

Big new UK assistance for Zambian education

LONDON, August 10, 2013 (PRNewswire Africa) - The UK will spend K315m supporting education in Zambia over the next three years. This will help bring UK aid to Zambia to its highest ever level. In total the UK expects to spend K560m on its development programme here in 2013. This is an increase of approximately 27% on spend in 2012.

Today the UK Government signed an agreement with the Government of Zambia to provide up to K 277 million (£33 million) of aid to education over the next three years. A further K37.8 million (£4.5 million) has been committed for technical support and programme monitoring, representing a total package of support worth K315 million (£37.5 million).

This will support the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training & Early Education to provide schooling to 3.5 million Zambian children. The UK is strongly committed to ensuring all children are able to attend and complete school in Zambia and around the world.

Education is a new programme of support by DFID in Zambia. It adds to the broad range of programmes already being pursued by the UK here.

UK aid will support the implementation of the Government's National Implementation

Framework (NIF III) for the education sector up to 2016. The support focuses on improving the quality of primary education and expanding access to secondary schools, particularly for girls.

This new UK funding will be fully aligned to the Ministry of Education's budget and accompanied by technical support to help strengthen national systems for financial management and monitoring outcomes.

The UK will also supervise a separate recent grant from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) which supports education around the world.

The agreement was signed by Kevin Quinlan, Head of DFID Zambia and by the Minister of Finance, Alexander Chikwanda.

British High Commissioner James Thornton said: "I am delighted about this big new programme. Education is a key sector for Zambia's development. The overall increase in the UK's assistance to Zambia is part of a broader increase in development spending by the UK worldwide. This year the UK becomes the first G20 country ever to meet the ambitious UN target for development spending; it is a target that we intend to meet every year from now on. The UK is also committed to improving the international economic framework in ways that will develop countries such as Zambia. This was illustrated by our strong focus on trade, tax and transparency in our Presidency of the G8 group of major economies."

Kevin Quinlan, Head of DFID Zambia, said: "I am delighted to sign this agreement today and to be working closely with the Zambian Government in its efforts to improve the quality of the education system for all children in Zambia."

Last month, the 2013 Joint Annual Education Review brought stakeholders together to assess progress on education in Zambia. I would like to congratulate the Government for the frank discussions on how to improve quality of education and the clear commitment to tackle these challenges in the sector to ensure ordinary Zambians can benefit from the country's economic growth.

Highlights of the review include high enrolment for both boys and girls at primary school, with 1.7 million more children now in school over the last decade. Infrastructure has also been increased at secondary and university levels which expands access to education.

However, general performance of pupils remains low. In reading and mathematics at grade 5 there has been little improvement made in the last 12 years. In addition, in 2012, there was poor performance on national examinations at grade nine. 94,000 students scored zero on the English language exam. This provides us with a reality check of learner performance at higher levels. It also highlights the need to improve the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy in early grades.

I am confident that the review process will result in key priorities for quality improvement. In particular, we hope that this will include textbooks being provided to schools this year. The Government inherited a situation where primary school textbooks had not been provided to schools since 2009. We know the Ministry of Education is determined to address this and ensure textbooks reach schools as soon as possible. Through the programme being signed today, we look forward to working with the Government to address this and other challenges facing schools in Zambia”

Further information: The education sector support programme will blend sector budget support, technical assistance and policy advice. Through this UKAid, we will support the GRZ to improve the effectiveness of their annual \$1bn spend in education. This will include supporting the Government's systems down to the school level, to improve the learning/teaching environment, focus on improving learning outcomes in the early grades, and increase participation of girls and other vulnerable groups. Our support also allows the opportunity of improved policy and strategy dialogue with government counterparts on the issues of public financial management, inclusive growth and skills development, and improved accountability.

(SOURCE : UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office)