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Assessing the Effectiveness of CDF in Enhancing Access to Quality Education Through School Construction Projects: A Case Study of Selected Schools in Kafue District

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Abstract

This study had been undertaken to assess the effects of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) on Education Sector Growth: The Case of Kafue District, Zambia. The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) had been a key policy intervention in many developing countries, aimed at enhancing local development through decentralized funding. The objectives were to assess the utilization of the CDF in the education sector, evaluate its effects on educational infrastructure development, and identify challenges and opportunities in its implementation. A descriptive survey design was employed, utilizing qualitative methodological paradigms. Primary data was collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, while secondary data was sourced from policy documents, reports.

The study analyzed data using SPSS, with a sample of 100 respondents, including CDF committee members, civic leaders, teaching staff, government workers, and community members. Findings revealed a fair level of community engagement in CDF-funded education projects, contributing to transparency in fund allocation and monitoring. However, the number of CDF-funded projects remains inadequate compared to other regions. Key challenges include limited community participation, insufficient funds and poor leadership. The study recommended a structured framework for enhancing community engagement, leadership development programs for CDF managers, advocacy for increased funding, and the integration of digital tools for real-time project monitoring.

Keywords: Constituency Development Fund, Methodological, Paradigms and Decentralized

1. Introduction

Chapter One provides an introduction to the study by explaining the context and motivation behind the research. It began with the background, which highlights the growing importance of Constituency Development Funds (CDF) in improving access to education through school construction projects, especially here in Zambia. The chapter then presented the statement of the problem, which outlined the challenges related to the effectiveness of these projects in addressing issues like classroom congestion, low pupil performance, and delayed project completion. The general and specific objectives are clearly stated to guide the direction of the study, followed by research questions that the study seeks to answer. This chapter also included the theoretical framework that helped to explain the relationship between educational infrastructure and quality education outcomes.

1.1 Background

Education was widely recognised as a key pillar for national development and poverty reduction across the world. According to the World Bank (2020), investing in education infrastructure improves learning environments and increases access to quality education, especially in rural and underserved areas. In many countries, building schools had been prioritised as a way to reduce travel distances for learners, ease congestion, and improve learning outcomes. The United Nations also emphasises inclusive and equitable education in its Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure that all children, regardless of their background, have access to safe and effective learning spaces. Governments around the world had adopted decentralised funding approaches to support this goal, allowing local communities to participate in planning and implementation of school infrastructure projects.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the significant increase in Constituency Development Fund (CDF) allocations in recent years, many communities in Zambia, including those in Kafue District, continued to face serious challenges in accessing quality education due to inadequate school infrastructure. The government had prioritized school construction projects under CDF to address issues like classroom congestion, low enrollment, and poor learning conditions, but the actual outcomes of these projects remained unclear.

1.3 Objectives

The general objective of the study was; To assess the effectiveness of CDF in enhancing access to quality education through school construction projects using selected schools in Kafue: To assess the influence of CDF - funded school construction projects on pupil enrollment and classroom congestion in selected schools in Kafue, To examine the effects of improved school infrastructure on teaching and learning outcomes, specifically teacher retention and pupil academic performance.

1.4 Research Questions

How have CDF-funded school construction projects influenced pupil enrollment levels and classroom congestion in selected schools in Kafue District? What are the effects of improved school infrastructure on teaching and learning outcomes, particularly in relation to teacher retention and pupil academic performance? What key implementation challenges are affecting the timely completion and functionality of CDF- funded school infrastructure projects in Kafue District?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

This study was grounded in the Human Capital Theory, which was developed by Theodore W. Schultz in the early 2020s. Schultz (2021) proposed that investment in human beings through education, training, and health enhances their productivity and contributes to economic development. The theory maintains that just like physical assets, people can be improved through purposeful investment, and education was seen as one of the most critical areas of such investment.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study was important because it helped us to understand whether CDF-funded school construction projects was actually improving access to quality education here in our country. Many communities, especially in rural and peri-urban areas like Kafue District, had long struggled with classroom shortages and overcrowding.

2. Literature Review

This Chapter presented a detailed review of existing literature related to the use of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in enhancing access to quality education through school construction projects. The literature was organized around the three specific objectives of the study. First, it explored how CDF-funded school infrastructure projects had influenced pupil enrollment levels and reduced classroom congestion, drawing from both international and local studies. Second, the chapter examines how improved school infrastructure contributes to teaching and learning outcomes, particularly focusing on teacher retention and pupils' academic performance.

2.1 Thematic area developed from accessing the influence of CDF – funded school construction projects on pupil enrolment and classroom congestion in selected schools in Kafue

At the global level, investment in educational infrastructure has long been recognized as a critical driver of access to quality education, particularly in developing regions where overcrowding and poor school conditions remain significant barriers to learning, and this should be assessed to find out the influence of CDF - funded school construction projects on pupil enrollment and classroom congestion in schools. The World Bank (2020) emphasizes that improved school facilities, including adequate classrooms, are essential for increasing enrollment rates and enhancing student outcomes.

2.2 Thematic area developed from examining the effects of improved school infrastructure on teaching and learning outcome specifically on teacher retention and pupil academic performance

Examining the effects of improved school infrastructure on teaching and learning outcomes, specifically teacher retention and pupil academic performance through Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in Zambia has been a pivotal mechanism for financing community-based projects, including the construction of school infrastructure. The government's commitment to decentralization and community empowerment was evident in the substantial increased CDF allocations, rising from K1.6 million per constituency in 2021 to K28.3 million in 2023. This significant boost aimed to address infrastructural deficits in education, particularly in underserved area Mulenga C and *et al* (2021) [7].

2.3 Thematic area developed from establishing the key implementation challenges affecting the timely completion and functionality of CDF- funded school infrastructure projects

To establish the most significant thematic challenges affecting the timely completion and functionality of Constituency Development Fund (CDF)-funded school infrastructure projects is the issue of project implementation inefficiencies, a problem observed globally, internationally, and regionally. Globally, infrastructure projects in the education sector are often delayed due to bureaucratic red tape, poor planning, limited community involvement, and mismanagement of funds (World Bank, 2018) [17].

2.4 Research gap

Despite the wealth of literature on the influence of CDF-funded school construction projects on pupil enrollment and classroom congestion, I have noticed a significant gap in understanding the long- term sustainability of these infrastructure improvements. Most studies focus on immediate changes in enrollment and space availability but do not track whether these improvements last or continue to enhance access over time. I believe that longitudinal research is needed to capture the lasting impact of CDF investments on school capacity.

3. Research Methodology

Chapter three focuses on the research methodology used in this study. It explains how the research was planned and carried out to answer the research questions. This chapter begins by describing the research design chosen to guide the

study and then identifies the target population from which data was collected. It also details the sampling design and how the sample size was determined to ensure the study represents the selected schools in Kafue District.

3.1 Research Design

This study will use a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of CDF-funded school construction projects in enhancing access to quality education. The mixed-methods design allows for the collection of numerical data through surveys to measure aspects like pupil enrollment, classroom congestion, and academic performance.

3.2 Targeted Population

The target population for this study consists of stakeholders directly involved or affected by CDF-funded school construction projects in selected schools within Kafue District. This includes school administrators such as head teachers and school management committee members, teachers, pupils, and parents or guardians. Additionally, local government officials and contractors involved in the construction projects were included to provide a broader perspective on project implementation and challenges.

3.3 Sampling Design

This study used a purposive sampling design combined with simple random sampling to select participants from the targeted population.

3.4 Sample Size determination

The sample size for this study will be limited to a maximum of one hundred (100) respondents to ensure that data collection and analysis remain manageable while still capturing diverse perspectives from the five schools namely; Soloboni Primary School, Mulangwa Primary School, Muchoto Primary, Kansenje Primary and Shikoswe Primary School selected schools in Kafue District. The sample will include key stakeholders such as head teachers, teachers, pupils, parents, and local officials directly involved with or affected by CDF-funded school construction projects. Determining the sample size of 100 respondents follows guidelines from Mugenda (2003), who suggest that a sample size of around 100 can be sufficient for descriptive studies, especially when using mixed methods. This number allows for a balanced representation of different groups while maintaining a practical scope for detailed data collection through surveys and interviews. The researcher will ensure that the sample reflects the composition of the school communities to provide reliable and valid insights into the effectiveness and challenges of the school infrastructure projects here in Zambia. I used Slovin’s Formula to determine the sample size.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

- n = sample size
- N = population size
- e = margin of error (usually 0.05 for 95% confidence level)
- Which is 100

3.5 Data Collection methods

In this study focus group discussions and structured questionnaires was used. Both quantitative and qualitative information, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the research topic was also used.

3.6 Data Analysis

In this study, data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software in order to come up with relevant information.

3.7 Triangulation

Triangulation involves comparing and cross- checking information gathered through surveys, interviews, and focusgroup discussions to ensure consistency and accuracy (Denzin, 2022).

3.8 Limitations of the Study

During data collection for this study, several challenges and limitations encountered that affected the research process. One possible challenge is the reluctance of some participants, such as teachers or local officials, to provide honest or complete responses due to fear of criticism or political sensitivity surrounding CDF projects (Kumar, 2014).

3.9 Ethical Consideration

When collecting data for this study, it was very important to follow ethical considerations to protect the rights and well-being of all participants. Before starting data collection, I sought permission from the relevant authorities, such as school administrators and local education offices, to ensure that the study is approved and supported. Participants will be informed clearly about the purpose of the study, and their voluntary participation will be emphasized, allowing them to choose freely whether to take part or not without any pressure (Bryman, 2016).

4. Results/Findings

This chapter presents the findings and discussions gathered through the study in Kafue District, like many rapidly growing areas in Zambia, has faced pressure on its education system from increasing enrollment (helped by free or low - fee policies), infrastructure deficits, and limited resources. Many schools lack sufficient classrooms, desks, ablution blocks, water and sanitation facilities, teacher housing, which reduces the quality of education even when access nominally increases.

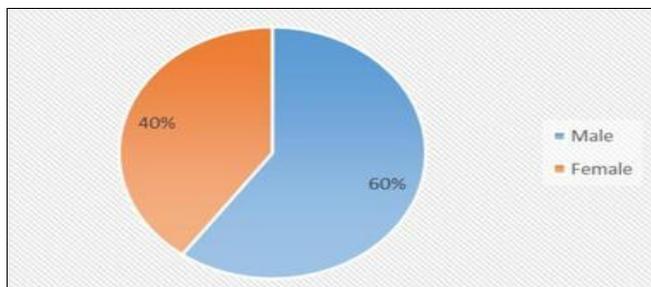
4.1 Presentation of results on background characteristics

Table 1: Population

Indicator	Data	Source
Population Size	219,574 people	2022 Census (Wikipedia)
Area	4,471 km ²	Kafue Council
Population Density	49.1 people per km ²	Calculated
Spatial Distribution	Mainly semi- urban and rural settlements	Summary Interpretation

According to the 2022 Census, Kafue District has a population of approximately 219,574 people. The district covers an area of about 4,471 square kilometres. Kafue Council and this yields an average population density of about 49 people per square kilometre, but spatial distribution

is uneven: areas close to Kafue town and along main transport corridors are more densely populated, while remote rural areas and settlements near the floodplains are more sparsely populated. Within the district, there are both urban, peri-urban and rural zones, each with different population dynamics; the urban/rural distinction is important because access to infrastructure (roads, electricity, building materials, skilled labour) tends to vary substantially.



Pie Chart 1: Response rate and gender

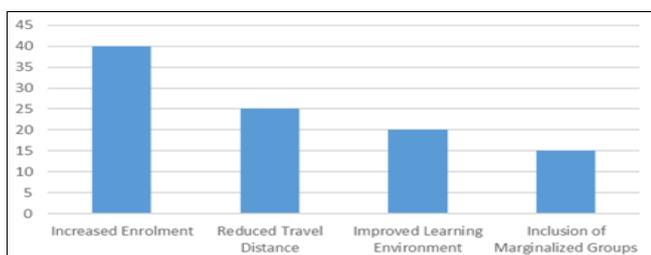
The above chart illustrates the response rate and gender of which sixty (60) percent are male and Forty (40) percent female representing a 100% response rate.

Table 2: Table to illustrate contributions

Contribution Type	Amount / Number	Notes
Classrooms built	25	New classrooms constructed in Kafue under recent CDF efforts.
Classroom block at Muchuto Primary	1	A 1x3 classroom block with 75 desks.
District-wide desks delivered	6,356	Number of desks procured/delivered across Kafue.
Desks to Mulanga schools	330	Distributed to the Mulangaa zone using CDF.

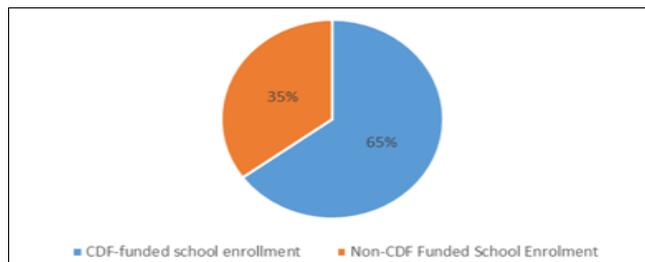
In Kafue District, the CDF has played a significant role in improving educational infrastructure: for example, it provided funding to build a 1x3 classroom block at Mulanga Primary School (with 75 double-seater desks) using the 2023 CDF allocation.

It also delivered 330 desks to schools in the Muchuto zone under CDF (with 290 desks procured via CDF) to mitigate shortages. More broadly, in Lusaka Province, of which Kafue is part, the CDF enabled the construction of 25 new classrooms and procurement/delivery of over 6,356 desks in the district. These projects have helped to reduce overcrowding in classrooms, improve learning environments, and ensure more pupils no longer sit on the floor, five schools namely; Soloboni Primary School, Mulangwa Primary School, Muchuto Primary, Kansenje Primary and Shikoswe Primary School were constructed and rehabilitated using Constituency Development Fund (CDF).



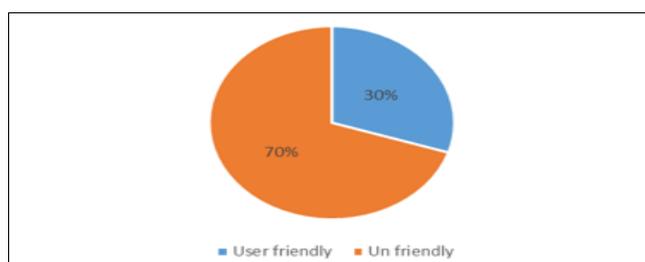
Graph 1: Impact of CDF

The Constituency Development Fund (CDF)-funded school construction projects have significantly enhanced access to education within the district at 40% increased enrolment rate because of the reduced distance about 25% learners must travel to attend school, alleviating classroom congestion, and creating a more conducive learning environment which is at 20%. These developments have contributed to higher enrollment rates, improved student retention, and greater inclusivity, particularly for marginalized groups such as girls and children with disabilities which stands at 15%. Moreover, the construction of new schools has often been accompanied by the provision of basic facilities like sanitation and water, which are critical for students' well-being and regular attendance.



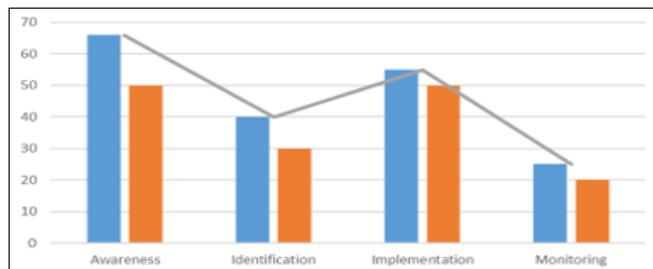
Pie Chart 2: Demonstrating the proportion

The use of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) has significantly influenced student enrollment rates in newly constructed schools by improving infrastructure, providing learning materials, and enhancing the overall learning environment. As a result, more students are attracted to these schools, leading to increased enrollment rates. For example, in a newly constructed school funded by CDF, enrollment might increase due to better classrooms, improved sanitation facilities, and availability of desks and textbooks, which collectively create a more conducive learning atmosphere. This positive impact is often reflected in enrollment data, showing a higher percentage of new students compared to schools without such funding.



Pie Chart 3: The gap between the prevalence of disability and school inclusion

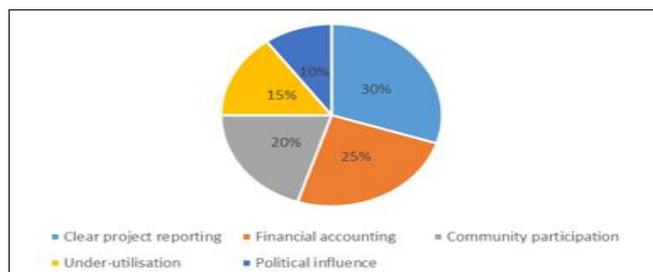
Despite the Persons with Disabilities Act (2012) and government policy mandating inclusive education. Most children with disabilities remain underrepresented in schooling, in 2024 only about 3% of disability-identified children (CSENDs) were in mainstream education relative to all children in Zambia. Schools often lack disability-friendly infrastructure (ramps, accessible toilets, and wide doorways), trained special education teachers, or learning materials adapted for those with sensory impairments.



Graph 2: Graphical Representation

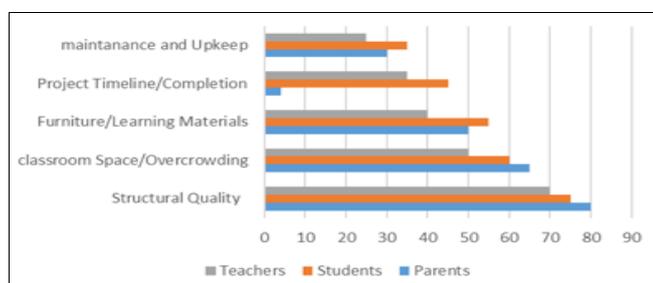
Awareness is relatively high (50 or 66% people know about Constituency Development Fund (CDF) programs and identification, Planning is at 30 to 40% (what school or project to build) has moderate involvement, but many people are not included.

Implementation is at 50 to 55% involvement tends to be small (unskilled labour or providing local inputs) rather than oversight or decision-making. Monitoring and Evaluation, oversight is quite low 20 to 25%. This shows that Local Authority responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluation of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) funded projects should put more effort and a lot has to be done to make sure that these projects are monitor to ensure quality standards are achieved and completed on time according to the President’s directive.



Pie Chart 4: Estimated transparency

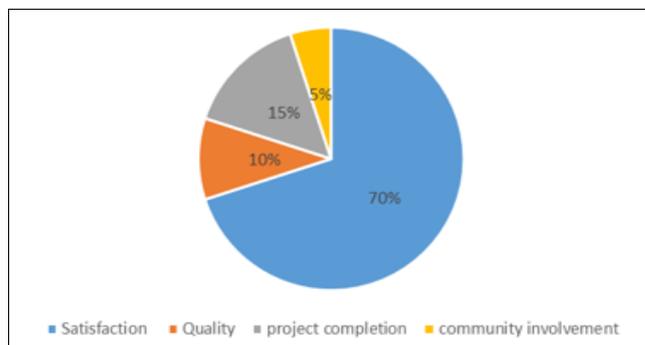
The transparency of the CDF allocation process in Kafue District appears mixed. On the positive side, there is public reporting which is at 30% of how many projects have been initiated vs completed (e.g. 70 projects between 2022-2024, with 46 completed).



Graph 3: Relative satisfaction levels

Most stakeholders acknowledge that CDF-funded school infrastructure has had positive effects: new or rehabilitated classrooms, provision of desks and sanitation facilities are seen as improvements. Parents and students generally appreciate improved physical conditions, especially where classrooms are less overcrowded and more sanitary. Teachers, however, often highlight ongoing challenges:

while infrastructure has improved in some cases, quality is inconsistent (some buildings have defects, delays in construction, or insufficient accompanying resources like furniture, teaching materials, or maintenance). Also, delays in funding disbursement or incomplete projects dampen stakeholder satisfaction. Overall, perception is moderately positive but tempered by concerns about durability, completeness, and whether infrastructure improvements are matched by improvements in teaching resources and staffing.



Pie Chart 5: Satisfaction

About 70% Local communities in Kafue District have expressed mixed levels of satisfaction with the outcomes of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) education infrastructure projects. On one hand, many residents appreciate the visible improvements, such as new classroom blocks, renovated schools, and provision of desks, which have enhanced learning environments and reduced overcrowding. These developments have contributed to increased school attendance and community pride. However, concerns remain regarding the quality of construction which stands at 10%, delays in project completion at 15%, and 5% indicate limited community involvement in planning and monitoring. Some community members feel that the projects do not always align with their most urgent educational needs, leading to calls for greater transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness in the implementation process.

Table 3: Stakeholder recommendations for CDF effect

Theme	What to Improve	Frequency
Community Engagement	Involvement in planning, Monitor and feedback loops	8
Accountability and Transparency	Clear roles, audits, financial disclosure	6
Capacity Building and Skills	Training for SMEs, CDF Committees, Managers	5
Disbursement (Timing and Amount)	Regular, Sufficient	5
Awareness and Sensitization	Informing citizens how to access and monitor CDF	4

Stakeholders suggest several key improvements to make the Constituency Development Fund more effective in enhancing education in Kafue District, stronger capacity-building for CDF committees and school management in project planning, implementation, and financial oversight, more timely and transparent disbursement of funds.

4.2 Presentation of results based on accessing the influence of CDF – funded school construction projects on pupil enrolment and classroom congestion in selected schools in Kafue

At the global level, investment in educational infrastructure has long been recognized as a critical driver of access to quality education, particularly in developing regions where overcrowding and poor school conditions remain significant barriers to learning. The World Bank (2020) emphasizes that improved school facilities, including adequate classrooms, are essential for increasing enrollment rates and enhancing student outcomes. Similarly, UNESCO (2017) highlights that classroom congestion adversely affects both teaching efficiency and student performance, noting that learners in overcrowded environments are less likely to engage actively or perform well academically.

4.3 Presentation of results based on a thematic area developed from examining the effects of improved school infrastructure on teaching and learning outcomes, specifically teacher retention and pupil academic performance

The objective of this study was to examine the effects of improved school infrastructure on teaching and learning outcomes, with a specific focus on teacher retention and pupil academic performance. The findings indicate that enhanced school infrastructure has a substantial and positive impact on both areas, demonstrating the critical role that the physical learning environment plays in fostering educational success and stability. Tembo L (2020) [8].

4.4 Presentation results based on a thematic area developed from establishing the key implementation challenges affecting the timely completion and functionality of CDF funded school infrastructure projects

The study sought to identify the key implementation challenges that hinder the timely completion and functionality of Constituency Development Fund (CDF)-funded school infrastructure projects. The findings revealed a complex interplay of administrative, financial, technical, and community-related challenges that collectively contribute to delays and deficiencies in the execution of these projects. Mwale M. and Chikumbi C. (2020) [13].

4.5 Discussions

The gender composition and related demographics play a critical role in assessing the effectiveness of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in enhancing access to quality education through school construction projects in Kafue District. Gender disparities in access to education have historically limited opportunities for girls, particularly in rural and underserved areas (UNESCO, 2021) [11]. School infrastructure developments funded by the CDF, such as the construction of additional classrooms, gender-sensitive sanitation facilities, and the provision of safe learning environments, have the potential to reduce dropout rates and improve enrolment and retention for both boys and girls (MoGE, 2023). In Kafue District, demographic trends indicate a relatively balanced gender ratio among school-age children, yet girls often face greater socio-cultural and economic barriers that hinder consistent school attendance (CSO, 2022). Therefore, evaluating the gender composition of beneficiaries and the inclusiveness of project planning

and implementation is essential to understanding how CDF interventions address educational inequalities and promote gender equity in education access (World Bank, 2020).

Population is roughly balanced between males and females. However, in community participation and decision-making roles (for instance, in CDF committees or school parent-teacher associations), there are sometimes gender disparities (with males more represented), according to related studies. (Though specific to school construction in Kafue, more data would help clarify). In terms of education access, gender-based barriers, especially for girls are often exacerbated by poor infrastructure (lack of separate ablution blocks, long distances to school), which school construction projects are intended to mitigate.

Most households in Kafue District, especially in rural and peri-urban areas, engage in subsistence agriculture, fishing (in floodplain / riverine areas), and informal economic activities. Access to services (electricity, good roads, water supply) tends to be uneven; wealthier households in or near Kafue town have better access than those in remote villages. Household size average Zambian rural household tends to have 5–7 members; in Kafue, households in floodplain or remote areas may be larger due to extended family living, but also may face more poverty. Household characteristics and socio-economic status play a significant role in assessing the effectiveness of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) initiatives, particularly in enhancing access to quality education through school construction projects. (Zulu & Chikopela, 2021) [16]. Therefore, evaluating CDF-funded school construction projects requires a contextual understanding of the socio-economic fabric of the target communities, as this directly impacts enrollment, attendance, and educational outcomes (World Bank, 2020).

Access to school facilities is strongly tied to locality. Communities farther from Kafue town often have more poorly constructed or fewer school buildings, less frequent maintenance, fewer amenities (ablution, lighting, teacher housing). Where school construction projects have taken place under the CDF or similar funds, they are often in more remote or under-served areas to address gaps in access. The distance children travel to school (and whether roads are passable in rainy season) is an important demographic, geo-spatial factor influencing effectiveness. (Ministry of Finance Zambia, 2022) [12].

Awareness of CDF schemes (including school construction) tends to be higher among more educated households, and those closer to centres. Participation in planning, contracting, monitoring tends to skew toward households with more social capital: male heads, more educated, those with connections to local authorities.

Vulnerable or marginalized populations (women, very remote households, migrants) may be less included. Demographic factors such as age, gender, education level, and socioeconomic status significantly influence community awareness and participation in Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects aimed at enhancing access to quality education through school construction. In Kafue District, variations in these demographic attributes affect how residents engage with and benefit from CDF initiatives. For instance, individuals with higher education levels are more likely to understand CDF processes, attend community meetings, and influence project decisions, while marginalized groups particularly women and youth often face systemic barriers to participation (Mwale and

Chikumbi, 2020) [13]. Moreover, socioeconomic status determines not only access to information about CDF projects but also the capacity to participate meaningfully in monitoring and implementation activities. Understanding these demographic influences is essential for designing inclusive strategies that promote equitable access to quality education infrastructure funded through the CDF. (Zulu and Chikumbi, 2021) [16].

However, the effectiveness of these investments depends not only on the quantity of infrastructure provided but also on how well it aligns with the actual needs of communities, including classroom space, sanitation, and teaching resources (World Bank, 2018) [17]. In Kafue District, selected school projects funded through the CDF illustrate varying degrees of success in meeting these needs, highlighting the importance of community participation, transparency, and accountability in project implementation (Chikuta *et al.*, 2022) [18]. Therefore, understanding household perceptions and demand helps assess whether CDF-funded infrastructure truly enhances equitable access to quality education.

Population and high enrolment pressure mean that school construction needs to anticipate future growth not just current deficits. Gender disparities in access (e.g. for girls) suggest that infrastructure (ablution blocks, proximity, safe travel) is critical. Remote and rural households face higher barriers; so the impact of CDF-funded school buildings is likely more significant in those areas if the construction is done timely and with quality.

Using several media and government reports, the following specific demographic-related observations for Kafue illustrate how the above general factors are playing out. In recent years, Kafue District has benefitted from multiple school construction and rehabilitation initiatives under CDF and similar funds. For example, 25 classrooms were constructed, 6,356 desks procured, Soloboni Primary School was rehabilitated, staff houses and ablution blocks built.

The new Soloboni Day Secondary School project (funded under the Zambia Education Enhancement Project) includes not only classrooms and staff houses but other facilities like science blocks, computer labs, home economics facilities, and a sick bay. These amenities are important for quality beyond just access. The project at Mpande Primary School (CDF and World Vision) involved construction of classroom blocks, an ablution block, and staff houses, aimed at improving conditions for almost 400 learners.

4.6 Conclusion

There is a need to enhance transparency and accountability mechanisms in the use of CDF funds for school construction. The study revealed cases of incomplete projects, substandard construction, and cost overruns, which compromise the intended outcomes of improved access to quality education. Education and health services stand at the centre of human development and their availability, accessibility, utilization, affordability and equitability are of paramount importance. In the case of health and education facilities and service delivery in Kafue Constituency from the perspective of CDF funding, there is a clarion call for government's enhanced consistency in prioritizing the allocation and consequential timely disbursement of the fund to the constituency for collectively agreed upon community development ventures annually.

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