REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

THE RE-ENTRY POLICY GUIDELINES 2026

Promoting Inclusive Education – Supporting Every Learner's Right to Complete Their Education

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Promoting Inclusive Education – Supporting Every Learner's Right to Complete Their Education

REVISED 2026

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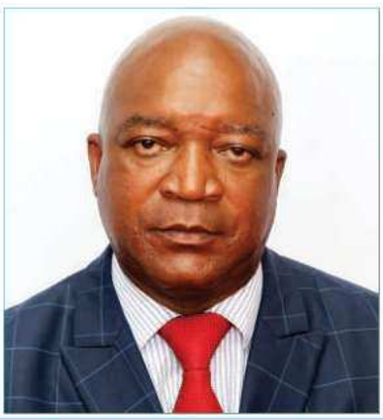
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Foreword



Douglas. M Syakalima, MP
HONOURABLE MINISTER OF EDUCATION

The Government of the Republic of Zambia has placed the education of the girl child as a priority area. This commitment is drawn from both national and international demands which call for improvement in the provision of quality and equitable access to education. Both the Sustainable Development Goals and Education for All goals implore member states to respond to issues of gender equality in the provision of access to quality education.

In its quest to meet national, Education for All and Sustainable Development Goals, the Ministry of Education has been implementing interventions to respond to challenges facing the education of girls. The launch of the Programme for the Advancement of Girls Education (PAGE) in 1997 marked Zambia's serious campaign to raise the education of the girl child on the national agenda. Through PAGE, a systematic attempt was made to raise the level of public, institutional and learner awareness of the essential equality of boys and girls.

One of the key interventions to promote gender equality was the introduction of the Re-entry Policy in 1997. The policy mandates that schools allow girls who fall pregnant to take maternity leave and return to school after pregnancy. Initially, the absence of clear implementation guidelines limited consistent application of the policy in schools. To address this, the Ministry of Education developed standardised guidelines in 2004 through a consultative process with key stakeholders, providing schools with clear directions to implement the policy effectively and coherently.

Since its inception, the Re-entry Policy has played a key role in enabling more girls to return to school after pregnancy. Despite this progress, a significant number of girls continue to fall out of the school system due to pregnancy and early marriages. To address this ongoing challenge, the Ministry of Education, with support from UNESCO, conducted a comprehensive review of the Re-entry Policy in 2023. This review identified emerging implementation gaps and provided valuable insights that guided the development of these revised policy guidelines.

It is, therefore, my firm belief that these revised guidelines will enhance the capacity of school administrators to implement the Re-entry Policy more uniformly and effectively. The guidelines will also serve as a practical guide and a renewed commitment to parents and guardians, encouraging them to play an active role in facilitating their children's return to school.

Douglas M. Syakalima, MP
Honourable Minister of Education
Republic of Zambia

Acknowledgements



Kelvin Mambwe (PhD.)
PERMANENT SECRETARY – EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
Ministry of Education

The education of the girl-child is one of the areas in the Education Sector that requires concerted efforts from all key stakeholders. This is because of the numerous and diverse issues that affect girls' participation in accessing education. As a result, planning and programming of interventions is a collective and consultative process to harness the various experiences from all partners.

It is in this regard that I take this opportunity to thank all the stakeholders that participated in the reviewing of the Re-entry Policy guidelines. The revised guidelines will enable school administrators, parents and other relevant stakeholders to effectively implement the policy.

The Ministry of Education is indebted to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the technical support and the Government of Sweden for the financial support rendered in the review of the Re-entry Policy guidelines.

I also wish to extend my thanks to the line Ministries and Civil Society Organisations in the Education Sector that participated in the review. Sincere gratitude is extended to all stakeholders for their valuable contributions. I also wish to acknowledge the important role played by parents throughout the process. Lastly, I commend the Ministry of Education officials at all levels who ensured the successful conclusion of the review process of the guidelines.

I am confident that the reviewed guidelines will enhance the effective and coordinated implementation of the Re-entry Policy.

Kelvin Mambwe (PhD.)
Permanent Secretary – Educational Services
Ministry of Education

Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASRHR	Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Central Statistical Office
DCD	Directorate of Curriculum Development
DEBS	District Education Board Secretary
ECZ	Examination Council of Zambia
EFA	Education for All
ESB	Education Statistical Bulletin
FAWEZA	Forum for African Women Educationalists in Zambia
FELAZ	Female Lawyers Association of Zambia
GIDD	Gender in Development Division
GRP	Gender Responsive Pedagogies
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LAZ	Law Association of Zambia
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MESVTEE	Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
PEO	Provincial Education Officer
PTC	Parents Teacher Committee
PCSC	Parents Community School Committee
SAFE	Student Alliance for Education
SHN	School Health and Nutrition
SMIT	Senior Management Implementation Team
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TESS	Teacher Education and Specialised Services
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VSU	Victim Support Unit
WILSA	Women in Law in Southern Africa
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Access to education is a legally and universally recognised right for all citizens. According to the Zambian Education Act No. 23 of 2011 Part IV Section 14(1) and (2), learners have a right to education. Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that education is a human right, reinforced by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Article 28. This right is further guaranteed by the Children's Code Act No. 12 of 2022, the Anti-GBV Act of 2011, the Gender Equity and Equality Act No. 22 of 2015, the Zambia National Gender Policy, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5, and other international instruments.

Despite these commitments, gender disparities persist in Zambia's education system, favouring males in literacy rates, retention, progression, completion, and education attainments (ESB, 2024). Gross enrolment rates tend to be lower for females than for males at various levels of the education ladder, especially at higher grades. Early marriages, HIV and AIDS, long distances to school, poverty, and teenage pregnancies are among the principal factors contributing to high drop-out rates for girls.

In line with the national and international policy instruments, the Ministry of Education introduced the Re-entry Policy in 1997, which mandates schools to allow girls who leave school due to pregnancy to return to school. Initial implementation was hampered by the absence of clear guidelines, a gap addressed in 2004 with the development of the first standardised guidelines. A comprehensive review conducted in 2023, supported by UNESCO, identified emerging implementation gaps and provided insights that have guided the development of these revised guidelines.

1.2 Purpose of the guidelines

These guidelines are designed to provide clear, standardised, and practical direction for implementing the Re-entry Policy across all schools in Zambia. Specifically, the guidelines aim to:

- Ensure uniform and consistent application of the Re-entry Policy at all levels of the education system;
- Provide school administrators, teachers, counsellors, parents, and guardians with practical guidance on their respective roles and responsibilities;
- Uphold the rights and dignity of pregnant learners and re-entrant girls throughout the process;
- Prevent unnecessary interruption to girls' education as a result of pregnancy;
- Promote coordination among the Ministry of Education directorates, line ministries, cooperating partners, and communities in supporting re-entry; and
- Establish a framework for monitoring, evaluation, learning, quality assurance, and performance in the implementation of the policy.

1.3 Target population

These guidelines apply primarily to school-going girls who become pregnant while enrolled in basic or secondary education, including those in government, community, grant-aided, and private schools. The guidelines also apply to:

- learners who drop out of school for reasons other than pregnancy and seek re-admission;
- children who have had no prior access to education and seek admission; and
- boys responsible for pregnancies in cases involving school learners.

Beyond learners, the guidelines target all education stakeholders involved in the implementation, including school managers, guidance and counselling teachers, classroom teachers, parents and guardians, district and provincial education officers, and the Ministry of Education Directorate staff.

1.4 Scope of the guidelines

These guidelines apply to all government, community, grant-aided, and private schools in Zambia at both basic and secondary school levels. They cover the full continuum of re-entry, from pregnancy detection and maternity leave, through re-admission and re-integration, to tracking, follow-up, and on-going support for re-entrant learners. They also address related admissions for out-of-school children and learners who dropped out for reasons other than pregnancy.

1.5 How to use these guidelines

Users are encouraged to read the entire document to gain a holistic understanding of the policy framework. However, specific Chapters may be consulted by relevant stakeholders according to their roles:

- School managers and guidance teachers should pay particular attention to Chapters 3 and 4, which outline school-level procedures for handling pregnancy cases, re-admission, and re-integration.
- Ministry of Education Directorates and Provincial and District Education Officers should consult Chapter 5 on Roles and Responsibilities and Chapter 7 on Monitoring, Evaluation and Quality Assurance.
- Cooperating partners and line Ministries should refer to Chapter 5 for their designated responsibilities.
- Parents, guardians, and community members are encouraged to review Chapters 3 and 4 and the relevant Appendix Templates.

All stakeholders should be familiar with the guiding principles set out in Chapter 2, which underpin the entire implementation framework.

CHAPTER 2: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The implementation of the Re-entry Policy is grounded in a set of guiding principles that reflect Zambia's constitutional obligations and international commitments to human rights, gender equality, and inclusive education. These principles should inform all decisions and actions taken at every level of implementation.

Right to Education	Every child has an inalienable right to education, regardless of gender, pregnancy, or parental status. Schools must uphold this right at all times and ensure that no learner is permanently denied access to education on grounds of pregnancy.
Non-Discrimination & Inclusion	No learner shall be discriminated against, stigmatised, or excluded from school on the basis of pregnancy, marital status, parenthood, or any other personal circumstance. Schools must maintain inclusive environments that welcome and support all learners.
Dignity & Respect	All interactions relating to pregnancy and re-entry must be conducted with the highest regard for the dignity, privacy, and emotional well-being of the learner. Schools must create safe spaces where learners feel respected and supported.
Confidentiality	Information regarding a learner's pregnancy, health, or personal circumstances is strictly confidential. Such information shall only be shared on a need-to-know basis and with the explicit understanding that it will be used solely to support the learner's welfare and education.
Child-Centred Approach	The best interests of the child must be the primary consideration in all decisions relating to re-entry. The needs, well-being, and education aspirations of the affected learner should guide all responses and actions taken by school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders.
Gender Responsiveness	The policy acknowledges structural gender inequalities that make girls more vulnerable to educational disruption. All implementations must be informed by a gender-responsive lens that actively works to eliminate barriers faced by girls in accessing and completing education.

Shared Responsibility	The successful implementation of the Re-entry Policy requires collective actions. Schools, families, communities, government institutions, and civil society all have a role to play in ensuring that girls are supported to return to school and complete their education.
Prevention & Support	While these guidelines primarily address responses to pregnancy, prevention is equally important. Schools must actively promote adolescent sexual and reproductive health education, positive peer norms, and safe environments that reduce the incidence of unplanned pregnancies.
Evidence & Accountability	Implementation must be guided by data and evidence. Schools and all levels of the education system must collect, analyse, and use accurate data to track progress, identify challenges, and continuously improve the quality and reach of the Re-entry Policy.
Legal Compliance	The Re-entry Policy operates within the framework of national legislation, including the Education Act No. 23 of 2011, the Children's Code Act No. 12 of 2022, the Gender Equity and Equality Act No. 22 of 2015, and the Anti-GBV Act of 2011. Implementation must comply with all relevant laws and protect learners from abuse and exploitation.

CHAPTER 3: SCHOOL-LEVEL GUIDELINES–PREGNANCY CASES

3.1 Pregnancy detection

All matters relating to suspected or confirmed pregnancy must be handled with the utmost confidentiality and sensitivity. The following procedures apply:

a. When pregnancy is suspected, whether through School Health and Nutrition (SHN) routine check-ups, learner self-disclosure, rumours, or any other reason, the matter should be referred in confidence to the School Guidance and Counselling Teacher/Unit. The Unit should provide appropriate support and, if necessary, recommend medical follow-up through an appropriate health facility.

b. Schools should not demand a written confession or conduct interrogations. All communication should be conducted through the School Guidance and Counselling Teacher and/or trained counsellors.

c. Schools should introduce suggestion or communication boxes to allow learners, teachers, and parents to share confidential information in a safe and discreet manner. These boxes must be managed with the utmost confidentiality, integrity, and professionalism to safeguard the privacy and trust of all parties involved.

3.2 Steps to be taken after pregnancy is confirmed

Once a learner's pregnancy is confirmed, schools should take the following steps:

a. Inform and counsel parents or guardians in a sensitive and constructive manner.

b. Offer learners, both boys and girls a structured counselling programme.

c. Send a letter to parents or guardians explaining the Re-entry Policy (see Appendix A).

d. Enter into a formal agreement with the parents or guardians by signing a committal document for the girl to re-enter school not later than one year after childbirth (see Appendix D).

e. Grant the learner mandatory maternity leave at the end of the seventh month of pregnancy, or earlier if medical advice dictates. Schools should remain flexible if the learner wishes to take leave earlier or later than the seventh month, subject to medical clearance. Appropriate documentation must be provided when the learner goes on leave (see Section 3.3).

3.3 Maternity leave documentation

All schools must provide the affected learner with the following documents before she goes on maternity leave:

a. A medical report confirming the pregnancy.
b. A document granting maternity leave, specifying the period. The maternity leave period should be the same for boarders and day scholars, with the expectation that the learner resumes school as soon as possible (see Appendix B).
c. A letter of re-admission to school, stating the expected date for resuming classes (see Appendix B).

3.4 Records to be maintained by schools

All schools must maintain the following documents for each affected learner:

a. A detailed school record (see Appendix E). Termly monitoring should be enhanced to ensure that records are properly kept.
b. All documents listed in Section 3.3.
c. A commitment by the person responsible for the pregnancy, and his family in the case of a schoolboy (see Appendix C).
d. A data collection sheet for monitoring teenage pregnancy (see Appendix F). Data should be consolidated at school level and submitted through the zone to the district, province, and headquarters. Review meetings should take place at district and provincial levels.

3.5 Steps to be taken if a fellow learner is responsible for the pregnancy

If a schoolboy is responsible for the pregnancy, the following steps should be taken:

a. Both the boy and his parents or guardians should sign a committal document to support the girl and the unborn child (see Appendix C).
b. The boy should be counselled about his responsibilities, together with the girl, by a trained counsellor.
c. Detailed records of the responsible boy should be maintained in the school file and are transferable in case of change of school (see Appendix E).

3.6 Steps to be taken if a teacher or outsider is responsible for the pregnancy

Adult men, including teachers, who impregnate schoolgirls must be held accountable. Schools should take the following actions:

a. Record the perpetrator's details on the school record (see Appendix E).
b. Inform the girl's parents of the identity of the unborn child's father.
c. Connect the family to relevant organisations such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Women in Law in Southern Africa (WILSA), Female Lawyers Association of Zambia (FELAZ), the National Legal Aid Clinic for Women, and the Police Victim Support Unit (VSU) for information on legal action and maintenance.
d. Perpetrators who defile girls under the age of 16 must be reported to relevant authorities for appropriate legal action.
e. In the case of an outsider, the PTA/PCSC and Guidance and Counselling Department should actively assist in tracking the perpetrator.
f. In cases involving a teacher, appropriate disciplinary action in accordance with the Teaching Profession Act must be applied. The affected learner should submit a written statement.

3.7 Re-entry after delivery

The learner should be allowed to re-enter school at least six (6) months after delivery. However, depending on family support and the learner's health and readiness, she may re-enter as soon as possible after delivery. The school should work with the family to facilitate the earliest possible return.

3.8 Transfers

a. Transfers should not be mandatory except where the learner or her parents choose to transfer.
b. The school manager and parents or guardians should assist in finding a school place for the affected learner, preferably on an exchange basis where a change of school is requested.

3.9 Number of times a learner may re-enter

A learner shall be allowed to re-enter school twice. If she is above the age of 18, the school should refer her to an alternative mode of education, such as the Adult Literacy and Continuing Education Programme (ALCE) or the Directorate of Open and Distance Education programmes.

Counselling must accompany all re-entry decisions.

Schools should promptly inform the Examination Council of Zambia (ECZ) to keep the learner's examination number active upon re-entry as a regular learner.

3.10 Tracking and follow-up

Schools have a responsibility to track all re-entry cases and follow up on learners who do not return to school after maternity leave. The following tracking mechanisms should be in place:

a. All schools should complete the data collection sheet every term as a way of monitoring early pregnancy trends (see Appendix F).

b. Detailed records on the pregnant learner and the person responsible for the pregnancy should be maintained and transferred to the next school in the event of a change of school. Records should clearly indicate the duration of leave, any subsequent pregnancies, physical contact details of the learner, and the date of re-admission.

c. Schools, through their Guidance and Counselling Departments, in collaboration with PTAs, PCSCs, and partners, should make active follow-ups on girls who do not return to school after the agreed re-entry date.

3.11 Prevention: Improving the school environment

Schools play a vital role in preventing teenage pregnancies. The following measures should be instituted in all schools:

a. Each school should have a trained counsellor for boys and girls.

b. All schools must have a Counselling Committee headed by trained counsellors, providing counselling on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR), gender relations, grief, and loss.

c. School Administration should ensure the Re-entry Policy is disseminated at assembly on a regular basis, particularly at the start of each term.

d. The Counselling Committee should sensitise PTAs, PCSCs, and the community on the Re-entry Policy.

e. Schools should sensitise all learners on the prevention and consequences of engaging in sexual relations, including pregnancy, maternity leave, and the risk of STIs, including HIV.

f. Learners should be sensitised on the complications of early parenthood, including balancing school and child-bearing responsibilities. Experts should be invited where necessary.

g. Schools should create networks with organisations such as the VSU, YWCA, Para Legal Service Providers, WILSA, FELAZ, and the National Legal Aid Clinic for Women to support legal-related issues, child maintenance, and bursary access.

h. Existing learners' clubs, such as SAFE Clubs, AIDS Action Clubs, and Child Rights Clubs, should be strengthened, and new ones established in schools where they do not exist.

CHAPTER 4: RE-ADMISSION AND BROADER SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

4.1 Re-admission of learners who drop out for non-pregnancy reasons

All schools should ensure that learners who have dropped out for reasons other than pregnancy are welcomed back without bias or discrimination. The following measures should be in place:

Learners who dropped out for reasons other than pregnancy should be re-admitted without bias.
Schools should develop measures that facilitate the re-admission of learners who dropped out for non-pregnancy reasons. These may include strengthening class register usage, waiving certain school requirements, Re-entry campaigns, and peer tracking mechanisms.

4.2 Admission of out-of-school children

Children who have had no access to education deserve the full opportunity to join and thrive in the school system. Schools should:

a. admit all children aged 18 years and below who seek admission into a government school, without reserve or bias;

b. direct children who are over the age for a particular grade to alternative modes of education;

c. ensure that all new entrants undergo screening to determine appropriate placement and effectively address their individual learning needs; and

d. provide all new entrants with comprehensive guidance and counselling services to support their smooth integration into the school system.

4.3 Re-integration support for re-entering learners

Returning to school after a period of absence can be a significant challenge for learners. Schools must actively support the re-integration of re-entrant learners by:

a. providing dedicated guidance and counselling sessions to help the learner adjust to the school environment;

b. raising awareness among peers, parents, and the community to prevent bullying, stigma, and discrimination against re-entered learners;

c. offering moral, social, and academic support to help returning learners catch up on missed work and succeed in their studies;

d. facilitating links to bursaries or financial support where the learner has additional financial needs resulting from re-entry; and

e. maintaining regular check-ins with re-entered learners to monitor their progress and address emerging challenges promptly.

CHAPTER 5: GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Beyond school-level implementation, the Ministry of Education has broader responsibilities to create an enabling environment for the Re-entry Policy. The following general guidelines apply at the system level:

5.1 Capacity building of stakeholders

The Teacher Education and Specialised Services (TESS) Directorate shall:

a. facilitate training and re-training of School Guidance and Counselling teachers; and
b. produce or facilitate the production of counselling information materials for the school-level Counselling Committees, ensuring that consistent messages are delivered to boys and girls across all schools.

5.2 Inter-Ministerial collaboration

The Ministry of Education shall work in collaboration with key government institutions, including the Cabinet Office Gender Division, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services, the Ministry of Home Affairs and Internal Security, the Ministry of Health, and other key partners to ensure that pregnant girls receive necessary support services during and after pregnancy.

5.3 Policy awareness and legislation

In order to standardise implementation of the Re-entry Policy and ensure consistency in the re-admission of learners, the Ministry of Education shall promote awareness and understanding of the following key policies and legislation:

- Life Skills and Health Education curriculum of 2023
- Re-entry Policy (1997 and 2026 revision)
- Education for All Policy (Free Education) of 2021
- National Education Policy of 2025
- National Gender Policy of 2023
- Education Act No. 23 of 2011
- Anti-Gender Based Violence Act No. 1 of 2011
- Children's Code Act No. 12 of 2022
- Gender Equity and Equality Act No. 22 of 2015
- The Teaching Profession Act, 2013

CHAPTER 6: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Ministry of Education Directorates

6.1.1 Directorate of Planning and Information

The Directorate of Planning and Information, in collaboration with the Directorate of Teacher Education, will facilitate training and sensitisation on the Re-entry Policy, as well as on related policies, legislation, and supporting interventions. The Directorate will collaborate with key departments and institutions to review Re-entry Policy implementation, document best practices from schools, and share insights through Policy Briefs to guide decision-making and continuous improvement. Specifically, the Directorate will be responsible for:

a. policy orientation, interpretation, and implementation guidance;
b. policy dissemination across all levels;
c. distribution of Re-entry Policy Guidelines;
d. budget support and resource mobilisation;
e. data management and reporting; and
f. coordinating monitoring and evaluation of the policy.

6.1.2 Directorate of Curriculum Development

The Directorate of Curriculum Development will, in collaboration with other stakeholders, review the curriculum for schools and Colleges of Education to integrate Gender Responsive Pedagogies (GRP) and Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR) content, ensuring that learners and teachers are well-equipped to support the goals of the Re-entry Policy.

6.1.3 Directorate of Standards, Evaluation and Assessment

The Directorate of Standards, Evaluation and Assessment will be responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the policy through regular monitoring. Data on the following areas will be collected during routine monitoring visits:

a. Pregnancy cases detected and confirmed.
b. Re-entries and re-admissions.
c. Follow-up on pregnancy cases.
d. Tracking and follow-up of re-entry transfers.
e. Compliance with policy enforcement at school level.

6.1.4 Directorate of Teacher Education and Specialised Services

The Directorate of Teacher Education and Specialised Services shall facilitate training in gender-responsive education and ensure that teachers understand their roles and responsibilities in child safeguarding. The Directorate shall ensure that teachers are well-informed about ethical standards and the legal guidelines governing their conduct in relation to learners, as outlined in the Teaching Profession Act and other relevant legislation.

Through the School Guidance and Counselling Unit, the Directorate will:

a. provide Guidance and Counselling Services to learners and schools;
b. facilitate policy interpretation for school-level staff;

c. provide capacity building for Guidance and Counselling teachers;
d. engage stakeholders in support of the policy;
e. implement the Child Safeguarding Guidelines; and
f. ensure that record keeping at school level covers pregnancies, dropouts, child marriages, and re-entries.

6.1.5 Directorate of Human Resources and Administration

The Directorate of Human Resources and Administration will oversee personnel matters related to the implementation of the Re-entry Policy. It will ensure that teachers uphold gender-responsive and child-friendly practices, and that disciplinary actions are taken where ethical or legal standards are breached. The Directorate will support enforcement of professional conduct in line with the Teaching Profession Act and will coordinate with other Directorates to promote staff welfare and a safe, inclusive learning environment.

6.1.6 Directorate of Primary Education and Directorate of Secondary Education

Both Directorates will coordinate implementation of the Re-entry Policy at their respective school levels, facilitate the dissemination and application of policy guidelines, and monitor and evaluate how the Re-entry Policy is being implemented. They will collaborate with relevant Directorates and stakeholders to ensure clear interpretation and effective implementation across the primary and secondary education sub-sectors.

6.1.7 Directorate of Open and Distance Education

The Directorate of Open and Distance Education will support implementation of the Re-entry Policy by offering Alternative Modes of Education Provision, particularly for learners unable to access regular schooling. The Directorate will facilitate the re-integration of out-of-school children into the formal education system and ensure effective implementation of policy guidelines.

6.1.8 Directorate of School Health and Nutrition

The Directorate of School Health and Nutrition will work in close collaboration with the School Guidance and Counselling Unit to support learners who are suspected or confirmed to be pregnant. It will assist in connecting learners to necessary support services and in facilitating their access to maternity leave, in line with the Re-entry Policy.

6.2 Schools

Schools play the primary role in the actual implementation of the Re-entry Policy as the first point of contact with learners and their families. Specifically, schools should:

a. explain the Re-entry Policy clearly to learners, parents, and guardians to promote understanding and support;
b. engage parents or guardians in meaningful dialogue and provide counselling where necessary;
c. guide and counsel learners who have re-entered school, helping them reintegrate into the school environment;

d. facilitate and grant maternity leave in accordance with policy provisions;
e. maintain accurate and confidential records of all re-entry cases and related follow-up actions;
f. raise awareness among learners, parents, and the community to prevent bullying, stigma, and discrimination against re-entered learners;
g. provide moral, social, and academic support to returning learners to help them stay in school and succeed;
h. collaborate with relevant authorities and stakeholders to mobilise additional support services when needed; and
i. provide age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education to equip learners with knowledge and help prevent unplanned pregnancies.

6.3 Line Ministries and Government Institutions

Line Ministries and Government Institutions play an important role not only in preventing unplanned pregnancies but also in providing supportive services to learners who become pregnant. They will ensure that learners have access to essential services such as healthcare, legal assistance, counselling, and other forms of support that help them overcome challenges and continue their education with confidence and dignity.

6.4 Cooperating Partners

Cooperating Partners support the implementation of the Re-entry Policy in the following ways:

a. Support the dissemination, sensitisation, and implementation of the Re-entry Policy guidelines.
b. Provide direct and indirect support to facilitate re-entry of learners.
c. Provide technical support and capacity building for all stakeholders on school re-entry guidelines.
d. Support monitoring, evaluation, learning, and sharing of best practices for evidence-based interventions.
e. Mobilise resources for supporting implementation of re-entry.
f. Advocate for the implementation of the Re-entry Policy guidelines.
g. Conduct research on the implementation of the Re-entry Policy to provide evidence-based advocacy and address gaps.

6.5 Parents and guardians

Parents and guardians are critical partners in the implementation of the Re-entry Policy. Their responsibilities include:

a. cooperating fully with the school and signing committal documents that commit them to supporting their daughter's return to school;
b. ensuring that the affected learner returns to school within the agreed time frame;
c. providing emotional, material, and childcare support to enable the learner to attend school;
d. participating in counselling sessions offered by the school; and
e. reporting any challenges or barriers preventing the learner from returning to school to the school management promptly.

CHAPTER 7: MONITORING, EVALUATION, LEARNING, QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PERFORMANCE

7.1 Overview

Effective monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) are essential to ensure that the Re-entry Policy achieves its intended outcomes. A strong MEL system enables the Ministry of Education and its partners to track progress, identify implementation gaps, share lessons learned, and make evidence-based decisions that continuously improve the quality and reach of the policy. Quality assurance mechanisms complement MEL by ensuring that all stakeholders implement the policy consistently, ethically, and in line with established standards.

7.2 Key Performance indicators

The following indicators shall be used to measure the performance of the Re-entry Policy at school, district, provincial, and national levels:

a. Number and percentage of pregnant learners identified and supported in each school per term.
b. Number and percentage of learners granted maternity leave within the prescribed time-frame.
c. Number and percentage of learners who re-enter school within one year of delivery.
d. Number of learners who complete a full academic year after re-entry.
e. Number and percentage of learners who drop out of school due to pregnancy and do not return.
f. Number of pregnancy cases involving teachers or school personnel, and outcome of disciplinary processes.
g. Number of schools with functioning Counselling Committees and trained guidance teachers.
h. Percentage of schools with up-to-date and accurate re-entry records and data collection sheets.
i. Number of stakeholder sensitisation sessions conducted per year at school, zone, district, and provincial levels.
j. Number of schools reporting compliance with policy guidelines during monitoring visits.

7.3 Data collection and reporting

Accurate and regular data collection is fundamental to evidence-based implementation. Schools must collect and report data using the standardised data collection sheets provided in the appendices. The following reporting flow is prescribed:

a. Complete the data collection sheet (Appendix F) every term and at the end of each academic year, and submit to the zonal head school.
b. The Zonal Head School consolidates data from all schools in the zone and submits to the District Education Board Secretary (DEBS) office.
c. The DEBS office consolidates district-level data and submits to the Provincial Education Officer (PEO).
d. The PEO consolidates provincial data and submits to Ministry of Education Headquarters (Directorate of Planning and Information).
e. The Directorate of Planning and Information analyses national data, prepares annual reports, and disseminates findings through Policy Briefs and review meetings.
f. Review meetings to discuss data findings and implementation challenges should take place at district level termly and at provincial level annually.

7.4 Monitoring and oversight

Monitoring responsibilities are distributed across all levels of the education system:

7.4.1 School level

School managers and Guidance and Counselling teachers are responsible for day-to-day monitoring of re-entry cases, accurate record keeping, and ensuring that all required processes and documentation are in place. School managers must review re-entry records termly and report any challenges to the zone.

7.4.2 Zone level

Zonal head school coordinators are responsible for consolidating data from schools and conducting periodic school visits to verify compliance with policy guidelines and the quality of record keeping.

7.4.3 District level

District Education Board Secretaries (DEBS) are responsible for:

a. consolidating and reviewing data submitted by zones;
b. conducting quarterly monitoring visits to schools to verify compliance with policy guidelines;
c. convening termly district review meetings to discuss implementation challenges and successes;
d. providing on-the-spot guidance and corrective action where gaps are identified; and
e. submitting quarterly reports to the Provincial Education Officer.

7.4.4 Provincial level

Provincial Education Officers (PEOs) are responsible for:

a. consolidating and reviewing data submitted by districts;
b. conducting annual provincial monitoring visits and review meetings;
c. ensuring that districts receive adequate technical support and guidance; and
d. submitting annual provincial reports to Ministry of Education Headquarters.

7.4.5 National level

The Directorate of Standards, Evaluation and Assessment, in collaboration with the Directorate of Planning and Information, is responsible for:

a. national-level monitoring and compliance checks during routine school inspection visits;
b. compilation and analysis of national-level data;
c. preparation of national annual reports on Re-entry Policy implementation;
d. coordination of national review meetings with all stakeholders; and
e. development and revision of monitoring tools and data collection instruments.

7.5 Evaluation

The Ministry of Education shall conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Re-entry Policy every five years, or more frequently if evidence suggests a need for earlier review. Evaluations will:

a. assess the extent to which the policy is achieving its intended outcomes;
b. identify systemic barriers to effective implementation;
c. generate evidence to inform revisions of the policy and guidelines; and
d. assess the equity dimensions of implementation, including the experience of learners with disabilities, learners from marginalised communities, and learners in remote areas.

Evaluations should draw on both quantitative data (from the monitoring system) and qualitative data (from focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and case studies) to generate a comprehensive understanding of policy performance.

7.6 Learning and knowledge management

The Re-entry Policy must be underpinned by a culture of continuous learning and improvement. To this end:

a. the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Directorate of Standards, Evaluation and Assessment, will document and disseminate best practices and lessons learned from schools and districts that have demonstrated outstanding implementation of the Re-entry Policy;
b. case studies, success stories, and policy briefs will be developed and shared through district review meetings, provincial workshops, and national conferences;
c. cooperating partners are encouraged to conduct and share research on the effectiveness of re-entry interventions, which will inform evidence-based advocacy and policy improvement; and
d. schools and districts are encouraged to participate in peer learning exchanges to share experiences and strategies for improving Re-entry Policy implementation.

7.7 Quality assurance

Quality assurance measures are in place to ensure that the Re-entry Policy is implemented consistently, ethically, and to the required standard. The following quality assurance mechanisms apply:

a. All schools must use the standardised templates and forms provided in the appendices to this document. Deviation from standardised forms should be reported and justified to the DEBS office.
b. The Directorate of Teacher Education and Specialised Services shall conduct regular training and refresher workshops for guidance and counselling teachers to maintain the quality and consistency of support offered to learners.
c. The Directorate of Standards, Evaluation and Assessment shall include compliance with Re-entry Policy guidelines as a specific area of assessment during routine school inspection visits.
d. Schools that fail to comply with Re-entry Policy guidelines will be issued with improvement notices by the DEBS or PEO office, and corrective action will be monitored and reported.
e. The confidentiality and dignity standards set out in these guidelines shall be enforced at all levels. Any breach of confidentiality or discriminatory treatment of a learner must be reported and addressed through the appropriate disciplinary channels.

7.8 Performance management

School managers and education officials at all levels are accountable for the effective implementation of the Re-entry Policy within their areas of responsibility. Performance in implementing the Re-entry Policy shall be:

a. included as a specific element in the performance appraisal of school managers and relevant Ministry officials;
b. reported on in the annual performance reports of schools, districts, and provinces:
c. recognised and rewarded where exemplary implementation is demonstrated, through the Ministry of Education's existing recognition mechanisms; and
d. addressed through targeted capacity building or performance improvement processes where implementation gaps are identified.

CHAPTER 8: APPENDICES

The following appendices provide standardised templates, forms, and data collection instruments to support uniform implementation of the Re-entry Policy across all schools in Zambia.

Appendix	Description
Appendix A	Letter to Parents/Guardians of Pregnant Girls
Appendix B (i)	Letter of Maternity Leave and Re-admission
Appendix B (ii)	Form for Maternity Leave and Re-admission
Appendix C	Commitment by Person Responsible for Pregnancy
Appendix D	Commitment by Parents/Guardians of Pregnant Girl
Appendix E	Detailed School Record
Appendix F	Data Collection Sheet on Teenage Pregnancies (School Level)
Appendix G	Data Collection Sheet on Teenage Pregnancies (District/Provincial/National Level)

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF PREGNANT GIRLS

Note to Schools: Schools may customise this letter to include additional information relevant to sensitising parents/guardians of pregnant girls regarding the Re-entry Policy.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

RE: RE-ENTRY POLICY FOR PREGNANT GIRLS

This is a follow-up to our earlier communication regarding the current situation of your child, [Name of Child]_____ who is currently expecting a baby.

This letter serves to explain the Government Policy on schoolgirl pregnancy. Through the Re-entry Policy Circular of 1997, as revised in 2026, the Government prohibits the expulsion of pregnant girls from school. This policy requires girls to return to school not later than one year after delivery of the child.

The purpose of this letter is therefore to inform you that [Name of Child] _____ will be required to resume school by [Date of Expected Re-entry] _____ after she has given birth.

Kindly sign the attached commitment form and return it to the school within two weeks. Failure to comply with the requirements of the Re-entry Policy may result in a delay to the completion of the re-entry process.

Yours sincerely,

_____

School Manager / Head Teacher

Date: _____

School Stamp:

APPENDIX B (i)

LETTER OF MATERNITY LEAVE AND RE-ADMISSION

Dear _____,

This serves to inform you that the school has granted you maternity leave from _____ to _____.

You will be required to report for classes on _____ at 07:30 hours.

In case you are unable to report to school on this date, you are required to inform the school authorities in good time so that you may be advised accordingly.

Yours sincerely,

_____

Signature

Name of Head of School: _____

Date Stamp:

APPENDIX B (ii)

FORM FOR MATERNITY LEAVE AND RE-ADMISSION

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA – MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Name of Pupil: _____

Grade: _____

SECTION A: MATERNITY LEAVE

The school has granted maternity leave for the following period:

From: _____ To: _____

SECTION B: RE-ADMISSION TO SCHOOL

You will be required to report for classes after delivery as follows:

Date: _____

Time: _____

Grade: _____

Re-admitting School: _____

Note: Disciplinary action will be taken against learners who fail to report on the stated date without prior notification.

Name of Head of School: _____

Signature: _____

Date Stamp:

APPENDIX C

COMMITMENT BY PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR PREGNANCY

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA – MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

I/We ("we" in the case of a schoolboy and his parents/guardians)

_____

do hereby promise to support the baby and mother (name of girl)

_____

until she completes school, both financially and materially. We also promise to assist the girl's parents in ensuring that (insert name of girl) _____ returns to school after delivery and by the date stated in the letter of re-admission.

Name of person responsible for the pregnancy: _____

Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of parent/guardian (Father): _____

NRC No.: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of parent/guardian (Mother): _____

NRC No.: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Distribution: Five (5) copies: 1 copy to learner's parents/guardians • 1 copy to learner • 1 copy to school file • 1 copy to School Guidance and Counselling File • 1 copy to the responsible person.

APPENDIX D

COMMITMENT BY PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF PREGNANT GIRL

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA – MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

I/We, the parents/guardians of _____, do hereby promise to ensure that she returns to school after delivery and by the date stated in the letter of re-admission.

Name of Mother/Guardian: _____

NRC No.: _____

Residential Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Contact Details: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name of Father/Guardian: _____

NRC No.: _____

Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Contact Details: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____ _____

Signature: _____

NRC: _____

Date: _____

School Date Stamp:

Distribution: Four (4) copies: 1 copy to learner's parents/guardians • 1 copy to learner • 1 copy to school file • 1 copy to School Guidance and Counselling File.

APPENDIX E

DETAILED SCHOOL RECORD

REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA – MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

A. DETAILS OF SCHOOL

Name of School: _____ District: _____

Province: _____ Address: _____

Tel/Email: _____

Type of School: GRZ / Community / Private / Grant-Aided: _____

Date: _____ Term: _____

B. BIO-DATA

Part (i) – Details of Learner

Name of Learner: _____ Grade: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Name of Parents/Guardian: _____

Address/Contact: _____

Part (ii) – Pregnancy Details

Date pregnancy detected/confirmed: _____

Estimated delivery date: _____

Date of maternity leave: From _____ To _____

Agreed date of re-entry: _____

Actual date of re-entry: _____

Number of re-entries to date (1st / 2nd): _____

Part (iii) – Details of Person Responsible

Name: _____

Age: _____ Occupation/Grade (if schoolboy): _____

School attended (if schoolboy): _____

Contact/Address: _____

Legal/Disciplinary action taken (if applicable): _____

C. FOLLOW-UP RECORD

Counselling sessions provided: _____

Academic support provided: _____

Referrals made (health, legal, other): _____

Current status of learner (enrolled / transferred / dropped out): _____

Remarks: _____

APPENDIX F

DATA COLLECTION SHEET ON TEENAGE PREGNANCIES

(TO BE COMPLETED TERMLY AND ANNUALLY AT SCHOOL LEVEL)

Name of School: _____

Zone: _____

District: _____

Province: _____

Type of School: _____ Term: _____ Year: _____

Name of Reporting Officer: _____

Designation: _____

Date Completed: _____

SCHOOL GIRL PREGNANCY RATES

Category	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	AMEP	Total
Girls' enrolment														
No. of girls pregnant														
No. of girls dropping out due to pregnancy														
No. of girls impregnated by teachers or school personnel														
No. of girls impregnated by school boys														
No. of girls impregnated by boys/men outside school														
No. of girls impregnated who are on bursary														
No. of girls impregnated who are LSEND														
No. of girls re-entering after pregnancy														

i. Factors hindering the effective implementation of the Re-entry Policy:

_____

_____

ii. Possible solutions / recommendations:

_____

_____

iii. Factors contributing to the successful implementation of the Re-entry Policy:

_____

_____

Completed by: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX G

DATA COLLECTION SHEET ON TEENAGE PREGNANCIES

(TO BE COLLECTED TERMLY AND ANNUALLY AT NATIONAL, PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT LEVELS)

Level of Reporting: ☐ District ☐ Provincial ☐ National

Province (if applicable): _____

District (if applicable): _____

Reporting Year: _____

Date Completed: _____

SCHOOL GIRL PREGNANCY RATES

Category	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5	G6	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	AMEP	Total
Girls' enrolment														
No. of girls pregnant														
No. of girls dropping out due to pregnancy														
No. of girls impregnated by teachers or school personnel														
No. of girls impregnated by school boys														
No. of girls impregnated by boys/men outside school														
No. of girls impregnated who are on bursary														
No. of girls impregnated who are LSEND														
No. of girls re-entering after pregnancy														

i. Factors hindering the effective implementation of the Re-entry Policy:

_____

_____

ii. Possible solutions / recommendations:

_____

_____

iii. Factors contributing to the successful implementation of the Re-entry Policy:

_____

_____

Completed by: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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