

“Transforming Schools Through the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Namibia: A case Study at Andreas Haingura Kandjimi Primary School”

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Batch 3

Summary of the project

Since the world summit for children, many goals and targets relevant to children’s rights have been endorsed by major United Nations summits and conferences. The commitment to achieve these goals and targets cannot be left only in the hands of political leaders. Hence, the need for all stakeholders, particularly in the education sector, to start doing something if we are to achieve the 2015 International Millennium Development Goals and targets. The program of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) seeks to address fundamental questions about expectations and demands with regard to various actors in the school culture, particularly the principals, teachers, parents and learners.

The project explored mechanisms on how the CRC could be implemented on a practical basis in school. It also seeks to address changes in the attitude and strategies of teachers and learners. A training session was conducted with the school community about different aspects of the CRC and how the school could implement them in its daily program and activities. An action plan was agreed upon with the staff and learners. The action plan envisaged the setting up of a Learners’ Representative Council and classroom councils per each project objective. A team consisting of teachers and learners was set up to help the monitoring of the implementation of the action plan. This team also serves as a regular link between the agents and the school regarding the continuous implementation of this project.

Impact on the personal and professional levels

The CRC training programme combined with our initial project was an eye opener and we learned a lot. We gained more knowledge and practical experience in the way the CRC could be integrated in every aspect of school life. Furthermore, we understood the concept of leadership and the different factors affecting the leader’s space of action. We learned how to create a space of action and group dynamics from developmental perspectives. The program also enhanced our understanding on how to live and cope with different cultural dynamics, since we had the opportunity to interact with other team members from different countries located in Africa and Asia.

We gained more self-confidence and the skills to explain issues related to the CRC to our colleagues, teachers, and other principals in schools or cluster

meetings. As a matter of fact, we tend to use the new information and experience gained during the training sessions of our teachers. During those sessions, we present the CRC ideas to our teachers. We share with them the possible methods of integration of the CRC in their classroom teaching. We are always pleased to hear teachers reporting that their learners have started taking responsibility for their own learning. On June 16th 2007, one of our team members, Fillemon Mungongi, presented at a local teachers college a paper titled: “The situation of children. Which way for Namibia?” This paper was received favourably and has pushed teachers to start thinking about the rights of Namibian children.

Impact on the organizational level

The implementation of our project at the target school was a real privilege since it was well received. The school managers, teachers, learners and parents were trained with regards to the existing literature on the CRC. The workshop was a great learning experience and helped them as a tool to get their learners/children to take responsibility for their own learning. All stakeholders took it very seriously and realized that education is indeed a constitutional right given at birth to all children. Our follow up visits confirmed that the spirit of the CRC is being practiced as teachers and parents recognize and respect children’s rights. They regularly conduct meetings at the learners’ representative council and classroom councils, during those meetings; they express their opinions on matters affecting them at school.

The school is also proud of the project because it has become the only school in the Kavango region that offers a special education curriculum accommodating learners with disabilities or impairments. The neighbouring schools have taken into account the project that we are conducting and at Andreas Haingura Kandjuini Primary School they have expressed their eagerness to know about what the CRC entails.

Impact on the country level

Fillemon Mungongi and Venolia Hamutenya are members of the national curriculum working groups for the secondary school and junior primary school respectively. They are also members of the curriculum development panel at the National Institute for Educational Development, (NIED) as education officers (‘subject advisors’) in their respective areas of expertise.

When all subjects were reviewed in the Namibian educational curriculum system, both of them encouraged the incorporation of CRC elements in the education taught between the first and the tenth grade. We are happy to report that issues such as human rights, democracy, environmental education and HIV/AIDS are now cross – cutting issues in all subjects in Namibia.