25SCHOOLS
FREE LEARNING NOTES FOR ZAMBIA

FORM 1

Geography

Settlements: Types, Hierarchy and Patterns

Lesson notes for learners · Competence-Based Curriculum

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Every person lives somewhere, and the place where people live is called a settlement. Settlements range from a single family home in the countryside to a large city, and the houses in them are arranged in different ways. In this note you will learn the main types of settlements, how they are ordered from the smallest to the largest, and the three patterns in which houses are arranged.

AFTER THESE NOTES YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO

- Define a settlement and tell the difference between rural and urban settlements
- Classify settlements as homestead, hamlet, village, town or city
- Describe other ways of classifying settlements, such as by function and location
- Identify and describe dispersed, nucleated and linear settlement patterns

KEY WORDS

Settlement	A permanent or temporary place where people live, such as a village, town or city.
Rural settlement	A settlement in the countryside with few people, mainly farming, fishing or forestry and limited infrastructure.
Urban settlement	A settlement with many people close together, many buildings and well developed roads and services.
Settlement hierarchy	The ordering of settlements by size, from homestead up to city.
Settlement pattern	The way houses and buildings are arranged in an area.
Infrastructure	Basic facilities such as roads and services that a settlement uses.

1 What a settlement is: rural and urban

A settlement is a permanent or temporary place where people live. A village, a town and a city are all settlements. Settlements have changed over time, from simple traditional villages to large urban centres, as industry and trade have grown. Studying them shows how people organise space and resources.

Settlements are usually grouped as rural or urban. A rural settlement has few people living in a large area, land used for agriculture and limited infrastructure. It is usually in the countryside, far from cities and towns. The main work in rural settlements is primary work such as farming, fishing and forestry.

An urban settlement has many people living close together, many buildings and well developed infrastructure and services such as roads. Cities, towns and large urban areas with closely packed houses are urban settlements. Their economies are driven mainly by services.

Think of the area around your school. A farming village with scattered fields and a footpath to the river is rural. A town with many buildings and well developed roads and services is urban.

2 The hierarchy of settlements

Settlements can be ordered by size from the smallest to the largest. This ordering is called the settlement hierarchy. A homestead is a single household or family settlement. A hamlet is a small settlement, usually rural, with a few houses, such as small farm houses for workers. A village is a rural settlement that is larger than a hamlet but smaller than a town, with hundreds of people. A town is large, with thousands of people. A city is larger still, with tens of thousands or even millions of people.

Size is only one way of classifying settlements. They can also be grouped by what the people do there. A residential settlement is for living, an agricultural settlement is for farming, an industrial settlement is for making and processing goods, a commercial settlement is for trade, and a tourist settlement is for tourism.

Location is another way. A coastal settlement is near the ocean and an inland settlement is away from the coast. A settlement may also be called rural if it is in the countryside and urban if it is in a city. Settlements can further be grouped by history and architecture, which looks at their historical importance and their traditions and culture.



Figure 1. The settlement hierarchy from smallest to largest

3 Patterns of settlements

A settlement pattern is the way in which houses and other buildings are arranged in an area, in relation to each other and to the surroundings. There are three main patterns: dispersed or isolated, nucleated or clustered, and linear or ribbon.

In a dispersed or isolated pattern, individual buildings or households stand apart from each other, with one or a few family homes scattered over a wide area. This is typical of rural settlements, where the main work is raising livestock and growing crops.

In a nucleated or clustered pattern, the houses are close together. They often gather around something useful, such as a road junction or a source of water. This is typical of urban settlements.

In a linear or ribbon pattern, the houses are arranged in a line, usually along a feature such as a road, a river or a stream, or a railway. In Zambia, examples are found in Luapula Province along roads and rivers, in Western Province along the Zambezi River and in the Kafue Flats along the Kafue River.

Pattern	How houses are arranged	Where it is typical
Dispersed or isolated	Houses stand far apart	Rural areas with livestock and crop growing
Nucleated or clustered	Houses close together around a junction or water source	Urban areas
Linear or ribbon	Houses in a line along a road, river or railway	Luapula, Western Province and the Kafue Flats

Figure 2. The three settlement patterns

4 Studying settlements in your area

Geographers study settlements by looking at them. Learners can use maps, atlases, photographs and charts to identify types of settlements. They can make sketch maps, and they can visit nearby areas in groups to find out which types of settlements are found there.

After a visit, groups write reports on what they found. They can also draw the patterns on charts or build models, which helps them see the difference between a dispersed, a nucleated and a linear settlement. Careful study helps people to plan and to keep settlements in good order.

TRY THIS

Draw a simple sketch map of the area around your school or home. Mark where you find a homestead, a hamlet or village, and, if there is one, a town. Then draw the pattern that the houses make in your area and say whether it is dispersed, nucleated or linear, giving one reason for your answer.

REMEMBER

- A settlement is a permanent or temporary place where people live, and settlements are rural or urban.
- Rural settlements have few people, farming land and limited infrastructure, while urban settlements have many people, dense buildings and well developed services.
- The settlement hierarchy runs from homestead to hamlet, village, town and city, by size.
- Settlements can also be classified by function, location, and history and architecture.
- The three patterns are dispersed or isolated, nucleated or clustered, and linear or ribbon.

? Check yourself

1. A family lives in a single house surrounded by their maize fields, far from any other home. (a) What type of settlement in the hierarchy is this? (b) Is it rural or urban? (c) Give one reason for your answer in (b).
2. A district has a trading centre with thousands of people, shops, a market and tarred roads, and a nearby group of about twenty houses for farm workers. (a) Classify the trading centre in the hierarchy. (b) Classify the group of farm houses. (c) Say whether the trading centre is mainly a commercial o
3. Houses in a village in Western Province are built in a line close to the bank of the Zambezi River. (a) Name the settlement pattern. (b) Give one reason why a pattern like this could form. (c) Name one other feature along which houses may line up.
4. A town has grown around a road junction and a borehole, and houses are packed close together. (a) Name the pattern. (b) Say why the houses gathered there. (c) Say whether this pattern is more typical of rural or urban areas.
5. A learner says that a village and a hamlet are the same thing, because both are in the countryside. (a) State one difference in size between them. (b) Name the settlement larger than both. (c) Give one way of classifying settlements other than by size.
6. A class goes on a field visit to study settlements near the school and is asked to write a report. (a) Name two things the learners can use to identify settlement types. (b) Name two things they should record in the report. (c) Say why the report is useful.

ANSWERS

1. (a) A homestead. (b) Rural. (c) It is in the countryside, with few people and farming land use.
2. (a) A town. (b) A hamlet. (c) Commercial, because the main activity is trade.
3. (a) Linear or ribbon. (b) People settle close to the river, which is a useful feature. (c) A road, a stream or a railway.
4. (a) Nucleated or clustered. (b) They gathered around useful features such as a road junction and a water source. (c) Urban areas.
5. (a) A hamlet is smaller, with a few houses, while a village has hundreds of people. (b) A town. (c) By function, location, or history and architecture.
6. (a) Maps, atlases, photographs or charts. (b) The types of settlements found and the pattern of the houses. (c) It helps people understand and plan settlements.

Written by 25Schools to follow the Form 1 Geography syllabus of the Zambian competence-based curriculum. Free for learners to read, download and share. More notes and quizzes at 25schools.com.