**Education in Zambia: An article compiled for/by UNICEF**

**Increasing access to quality basic education for all children**         Education is not only a human right, but it is also an essential tool for individuals to break the poverty cycle and to building the human capital of nations.  Zambia is one of the poorest countries in the world and is home to 6 million children under the age of 18 of which 4 million children are of the primary school age (7-14).   Though Zambia made commendable progress in increasing access and gender parity, more than a quarter million children are out of school and 47% of those enrolled in school do not complete the primary cycle.

The current UNICEF country program (2011-2015) focuses on capacity and systems strengthening for improvement of quality of education, equity in participation and progression from pre-primary to primary and lower secondary education, particularly for girls, rural children, and other excluded groups.   HIV prevention and behavioral change are promoted through life skills program for children who are in school and out of school.   The program has three results areas:
• Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE)
• Quality Basic Education
• HIV and AIDS and Life Skills Education

**Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE)**

UNICEF is providing support to help the GRZ promote Early Childhood Care and Development Education (ECCDE) for children aged six and below. Children who participate in early childhood education are more likely to enroll and remain in primary school (and achieve better results) than those who cannot access comprehensive early childhood care.  UNICEF supports establishment of child-friendly early learning centers, developing national curriculum and learning and development standards, and training of teachers and care-givers. More than 40 centers are providing school readiness instruction to 7,000 children in 5 districts. ECCDE centers are also entry points for monitoring child health and nutrition.

**Quality Basic Education**

Since the introduction of the free basic education policy in 2002, enrolment in basic education levels has steadily increased. However, children from poor households, rural children and girls are the last to enroll in school and the first to drop out, and are significantly underrepresented in the upper grades of basic education as well as the secondary level. UNICEF supports the Ministry of Education, civil society, and communities to ensure that children and adolescents are able to develop, learn and participate in a protective, inclusive and child-friendly enabling environments.

At the national level, support include training of teachers and school administrators on inclusive education, interactive teaching and other classroom subjects; technical assistance for curriculum and student assessment reviews; and advocacy for policy and systemic reforms.

At sub-national level, community schools that serve rural and marginalized children are the priority for UNICEF support: 10,000 children are learning in newly constructed child-friendly 60 classrooms with clean water and gender sensitive sanitation facilities and more than 20,000 pupils have received adequate teaching/learning materials. 306 community School teachers (146 male, 160 female) have benefited from professional training on teaching skills.