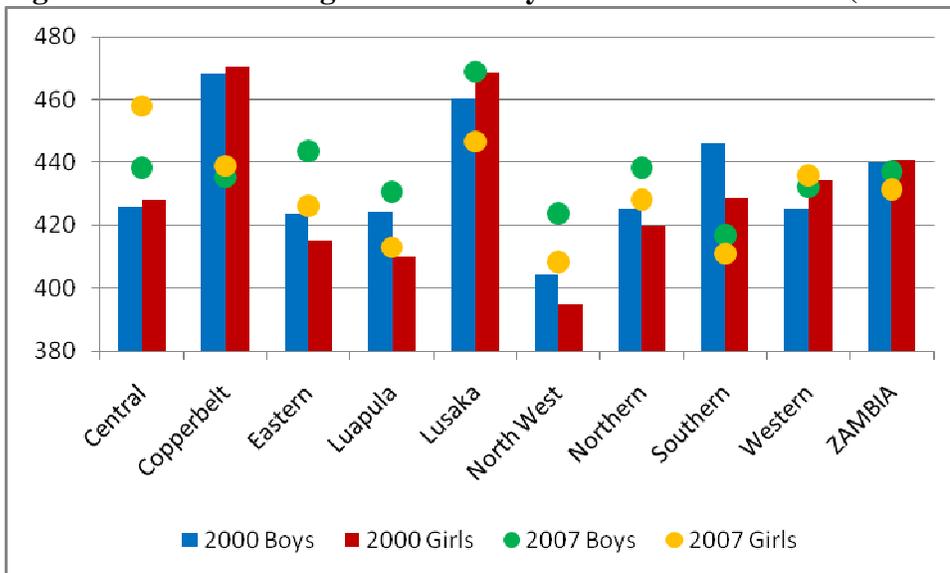
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Figure 1: Proportion of Grade 6 Girls out of Total Grade 6 Enrolments in Zambia (2000 and 2007)



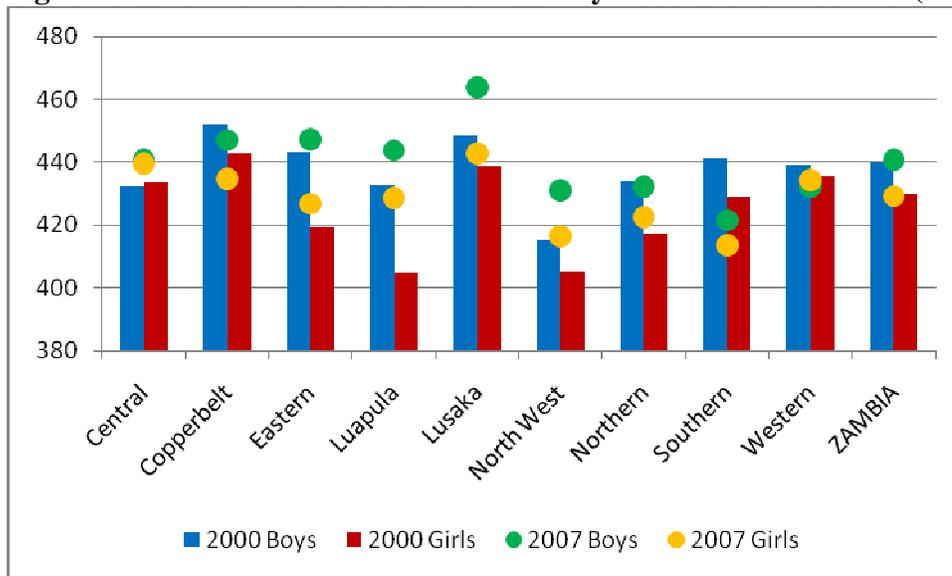
Source: SACMEQ Data Archive.

Figure 2: Mean Reading Scores for Boys and Girls in Zambia (2000 and 2007)



Source: SACMEQ Data Archive.

Figure 3: Mean Mathematics Scores for Boys and Girls in Zambia (2000 and 2007)



Source: SACMEQ Data Archive.

Table 1: Selected Information through ‘Gender Lens’ in Zambia (2000 and 2007)

Selected Indicators	2000	2007
Female Reading Teacher	53%	53%
Female Mathematics Teacher	52%	53%
Female School Head	19%	32%
Schools with Fences	40%	24%
# Boys per Boys' Toilet	46	46
# Girls per Girls' Toilet	45	29

Source: SACMEQ Data Archive.