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Attention News Editors: Please handle Fact Sheet/News Release Below

Factsheet on Proposed Closure of Small Schools

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education in keeping with the procedures below has been monitoring small schools over the last five years. This procedure was circulated to all schools and letters were sent to schools that are under enrolment of 100 students. Meetings have been held with all stakeholders including the churches, Members of Parliament, Board Chairmen and community members to sensitize them regarding the process as well as plans where it became necessary.

The Ministry has now identified 24 schools that are being processed for closure for 2015/2016 school year. The process for final decision is still on-going, however, and is scheduled for conclusion by the end of the current school year.

FACTORS AFFECTING VIABILITY OF SCHOOLS

Over the years, the constant shift in demography has resulted in the population in some schools being even more reduced and other schools with larger populations also started to experience significant reduction in their enrolments, resulting in under-utilisation. The phenomenon of volatile communities in urban centres has also contributed to under-utilisation and the number of schools with small population in the country. *Underutilized schools are those schools where the enrolment is less than the capacity. However, there are different levels of underutilization.*

Population shifts and displacement of original communities are not the only factors that contribute to underutilization and the latter is not necessarily synonymous with under-performance. Factors such as perception of school quality including leadership can also influence the movement of the school's population.

Data from the Statistics Unit of the MOE indicates that 184 public schools offering primary level education, (primary, all age schools and primary and junior high schools), are underutilized with enrolment of 100 or less. (See table 1). Secondary schools for the most part, tend to operate above capacity except for a few schools which are located in volatile communities in the KMA.

Table 1 Enrolment Rates by Region

Region	Number of Schools with enrolments 60 and below	Number of schools with enrolments of 61 to 100	Number of Schools with Enrolments of 100 or less
1	15	10	25
2	23	25	48
3	10	18	28
4	12	19	31
5	13	10	23
6	10	19	29
Total	83	101	184

Small schools tend to be more costly to administer as there are basic costs that must be met regardless of the population and the schools do not benefit from economies of scale. A study

conducted by the Ministry on small schools indicated that the per pupil expenditure for these schools was higher than the national per capita for primary and all age schools and in some cases, the national per capita for secondary schools.

Primary level schools with small population often operate a multi-grade system whereby one teacher has instructional responsibility for children in two or more grades. Performance in these schools tends to be poor, usually below the national average. For example, of the 176 primary level schools with enrolments of 100 or less, some 46 per cent fell below the national average in the Grade Four Literacy Test and 52 per cent fell below the average in the Grade Four Numeracy Test. At the same time, 95 per cent of the schools with enrolments of 60 and less performed below the national average in the Numeracy test.

The intent to close a school could be as a result of :

- **Underutilisation**- The school's enrolment is significantly less than its capacity
- **Physical conditions of the facilities** - the conditions of the buildings are safety and health hazards. Repairing the plant would not be economical/cost efficient.
- **Alternative use of school facilities** - there may be new opportunities, for various reasons, to provide better buildings and facilities, and improve the quality of educational provision,
- **Change in educational focus** - in order to use its facilities for other programmatic/educational purposes, for support services, to open a new school, or to expand an existing school implementing new curriculum and/or instructional programs

PROCEDURE FOR CLOSURE

The Education Act 1965 states that *“where the Minister is satisfied that it is expedient that any public educational institution should be transferred to a new site either because it is not reasonably personal practicable to make to the existing premises of the institution the alterations necessary for securing that they should conform to the prescribed standards or in consequence of any movement of population or of any action taken or proposed to be taken under the Housing Act or the Town and Country Planning Act, the Minister may by order authorize a transfer of the institution to the new site”* .

Implicit in this Act is that the Minister of Education has the power to authorize the closure of a school while at the same time ensuring reallocation to accommodate the said school's population in a supportive educational atmosphere where students are provided with high quality academic opportunities. However, when the closure of any school is contemplated, the process should be guided by the following procedure:

1. Consultations with stakeholders

- The Regional Entity will undertake consultations with the school Community:
 - School Board Administration
 - PTA and wider school community
 - JTA and other union representatives
 - Member of Parliament
 - Church organisation

- Results of the consultations will be provided in the form of a draft report to the School Board and Administration, Member of Parliament and other community representatives for validation.
- Validated report submitted to the MOE executive for discussion at the relevant meeting.
- The MOE will take the decision regarding the closure of the school.

2. Notice for School Closure

- The MOE shall provide advanced notice to the public regarding the closure of the school. The period of the notice will be dependent on the circumstances surrounding the closure.
- Notice of the proposal to close the school shall include a written statement of the rationale.
- Prior to the public disclosure of the proposal to close a school, the REE shall provide notice to the principal, school board, parents and staff.

3. Reallocation of Students and Staff

- In the case of a redistribution of students, receiving school(s) should be engaged in the transitioning process. Students should be accommodated as close as possible to their communities to avoid having to travel long distances.
- Permanent staff at the school to be closed shall be facilitated for employment through the relevant authorities and unions.
- The Regional Education Entity shall ensure that all records relevant to the school, students and personnel are properly stored and/or transferred to their new institution(s).