

**Project Title: Implementation Of Article 12 Of The United Nations  
Convention On The Rights Of The Child in Schools  
(A Pilot Project at Kabale Basic School - Mpika)**



**Country: Zambia**

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Gratitude is extended to our fellow participants, who showed great interest in our project and gave us suggestions on how to improve it.

In addition, we thank the Mpika District Education Board for granting us permission to carry out the project in the district.

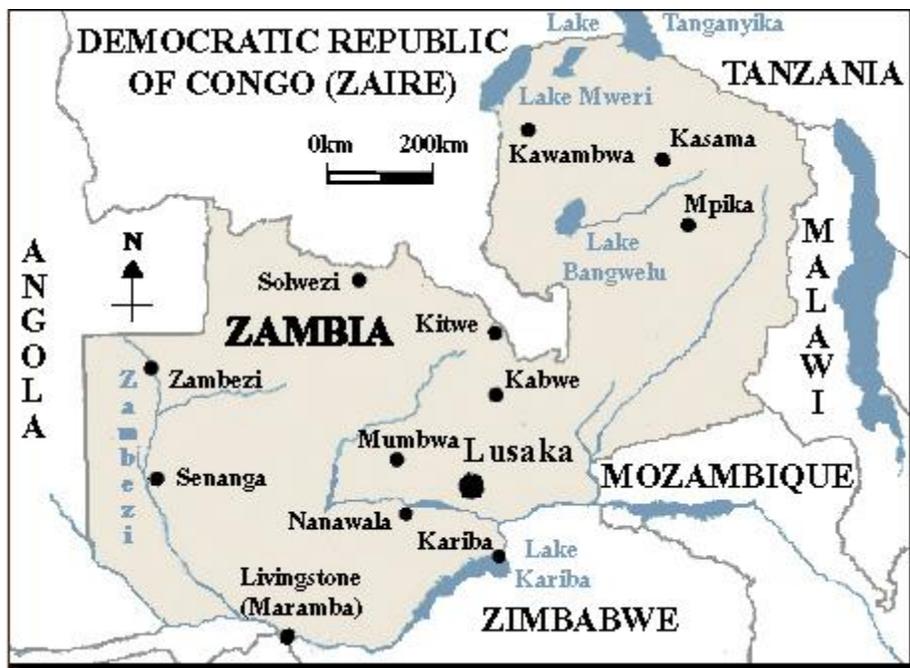
We also thank the management, staff and children of Kabale Basic School for their keen interest and lively participation in the project.

# 1. CONTEXT

## Background

In September/October 2003 a Zambian team consisting of David Chisanga, Paul Mumba and Gertrude Mwape attended a three-week training programme entitled 'Child Rights, Classroom and School Management'. The programme was sponsored by Sida and took place in Lund and Malmo, Sweden. It was attended by 30 participants from Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Indonesia, Kenya, Nicaragua, Peru, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Zambia.

As part of the course work, each of the country teams represented were required to draw up a project based on one article of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This project was to be implemented in the participants' home countries. The Zambian team opted to centre their project on the implementation of article 12 of the CRC. The pilot project is being carried out in Mpika, a rural District of Zambia. Mpika is situated about 600 kilometres from the capital city, Lusaka.



Article 12 of the CRC states the following:

State Parties shall ensure to the child who is capable of forming his/her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

This article, together with the child's right to freedom of expression (article 13) and other civil rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (article 14) and freedom of

association (article 15) underline children's status as individuals with fundamental human rights, and views and feelings of their own.<sup>1</sup>

According to Save the Children (2002 p 18),

Girls and boys have the right to be involved in decisions affecting them. Article 12 places an obligation on governments to ensure that girls' and boys' views are sought and considered in all matters that affect their lives. Children of any age should be allowed to express their views and in ways with which they are comfortable. Decision-making bodies, other institutions and families must listen to children and take their views into account in account with the child's age and maturity . . . Boys and girls should also be encouraged to participate in decision-making within the family as well as in all aspects of school-life. In order to be able to make decisions, children have the right to relevant information provided in a form they can understand.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child<sup>2</sup> reports that many countries have implied that implementing children's civil rights is the most challenging aspect of the Convention and states that that this applies equally to resource-rich countries. It is further pointed out in the handbook that traditional practices, culture and attitudes have been identified by the Committee and State Parties as obstacles to the full implementation of article 12 and other civil rights of children.

### **The Importance of Children's Right to Participate in Decision-making**

According to Rubenson (n.d. p. 8)

The culture of democracy implies that people learn to argue for their opinions, and listen to the arguments of others, that they are prepared to change their views or to accept defeat in a vote. The earlier this is practised and learnt, the better a democratic culture is established. Here school is an important instrument. When children are treated in a way that promotes their sense of dignity and value, their respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of others is strengthened.

Rubenson (n.d. p. 24) further asserts that

Models for the participation of children in all issues concerning them need to be developed . . . if children and young people are respected and learn to participate and accept responsibility on the basis of tolerance and respect for others, the prospects for development and peaceful coexistence will grow.

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<sup>1</sup> p 159 of Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<sup>2</sup> Henceforth referred to as "The Committee"

The school's role in promoting children's right to participate in decision-making is further elaborated in "An Agenda 21 for Education in the Baltic Region" (p. 10) thus:

Real democracy is based on people respecting each other, talking to each other, exchanging information, talking about their experiences, listening to each other and comparing their respective views, before making their own choices and decisions . . . Involving learners in the decision-making process in school/IHE<sup>3</sup> provides important training for democracy. This could be on a individual basis in a specific educational situation or on a collective basis in student council work.

### **The School and Participation Rights in Zambia**

Children in government schools in Zambia have for a long time participated in cleaning school surroundings. They have also been involved in other activities such as farming in the school gardens. As far as decision-making is concerned, however, they have hardly played a role. They participate in the work activity but not in determining what work is to be done. This situation arises most likely because of the perception the teachers have of the role and status of school children. In most cases adults in Zambia perceive the pupil as one who should be told what to do because he/she is too immature to make decisions. Such a perception brings about a lot of social distance between teacher and pupil which makes the establishment of a democratic process difficult. (Siamwiza, 1989).

In a study carried out on the Child-to-Child programme in schools Chiwela (1998 p. 6) observed the following:

Children very rarely participate in decision-making concerning health problems let alone assuming leadership roles or responsibilities in planning health initiatives. Occasional suggestions from children are seen as participation by children in decision-making.

The Ministry of Education however aims at producing a learner who is capable of:

- Demonstrating free expression of one's own ideas and exercising tolerance for other people's views
- Cherishing and safeguarding individual liberties and human rights. (Ministry of Education, 1996 p. 5)

The Ministry is aware of prevailing cultural attitudes which pose a challenge to attaining these ideals

- . . . in many parts of the country child-rearing practices promote submissiveness and passivity, but discourage qualities which the school system strives to develop such as child independence, self-assertion, question and inquiry. (Ministry of Education, 1996 p. 5)

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<sup>3</sup> Institutions of Higher Education

## **Zambia's Initial and First Periodic Report on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

This report was published in 2002 (almost 11 years after the country's ratification of the CRC). It states the following with regard to article 12 of the CRC.

140. The State Party wishes to report that freedom of expression is protected in Article 20 (1) of the Constitution
141. The State Party wishes to acknowledge that prevailing cultural norms and social practices seriously curtail the right of children to express themselves freely. Unfortunately, it still remains true that children are seen and rarely heard.
142. Female children are more adversely affected than males, although this situation is changing due too the influence of formal education and exposure to enlightened adults who encourage children to express their views more openly.
144. The State Party wishes to inform the Committee that classroom education in Zambia is examination-oriented, hence, there is considerable interaction between teachers and pupils. During the interaction, pupils are encouraged to participate and express their views in order to optimise their performance in schools.

### **Comment**

The kind of interaction described in 144 above, cannot be regarded as fulfilling children's right to participate in decision-making. In fact, in over-crowded classrooms in urban areas, children hardly have time to discuss important matters with their teachers. In addition, there is evidence that teachers hardly give children the space to participate actively in decision-making in schools (Siamwiza, 1989 and Chiwela 1999).

With regard to measures taken to raise awareness of families and the general public, the following is stated in the report:

147. The State Party wishes to report it has consistently used the opportunities provided by annual celebrations of Youth Day, the International Children's Day of Broadcasting, and the Children's Summit to sensitise parents and the general public on the need for children to express their views and concerns. On these occasions, child representatives are given an opportunity to have direct contact with national leaders and decision-makers, who listen to their submissions.

### **Comment**

Speeches children make during Youth Day celebrations often seem like they were written by older people and not the children themselves. With regard to the International Day of Broadcasting it has been observed in the past that it is an elitist affair as we often see children from well-to-do backgrounds making presentations on national television. Children from poor backgrounds and rural areas do not appear on television.

As far as the Children's Summit is concerned this is a highly centralised activity. Very few children participate in it. One central question that could be asked is: Whose views

are these children presenting? Do they consult fellow children before attending the summit? It is not even clear whether after the summit the children go back to report to their fellows in their provinces. To be meaningful, participation needs to be brought down to the grassroots in a decentralised way to ensure that the views of the majority are heard.

### **Children's Participation in School**

According to the State Party Report:

143. The formal educational setting offers many opportunities for children to participate in decision-making and assume leadership roles, such as serving as prefects, monitors or class captains, taking part in disciplinary hearings, and making recommendations to teachers on the provision of text-books, desks or chairs.

### **Comment**

Majority of the children do not participate – the role seems limited to a small group – prefects and class captains/monitors. One also wonders just how much consultation these representatives make.

Under General Principles in Chapter 3, the State Party reports that,

Respect for children's views may be one of the more difficult principles to achieve compliance with. Children are heard in various forums but their views may not always receive the degree of serious consideration they deserve. Zambia is still a society in which elders are perceived as always wise and children as immature and sometimes foolish. Such perceptions are major challenges for implementation of the principle.

## **2. THE MOTIVATIONS, AIMS & OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT**

Since ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991, the Zambian Ministry of Education has taken some steps in including information on the CRC in the school curriculum. Although this is the case, it is not certain that much attention has been given to making children's participation rights a reality in schools.

Article 12 of the CRC is a very important to the whole CRC. According to the CRC Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2002 p. 159):

The Committee on the Rights of the Child asserted early on the status of article 12 as a general principle of fundamental importance relevant to all aspects of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to the interpretation of all other articles.

## **Main Objective of the Project**

The main object of the project is to contribute to making children's rights to participation a reality in schools.

## **Specific Objectives**

- To sensitise teachers, administrators and schoolchildren about children's right to participate in matters affecting them at school
- To set up class and school councils at Kabale Basic School in Mpika, Zambia

## **Rationale for Setting up Project at Kabale Basic School**

A few teachers have been experimenting with children's right to participate in matters affecting them for about a decade now. One of these, Paul Mumba, is a member of the team that attended the child rights training programme in Sweden. By setting up the project at the mentioned school, the team would be building upon the work that is already in progress by extending it to the whole school community.

## **School Councils**

While in Lund, (Sweden), the Zambian team and the team from Bangladesh visited a school where they witnessed a class and school council in session. The Zambian team was greatly impressed by these two activities and started thinking that they could perhaps try out the class and school council model as a possible way of involving children in decision-making in the Zambian school on a larger scale.

While doing research on the Internet, members of the Zambian team came across information on school councils in some parts of the world, including England. Some of this information follows below.

School Councils UK in describing class councils states the following:

This provides regular times for pupils to solve problems in their everyday life at school. This could include practical difficulties, such as not having enough space for coats and bags, questions about uniform or behavioural problems in the classroom, the dining room or the playground.

Issues raised at class council meetings might alert teachers to issues such as bullying that they will want to address . . . Some issues discussed in the class council might need to be raised at school council meetings.

The following paragraph described the school council from the perspective of School Councils UK:

The school council, which meets regularly, is made up of democratically elected pupils from each class. It enables different classes to become aware of each other's problems. It discusses issues and ideas, which need to be addressed at a whole school level. The elected pupils represent the views of their own class at the school council meeting and then report back to their class on the outcome. ([www.schoolcouncil.org](http://www.schoolcouncil.org))

## **How Schools Benefit from Pupil Involvement**

According to School Councils UK:

The whole ethos of the school changes as pupils exert a positive influence over one another through the structures that give them responsibility for decision-making.

- Anti-social behaviour becomes the responsibility of the class and consequently the authority of anti-social groups diminishes
- Teachers are able to spend less time tackling issues such as bullying, disruptive behaviour, truancy, vandalism and exclusions
- Teachers have more time for teaching, stress levels reduce, relationships between teachers and pupils improves and the learning environment becomes more effective
- Pupils feel responsible as partners in their own education and are able to make the most of the learning opportunities offered by the school.

School Councils UK has pointed out benefits pupils derive from pupil councils:

Pupil's councils contribute to positive changes in the lives of every child in the school. Involving pupils in real issues helps them to develop important life skills that promote positive mental health and social welfare –emotional literacy, critical and moral reasoning, self-esteem, self-awareness, communication skills, relationship skills and assertiveness.

### **Pupil councils and children's rights**

There is a relationship between pupil councils and child rights. The view of School Councils UK on this is shown in the following passage

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 states that children should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions and to have those opinions taken into account on any issues relevant to them (Article 12). Pupil councils are an important step in promoting and protecting the rights of children and young people in school and in preparing them to assert their rights in the wider community.

## **3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT**

The project was implemented in two major phases. The first phase was carried out upon the team's return to Zambia in October 2003. Thereafter the team presented a preliminary report on their project to course participants and lecturers in Morogoro, Tanzania during the second part of the training, in February/ March 2004. Helpful comments were given by both course participants and lecturers. During the period between the team's return to Zambia and the follow-up meeting in Morogoro, guidance was provided by the team mentor Bereket Yebio by e-mail. The two team members based in Mpika were in constant communication but they also communicated mostly by e-mail as well as by phone to a lesser extent with the team member based in Lusaka. Meeting as a complete group was difficult largely because of financial constraints.

The third part of the project implementation was in July 2004 when the team mentor, Dr. Bereket Yebio visited Zambia. He traveled to Mpika with Gertrude Mwape, the team

member based in Lusaka. They were in Mpika from Monday July to Wednesday July 2004. During this time they held discussions with the District Education Board Secretary, Mrs. Matandiko on the day of their arrival and the day before their departure. The project was discussed with her in detail. She expressed much interest in the idea of school councils and was hopeful that the idea could be tried out in one school in the district, which has experienced serious troubles between the students and the school management.

A meeting was also held with the Head of the school, Mrs. Bwalya, and teachers at the school. Some parents attended the meeting that was held with the teachers. Apart from holding these discussions, Ms Mwape and Dr. Yebio They also attended some class councils (Grades 1, 5, 8 and 9) as well as the school council in session.

Dr. Yebio and Ms Mwape returned to Lusaka on Thursday and that very day held a meeting with Professor Robert Serpell, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Zambia. On Friday, meetings were held with two officials of the Swedish Embassy. The two showed much interest in the project and promised to pass on information to other co-operating partners since the Swedish Embassy in Zambia is not involved in the area of education.

Later in the day, Dr. Yebio and Ms Mwape had a meeting with Ackim Banda of the British Council to brief him on the project and to explore the possibility of merging the school council project with the child rights project based in the Department of Psychology with funding from the Department for International Development. Mr. Banda showed much interest in the project and welcomed the idea of merging the two initiatives.

### **Participants in the project**

These consisted of teachers, school heads and school children in Zambia's Mpika District. The project team is composed of :

- David Chisanga (District Education Standards Officer), Mpika
- Paul Mumba (Class teacher, Kabale Basic School), Mpika
- Gertrude Kasuba Mwape (Lecturer, University of Zambia), Lusaka

### Roles of the team members

David Chisanga played a crucial role in giving the support of the Ministry of Education to the project

Gertrude Mwape played an important role in project design, preparing topic guides for documentation and writing the report

Paul Mumba was the main actor where implementing the project at the grassroots level was concerned.

The three members of the team complemented each other's roles very well.

## **Methodology**

The pilot project has been based at Kabale Basic School in Mpika. An attempt is being made to make children's rights to participation a reality through the establishment of class councils and school councils. The process was carried out through participatory methods.

## **Choice and collection of materials**

The team's work was guided by Article 12 of the CRC. This was in addition to pronouncements in The Education Policy and The Teachers' Curriculum Manual. These are that

The Ministry of Education has set for itself the goals of

(a) producing a learner capable of . . .

(iv) demonstrating free expression of one's own ideas and exercising tolerance for other people's views

(v) cherishing and safeguarding individual liberties and human rights (Ministry of Education, 1996 p. 5)

## **The Process**

The process of introducing class and school councils was spread over nine days (27 October 2003 to 12 December 2003). It was initiated soon after the team returned from Sweden. The steps taken were as follows:

1. Meeting with teachers
2. Children express their views about article 12 of the CRC
3. Children vote for school council representatives
4. First class councils are held (spread over 3 days)
5. Meeting with teachers to identify training needs for teachers to ensure successful implementation of article 12 of the CRC
6. Introduction of school councils in seven other schools in the zone
7. Meeting with teachers to discuss (a) benefits of human rights to children in class and (b) alternatives to corporal punishment.

Details for each of these meetings follow in the section that follows.

# DIARY OF ACTIVITIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLE 12 OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

## DAY ONE

Meeting with teachers

### Aim:

Creating awareness of article 12 among teachers at Kabale Basic School

### Attendance

31 teachers

Head teacher of the school

District Education Standards Officer (David Chisanga)

District Resource Centre co-coordinator

### Material Used

Teacher's Curriculum manual

Copy of article 12 of Children's right convention

### Method

The 31 teachers were asked to work in four groups. They were then requested to respond to the following questions<sup>4</sup>:

#### **Question 1: What is your understanding of article 12?**

##### Responses

- *All children must be involved in decision making in all matters affecting their lives*
- *The children must be trained to express their feelings without fear, intimidation or situational influence*
- *Children's decisions or opinions must be considered regardless of their age*
- *There should be a policy to cover the rights of the child regardless of the ruling party in the country*
- *State parties means any one with connections with the life of a child, has to uphold this article*
- *Every child should be given a chance to express their views at all ages and maturity (stages) with guidance. We should also respect their opinions*

#### **Question 2: What are the implications of article 12 in the context of the school?**

##### Responses

- *If not well-guided children go out of the way*
- *Children become indisciplined*
- *The school has to understand the article for effective implementation*

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<sup>4</sup> The responses were recorded verbatim

- *The school has to educate learners or the article will not be implemented*
- *The article must be implemented practically*
- *The school has to be ready to deal with new challenges during the implementation process*
- *The school policy should suit the learning environment of the child*
- *The child becomes more empowered and un controllable when it is taken more on the side of the child without explaining the importance of other sectors*

These responses show that some teachers were concerned about issues of discipline. It was a good idea that later on in the process a discussion was held on alternatives to use in the absence of corporal punishment, which has now been banned by the government. The teachers also spoke about the need for both teachers and children to understand the article for effective implementation.

It was also observed that teachers did not give suggestions on how the school could implement article 12. This was perhaps a new idea that was threatening to the status quo. This however, is not a strange phenomenon. It usually happens when innovations are underway but teachers' concerns still need to be addressed so that the project can succeed.

### **Some other comments by teachers on article 12**

An attempt was made to categorise the contributions as shown.

#### Concerns

- *If we agree not to beat children in disciplining them then we need a substitute to this punishment*
- *We have always been good as Africans in working co-operatively but something has gone amiss. What is it?*
- *We shall encounter resistance by some teachers during the implementation of the child rights because we ourselves did not go through this process when we were young!!!*

#### What Needs to Be Done

- *We must now allow children to express their emotions and even show their anger. In case of these expressions from children what do we do?*
- *We must be fully prepared now to do more of the listening to the children.*
- *We need to guide these children if they should be disciplined*
- *Children will have a fear of expressing themselves freely as most of them have not done this before; we are supposed to train them*
- *If we have to succeed in this process we should give children chance to talk*
- *We should encourage them to express themselves*
- *Any one connected to the children such as parents, guardians, etc should be concerned*

#### Attitude that Will Help Implement Children's Right to Participate

- *We should not be thinking of acting negatively.*

### **Question 3: How much have pupils been participating in decision-making?**

#### Responses

- *They are involved in decision making in programmes like PAGE, Safe, Life skills, democratisation in classrooms*
- *In extra curricular activities pupils choose their clubs.*
- *They have been making decisions in classrooms, clubs, group work, democratisation, decision making as in life skills, suggesting ideas to teachers*
- *In agriculture units*
- *They are not fully involved*

Some teachers opted to refer to what the school should do to promote children's right to participate rather than the extent to which students have been participating in decision-making.

- *The school should create a clean and clear atmosphere where pupils are involved in decision making like cleaning the surrounding, making classroom rules, sweeping rota*

Others mentioned the platform through which children participate.

- *Also to give chance to pupils to decide what to do to late comers and bullies*

Only one response referred directly to the extent to which children have been participating in decision-making in the school thus: "They are not fully involved."

It is important for the school to repeatedly ask itself the question, "How much have pupils been participating in decision-making?" This is in order to monitor whether children are really participating in decision-making in the school in a meaningful way or not.

### **Question 4: What methods can you recommend/suggest for implementing children's participation/involvement in decision making in your school?**

A number of methods were suggested that could facilitate the participation of children in decision-making in school. Some of these were:

- *Co-operative learning*
- *Twinning*
- *Debates or other clubs*
- *Role-play*
- *Discussion methods*
- *Meetings*
- *Workshops*
- *Projects*
- *Research work*
- *Inquiry methods*
- *Brain storming/problem solving*
- *Individualization*
- *Child centred*

- *Pair and group work*

### **Introduction of School Councils**

At this point, the Swedish experience of the school councils as school meetings, school consultations etc., was introduced. The idea of introducing a school council was welcomed by the teachers and they all promised to attempt implementing it.

At that particular meeting it was decided that the school-in-service provider would work closely with the teachers in the weeks to follow. The following are some of the tasks that were carried out:

- Holding one-on-one discussions with teachers for further clarification
- Learning about the challenges being experienced by individual teachers
- Carry out further discussion with children on article 12
- Keep a diary of such encounters for the preparations of future meetings

### **DAY TWO**

Meeting with children.

#### Aim

Exploring children's perceptions of article 12 of the CRC.

#### Attendance

Three classes of grade eight and one grade seven class. Three teachers were also present.

#### Materials Used

Plain papers for recording discussions

#### Method

The following steps were followed:

- (a) Article 12 was written on the chalkboard in each of the four classes
- (b) Children were asked to read article 12
- (c) Children were encouraged to ask for the meanings of words that they did not understand
- (d) Teachers explained the article in Bemba (the local language used in the school)
- (e) Children discussed their understanding of article 12 in groups of six and then wrote down their responses.

### **Question 1: What is your understanding of article 12?**

The children gave many responses. An attempt has been made to categorise these responses as follows:

(a) Parents as Duty Bearers

- *Every parent must give the chance to children to hear what is being said according to the age*
- *If a parent tells me that I must not go to school, we have the right to say no*
- *I understand the article in this way that every parent must give chance to children to hear what he is saying and the meaning according to age*
- *A child can correct the views of the elders*
- *The child must talk to parents everything he wants*
- *The child must be free to talk to parents any problem she has*
- *A child who has problems should be given the right to say to parents*

One child understood the article in terms of the need for children to obey their parents.

- *If parents are saying something we must obey*

(b) Teachers as Duty Bearers

- *We have a right to say to our teachers that we do not understand what you are teaching*
- *A child must be free to talk everything in our school*
- *What we should know if there is a meeting at school the pupils must be there to understand what is happening at the meeting some pupils say teachers eat our money because they do not know what is going on*
- *We need some friendly teachers who are able to understand our rights*

(c) Government as Duty Bearer

- *The government gives us an authority to say something good which can help us like at school if we are not learning we have the right to say this issue to the government*
- *The government also gives the right to say something about if the teachers are not teaching*
- *We can also say something about the government about school maintenance or school things*
- *Every child must be free to say anything to the government*
- *Most children fear the government but it gives a chance to say what we want*

(d) The role of the home, school and Police Service

- *Every child has got the right to talk his or her problem to the parents, teachers, police and friends*

(e) Freedom of Expression

Most of the contributions were centred on freedom of expression but only a few of them will be mentioned, to avoid unnecessary repetition:

- *We understand that in Zambia we have rights to speak something according to our age*
- *I can say what I feel is right*
- *I can express myself without being forced to do so exercising my freedom of expression Every child must say what he wants*
- *We have the right to express our views freely*
- *We have the right to say anything freely*

- *We can say anything that is right to us*
- *If I want to say something which is all right no one should refuse me*
- *We have to give a child chance to say everything he wants*
- *A child has the right to complain what is wrong*
- *A child who wants to talk leave him do not say shut up*
- *When child is talking leave him because he knows what he is talking about*
- *We are able to speak out the problems we are facing*
- *A child has the right to say what he or she wants to do*
- *We have the right to say or perform something*

Care needs to be taken to ensure that children realise that they do not have the right to say whatever they want, they need to know that they have rights as well as responsibilities. If something is offensive to other people, they do not have the right to say it. Similarly, they do not have the right to do whatever they want.

(f) Violation of Rights

- *The article means to me that no one could violate my rights*
- *No one can misuse the right of the children*

(g) Access to Information

- *A child has a right to know what is right*

(h) Freedom to Engage in Activities of their Choice

- *A child who wants to do something must be given the right to do it*
- *A child should do something, which he or she thinks it is not bad*

One child had the notion that “*a child who is 5 years should not be heard but a child between 15 and more should be heard what he is saying.*” This an inaccurate understanding of the article and needs to be pointed out to the children.

Another child said, “*People should enjoy rights under the universal declaration of Zambian rights*’. There is no such thing as the universal declaration of Zambian rights! Perhaps the child was referring to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights!

## **DAY THREE**

Meetings for school children

### Aim

Electing school council representatives

### Attendance

Children in the various classes

### Materials Used

Papers for writing on the names of chosen representatives

## Method

Before voting, children were invited to list the qualities they would like school council representatives to have. What they wanted in representatives were those who could represent them effectively (not shy, not a coward, outspoken). Representatives should also be role models (honest; hard-working; come to school everyday). They should also be clever, fair and clean).

- *They should be honest*
- *They should not be cowards*
- *Hard worker*
- *Very free and open*
- *Must lead by example*
- *Should know how to read and write*
- *They should not be shy*
- *One who comes to school every day*
- *Representatives should be clever*
- *Such a person should be fair*
- *One who talks a lot*
- *They should be clean*

Having agreed upon the desirable qualities in representatives, the children were invited to vote for their representatives. Voting was by secret ballot.

## **Comments during voting**

*“Prefects should not be voted for because they already in authority”*

*“Yes, because they have an authoritative way of solving problems”*

*“Since it is we voting when we vote no one should change”*

***“Takuli ati tabeshibe ifyo balecita”*** *(No one should say we do not know what we are doing)*

## **DAYS FOUR, FIVE AND SIX**

Children’s class council meetings

### Aim

Conducting the first class council meetings in the school

### Attendance/Participants

Those who took part in the exercise were children in grades 1 to 6 as well as those in grade 8. For the purpose of this report, only responses for 12 out of 42 classes have been used for analysis. See Table I below:

**Table 1: List of Classes Whose Responses Have been Used in this Report**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Number of Classes</b>
One	Two
Two	One
Three	One
Four	One
Five	Three
Six	Three
Eight	One
<b>Total</b>	<b>Twelve</b>

Materials Used

Plain papers for recording discussions

Method

Class by class pupils discussed ideas and concerns to be presented to the school council by their class representatives. Views expressed by the children are presented below class by class.

**DAY FOUR**

**GRADE ONE B**

- (a) Keeping classroom/school surroundings clean
- *Encourage pupils to bring with them brooms for sweeping to make the school clean*
  - *Cleaning of walls in the classroom and windows*
  - *Ask pupils to get money from their parents for buying cobweb removers to remove cobwebs in the classes*
  - *To have the school painted*
  - *Care for school property*
  - *To clean all the offices*
  - *Grade nines to be involved in cleaning of toilets*
- (b) Concern about the outside surroundings
- *Planting of flowers at school to beautify the place*
  - *Pupils to plant grass*
  - *To come with containers of water for watering the surrounding*
- (c) Personal hygiene/cleanliness
- *Cleanliness to be encouraged on part of the school children*
- (d) Need to have electricity
- *Have electricity in all classes*
- (e) Unclassifiable

- *Make meetings for teachers*

These pupils were mostly concerned about their environmental rights. Children want to be in pleasant physical surroundings. They are also interested in having electricity in the school. They would in addition, like Grade nines to be involved in cleaning the school toilets. They do not seem to think it fair for these pupils not to be involved in cleaning the toilets.

## **GRADE ONE A**

- (a) Teaching/learning Process
- *Having more teaching aids on the walls*
- (b) Making the Classroom Clean/Pleasant
- *Having flowers in the class*
  - *Applying floor polish (Cobra) in class*
  - *Cleaning the roofs to remove cobwebs*
  - *Cleaning of windows*
- (c) Comments on infrastructure/furniture etc.
- *Putting a ceiling board made of wood*
  - *Replacing broken windows*
  - *Putting some chairs or benches for sitting outside*
- (d) Concern about the outside surroundings
- *Picking litter in the school*
  - *Planting flowers in the schools*
- (e) Need for Electricity
- *Our class should have electricity*
- (f) Recreation/Extra curricular Activities
- *We want swings*
  - *We want a see saw*
  - *Buying footballs*
- (g) Concerns About Security
- *Creating a fence around the school*
  - *Putting burglar bars on windows*
- (h) Water and Sanitation
- *Making the ablution to work again*
- (i) Transport
- *The school to buy bicycles for pupils*

Although these children were also grade ones, they did not concentrate on improvements to the physical environment only. They also talked about the teaching-learning process through their reference to the need to have teaching aids.

The children were also concerned about recreational facilities such as swings and see-saws. They also wanted balls to play with. Benches for sitting on were mentioned. Concern was also expressed about security for the school. This is evident from the children saying burglar bars should be put on windows and a boundary wall should be built around the school.

## **GRADE TWO D**

- (a) Security Concerns
  - *The school should build a wall fence so that people from the communities could stop stealing window panes and goal posts*
  
- (b) Concerns about infrastructure/furniture and other things to make the classroom better
  - *The school should be repairing windows in classrooms*
  - *The school should provide more desks so that others are not pushing us when we are writing*
  - *To be applying cobra in classrooms so that dust can be reduced when sweeping*
  - *Instead of using reed mats when they are teaching we want to be using carpets or mats*
  
- (c) The Teaching/Learning process
  - *We do not like the removing of pictures our classrooms by other grades because we like using them during our free time*
  - *We want to be using computers in the school*
  
- (d) Personal Appearance
  - *The school should allow plaiting of hair and going to saloons*
  
- (e) Recreation
  - *The school should provide swings*

Security for the school was a concern for these children too. They recommended the building of a boundary wall around the school. They also want repairs to be made to the windows in their classroom. The children were concerned about a number of things such as sitting on reed mats. They prefer carpets or some other kind of mats. They were also concerned about not having enough desks. Concern was also expressed about not using computers in the school. Some of the children would also like to have swings.

With regard to personal appearance, some children said they would like the school to allow them to plait their hair as well as getting their hair treated in hair salons.

## GRADE THREE C

- (a) Concerns about security/electricity
- *We should be enclosed in a wall fence*
  - *Putting window bars in all classes for safety*
  - *Need for electricity with security light*
- (b) The Teaching-learning process/Entertainment
- *Introduction of extra lessons after normal classes*
  - *Buy a lot of teaching aids*
  - *Introducing prep*
  - *Need for computers and video games*
- (c) Extra-curricular activities
- *Creating an entertainment hall for extra activities*
  - *Need for a keyboard*
  - *Need for a swimming pool*
- (d) Comments on Infrastructure
- *Need good furniture*
  - *Need for ceiling board*
- (e) Transport
- *Need for a vehicle in case of emergency*
- (f) Equipment for cleaning
- *Need for hosepipes to water the carpet grass*
- (g) Shop
- *Need for a big shop in the school*

Children in this class expressed concern for a wide range of things such as the need to have computers and video games; security around the school; better furniture; ceiling board in the classrooms. The need to have a school vehicle in case of emergencies was also mentioned. The children want a shop and teaching aids as well as facilities for extra curricula activities such as swimming pool and a keyboard.

The need to have extra lessons/prep was also mentioned. Like children in some other classes, the children would like electricity in the school as well as ceiling-boards in the classroom.

What is interesting about these children is that they provided ways of addressing some of the issues raised. These were contributing money; introducing businesses and working for money. It is, however, important to protect the children from child labour and to see to it that their right to education is not violated by their not having sufficient time to attend to their schoolwork.

## GRADE FOUR B

An attempt has been made to put the contributions into some categories.

- (a) Comments on uniforms
  - *Change the green uniform to another colour*
  - *The watchman should wear uniform*
  
- (b) Comments on the teaching/learning process
  - *Learning computers*
  - *We need to have more time for extra studies*
  - *The school should buy more books so that when we knock off we go with them*
  
- © Security Concerns
  - *The school be enclosed in a wall fence*
  - *Putting window burglar bars in all classes*
  
- (d) Infrastructure/Furniture/Equipment
  - *We need a ceiling board for classes*
  - *We need good furniture to avoid accidents*
  - *More toilets needed*
  - *Build a small office for the watchman*
  - *The school should buy equipment and tools like wheel burrows, spades for carrying bricks instead of using hands*
  
- (e) Outside surroundings
  - *Plant different types of flowers*
  - *The school needs to have a big field*
  
- (f) Extra-curricular activities
  - *We need a swimming pool*
  
- (g) Communication
  - *Re-open a school telephone*
  
- (h) Other
  - *All classes should have wall clocks*

Showing their capacity for problem-solving, the children suggested that money could be contributed to buy some of the mentioned things. This is similar to their counterparts in Grade 3C.

## DAY FIVE

### GRADE FIVE A

#### Categories of responses

- (a) Teaching/Learning Process
- *We want extra lessons at school*
  - *We want to speak English at school*
  - *We want the computer lessons*
- (b) Concern about food vendors
- *We do not want the people selling fritters because we do not know what they use to make them*
  - *The food vendors sell dirty foods*
  - *We need a good shop so that we stop buying from (Zanzibar) food vendors*
- © Issues to do with personal appearance/uniforms
- *Teachers should check our uniforms*
  - *We want to be plaiting our hair with mesh<sup>5</sup>*
  - *We want to look clean*
  - *We want to change our uniforms*
  - *We should be allowed to wear high-heeled shoes*
  - *We should be allowed to perm our hair*
- (d) Concerns about security
- *We want a wall fence*
  - *We want a watchman*
- (e) Concern about poor water and sanitation in the school
- *We have no water in school*
  - *Our ablution (toilets) is not in use because there is no water*
  - *The toilets are not clean*
  - *We want to open the ablution block*
- (f) Concerns about the behaviour of some pupils
- *The prefects are very lazy and they do not speak English*
  - *Some elderly pupils smoke cigarettes here in school*
  - *There are a lot of bullies in school*
- (g) Issues to do with transportation
- *The school must have a vehicle especially during school outings*
- (h) Keeping the classroom clean
- *We want to apply floor polish (cobra) in class*

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<sup>5</sup> Something like hair extensions

- (i) Outside surroundings
  - *We can plant simba grass*
  - *We can plant some trees in the school*
- (j) School garden
  - *We must have a school garden*
- (k) Places to eat from
  - *We want to be eating in class during break time*
  - *We want a dining hall*
- (l) Extra curricular activities
  - *We want a swimming pool*
  - *We need stereo cassette player in school*

One child mentioned that he/she wants the teacher to have breakfast and lunch. It is not clear what this contribution was about.

## **GRADE FIVE B**

- (a) The teaching/learning process
  - *Why hasn't the school bought computers so that each child knows how to use them?*
  - *We want all school children to use English language in school*
  - *We want teachers to organize special quiz to compete with other schools*
  - *We need mathematical sets for each child*
- (b) Concerns about teacher behaviour
  - *There are some bad teachers in this school who insult children*
- © Personal appearance
  - *The school has refused us to perm our hair and yet others do*
- (d) Uniforms
  - *We want to change our uniforms they are long overdue*
  - *Why hasn't the school bought some sports attire?*
  - *We need special P.E. uniforms*
- (e) Water and sanitation
  - *We have paid money for the ablution block but the toilets are yet open*
  - *We are used very much by the school especially the idea of coming with water daily*
- (f) Security concerns
  - *We need a wall fence*
- (g) Infrastructure/furniture etc
  - *We want better desks to put books inside*

- *Our class door in five B is not in good condition we want it repaired*
- *We have very few classes in this school*
- *We want curtains for our classes*
- *We need a ceiling board for our classes*
- *We have very few desks in the school we need more*

(h) Transportation

- *The school needs a vehicle for taking us for celebrations like Independence Day*

(i) Facilities for sporting/recreational activities

- *We need swings in the school*
- *Why hasn't the school bought balls for each class?*
- *We want a swimming pool*

(g) Views on children in difficult circumstances

- *What are the comments of the school on school children with HIV/AIDS and those who become pregnant?*
- *Why don't you send children who fail to contribute to money we have agreed to?*

There is need to point out to the children that children with HIV/AIDS and those who become pregnant have the right to be in school. Similarly, children should know that according to government policy children should not be sent away from school for failure to pay money. It is also important to train children in having empathy for their less privileged counterparts. They should also be helped to show solidarity with their peers.

One of the children was concerned about the current school bell hence he she said, “*We want a better bell for the school.*”

## **GRADE FIVE C**

(a) Teaching/learning process

- *We need more books to read*
- *We want good teachers in the school*
- *Grade fives should be coming in the morning as well*
- *The books, which have been distributed in the school, have resulted into some of us not receiving but we are being sold, why?*

(b) Water and sanitation

- *We ask the school to open toilets for us we have paid money towards them*
- *We do not want to use the same toilet by all pupils*
- *We should stop carrying water from our homes we are becoming very tired*
- *We have paid money for toilet tissues but we do not see tissues in class*

© Security

- *There must be a fence in school*

- (d) Furniture
  - *We need more desks in the school*
- (e) Transportation
  - *We need a school vehicle*
- (f) Pupil behaviour
  - *We need to discourage indiscipline in the school*
- (g) Personal hygiene/neatness
  - *Teachers should be telling some school pupils to be neat*

The children were also concerned about keeping the school premises clean. One wanted the school's driveway to have tarmac on it.

One very impressive thing was that one child was concerned about HIV/AIDS: ***“We need to think of avoiding the spread of HIV/AIDS even in the school.”*** It is very encouraging to find children who think this way because in Zambia children below the age of 15 are being regarded as the window of hope with regard to combating the devastating effect that HIV/AIDS is wreaking on Zambian society, especially among those in the 15-49 year age bracket.

## **DAY SIX**

### **GRADE SIX A**

- (a) Teaching/learning process
  - *We need a library for grade sevens*
  - *We need computers*
  - *We should learn music in our school*
- (b) Extra-curricular/recreational activities
  - *We need a gymnastics club*
  - *We should have the art club*
  - *We need a swimming pool*
  - *All children should play the ball and not only in one class*
- (c) School uniform
  - *We need to change the uniform*
  - *The school should allow only black shoes*
  - *Discourage uniforms which are being turned into slits*
  - *We should introduce school socks for uniform*
- (d) Personal hygiene/appearance
  - *Allow us to perm and plait with mesh as well*
  - *Boys should cut their hair*
  - *We need to be clean*

- *Plaiting ifikuti is not being neat especially ifyatuni*
  - *All children should be encouraged to bath*
- (e) Security
- *We need wall fence in the school*
- (f) Water and sanitation
- *Build new toilets*
  - *We need water in the school to water flowers very well*
- (g) Keeping the school/classroom clean
- *We need to apply floor polish (cobra) in our class*
  - *We should clean our school*
  - *We need to clean the windows*
- (h) Outside surroundings
- *We need plant new flowers in the school*
  - *We should plant flowers at the school's signpost*
  - *We need to plant trees around the school*
  - *When flowers grow tall we need to cut them well and not the way you did it*
- (i) Concerns about infrastructure/furniture
- *The walls in the school should be painted now*
  - *We need more desks in the school*
- (j) Other
- *We need a permanent school tuck shop*
  - *Turn the school into a boarding school*

One child spoke about the need for the school to have electricity, “*We need electricity in our classes.*”

## **GRADE SIX B**

- (a) Teaching/learning process
- *We should be coming to school to learn during holidays*
  - *Teachers should challenge us with schoolwork and not just giving us things we know*
  - *Teachers must teach all subjects for that day and give pupils more time to finish their work*
  - *Teachers should give us notes*
  - *We should be learning more and more about HIV/AIDS every day*
  - *We should be given more free time to read before we knock off*
  - *Each class should have a class library and each child should bring at least one book for reading*
  - *We should do more creative activities in class*
  - *We need to hold class quiz*

- (b) Personal appearance/hygiene
- *We want to be perming our hair so that we look nice*
  - *We should be coming to school very smart*
- © Taking care of school property/surroundings/classrooms
- *We should come with working tools to school every day*
  - *We should be coming for preventive maintenance and something should be done to pupils who do not come for work*
  - *Pupils should come early to clean the school before lessons*
  - *We need to pick litter in school*
- (d) School uniform
- *We need to change our uniforms*
  - *We must all have P.E. uniforms*
- (e) Interpersonal relationships
- *We need to enhance co-operation in the school*
- (f) Punctuality
- *All prefects must be coming early to school so that they can be models*
- © Water and sanitation
- *When school toilets are opened there should be toilet tissues available for use*
  - *We want water in the ablution block*
- (d) Furniture
- *All pupils should contribute money for desks*
- (e) Concern about food vendors
- *We do not want to buy from the vendors they may cause us to be sick*
  - *We want a new tuck shop*
- (f) Reflections on teacher behaviour
- *Teachers should not leave the classrooms but be available all the time*
  - *Teachers should beat anyone who is late<sup>6</sup>*

One child wanted fruit trees and to be grown at the school.

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<sup>6</sup> Children need to be informed that corporal punishment is no longer an option as it has been banned by the government

## GRADE SIX D

(a) The teaching/learning process

- *Group work is the most important thing to consider, we are supposed to work hard in school*
- *We are supposed to express our views freely to the teacher without fear*
- *We are supposed to meet and discuss every Friday at 16:30 hrs and discuss about progress in class*
- *We want to be speaking English in our classroom so that we get used to the language*
- *We want to work together in terms of problems given to our classroom whether academically, spiritually or morally*
- *We want a library so that we improve in reading*
- *We want our teachers to teach us how to speak English*

(b) Desirable rules/Participation in decision-making

- *We are not supposed to eat during learning time*
- *We want to be speaking English so that we get used to this language*
- *We are supposed to come up with our own rules as a class*

(c) Teacher behaviour

- *We do not want our teachers to be out of school all the time*
- *We want democracy; we do not want punishments from our teachers because we are disturbed*
- *We do not want abusive language or insults from our teachers*
- *Our teachers should start lessons at the right time they are given to start their work*
- *Our teachers have to teach us all the subjects, which we are supposed to be taught to us*

(d) Uniforms/personal appearance

- *We would like to have our uniforms changed*
- *Girls want to plait hair so that they look smart all the time*

(e) Transportation

- *We want a school truck so that whenever we are going out for academic work we are not troubled with transport*

(f) Furniture

- *We want many desks in our school*

(g) Security

- *We want a wall fence around our school*

(h) Water and sanitation

- *We want clean toilets*

These children seemed to be greatly concerned about teacher behaviour. It is also interesting to observe that this group of children, unlike the ones looked at so far, did not say anything about their role in keeping the school surroundings clean.

## GRADE EIGHT

### (a) Teaching/learning process

- *We need sewing machines for use at home economics, clothes, braziers etc.*
- *We want history, Bemba and English teachers*
- *We need more trained teachers at grade eight and nine*
- *We want a library*
- *We want computers in the school*
- *We do not want to be learning one subject per day*
- *We need to learn more on HIV/AIDS*
- *We need to have woodwork in our school*
- *We want prep time introduced*
- *We want the government to give us library books*

### (b) Teacher behaviour

- *Teachers should be kind*
- *We want teachers to be fair to all pupils*
- *We want teachers to be serious*
- *We need to change the teacher for English. He is not serious*
- *Teachers should ensure pupils are following the rules*
- *We do not want teachers who give us notes without an explanation*
- *We don't want teachers who insult pupils*
- *We do not want teachers who give pupils to write on the board because they are not teachers.*
- *We do not want teachers who come to give us stories*
- *Teachers should not come late*
- *Teachers without any reason should not beat pupils*
- *Some teachers are stubborn.*
- *Some teachers do not mark the exercise books*
- *We do not want teachers who ask pupils to see them at their homes*
- *We do not want teachers who dictate to pupils in class*
- *Teachers must not punish children without any reason*

### © Uniforms/personal appearance

- *We want to be perming our hair using the styles we want*
- *We want to wear green jackets*
- *All grade eights and nines should be in their neckties*
- *We want to change uniforms*

### (d) Water and sanitation

- *Our toilets should be cleaned*
- *What is the school thinking about ablution block?*
- *We do not know why we have stopped using the ablution block and you start digging the ablution, which means you have lot money.*
- *We need water in this school*

### (e) Lights/furniture etc

- *We want new desks because old one are tearing our uniforms*
  - *We want bulbs in our classes to be studying at night*
- (f) Keeping the school clean
- *We would like to apply polish in our classes*
  - *We want to have people to sweep for us*
- (g) Extra-curricula activities
- *We need drama club and forming of school choir*
  - *We need to have a karate club*
- (h) Accountability
- *We want to know how the funds we pay is put to use*
- (i) Other
- *Kabale can be made into a boarding school*

Other concerns were to do with the need to construct a boundary wall around the school; the need to cooperate with teachers and; maintenance of discipline in the school; introducing a school tuckshop and setting up a school garden.

Some children it seems were really concerned about teacher behaviour. Hopefully, the school administration will take up the matter and do something about it.

**Table II (a)**

<b>Grade/ Item</b>	<b>Keeping classroom /school clean</b>	<b>Personal appearance/ neatness</b>	<b>Electricity</b>	<b>Teaching/ learning process</b>	<b>Infras- tructure</b>	<b>Recrea- tion/Extra curricular Activities</b>
<b>One</b>	x	x	x	x	x	x
<b>Two</b>	x	x		x	x	x
<b>Three</b>			x	x	x	x
<b>Four</b>				x	x	
<b>Five</b>	x	x		x	x	x
<b>Six</b>	x	x	x	x		x
<b>Eight</b>	x	x	x	x	x	x

**Table II (b)**

<b>Grade/Item</b>	<b>Furniture</b>	<b>Transport</b>	<b>Teacher Behaviour</b>	<b>Food Vendors/Shop</b>	<b>Equipment For Working With</b>	<b>Uniform</b>	<b>Outside Surroundings</b>
<b>One</b>	x	x					x
<b>Two</b>	x						
<b>Three</b>	x	x		x	x		x
<b>Four</b>	x				x	x	x
<b>Five</b>	x	x	x	x		x	x
<b>Six</b>	x	x	x	x		x	x
<b>Eight</b>			x			x	

**Table II (c)**

<b>Grade/Item</b>	<b>Security</b>	<b>Water &amp; Sanitation</b>	<b>Pupil behaviour</b>	<b>Places to eat from</b>	<b>Communication</b>	<b>Children in difficult Circumstances</b>
<b>One</b>	x	x				
<b>Two</b>	x					
<b>Three</b>	x					
<b>Four</b>	x				x	
<b>Five</b>	x	x	x	x		x
<b>Six</b>	x	x	x			
<b>Eight</b>		x				

**Table II (d)**

<b>Grade/Item</b>	<b>Turning school into a boarding one</b>	<b>Growing fruit trees at school</b>	<b>Desirable Rules/ Participation in decision-making</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Children in difficult circumstances</b>
<b>One</b>					
<b>Two</b>					
<b>Three</b>					
<b>Four</b>					
<b>Five</b>					x
<b>Six</b>	x	x	x		
<b>Eight</b>	x			x	

### Summary of the findings in Tables II a-d

ITEM	COMMENTS
<b>Keeping classroom/school clean</b>	Mentioned by all except grades 3 and 4
<b>Personal appearance/cleanliness</b>	As above
<b>Electricity</b>	Mentioned by grades 1, 3, 6 and 8 only
<b>Teaching/learning process</b>	All grades had something to say
<b>Infrastructure</b>	All classes had something to say except grade six classes
<b>Recreation/extra curricula activities</b>	All classes with the exception of grades 6 and 8 had something to say
<b>Security around the school</b>	All classes with the exception of grade 8 said something
<b>Water and sanitation</b>	Grades 1, 5, 6 and 8 said something about this matter while grades 2, 3 and 4 did not.
<b>Furniture</b>	All classes except grade 8 said something
<b>Transport</b>	Grades 1, 3, 5 and 6 said something while grades 2, 4 and 8 did not
<b>Teacher behaviour</b>	The comments were concentrated among the higher grades (5, 6 and 8). Grades 1 to 4 did not say anything about teacher behaviour
<b>Concern about food vendors and need for a shop</b>	Grades 3, 5 and 6 made comments while grades 1, 2, 4 and 8 did not make any
<b>Equipment for working with</b>	Grades 3 and 4 were the ones who expressed concern about this. There were no comments from grades 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8.
<b>Uniform</b>	Grades 4, 5, 6 and 8 made comments on uniforms while grades 1 to 3 did not
<b>Outside surroundings</b>	Grades 2 and 8 did not make any comments while the rest (grades 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6) said a number of things
<b>Communication</b>	Only the Grade 4 class made a comment
<b>Pupil behaviour</b>	Grades 5 and 6 said something about this
<b>Places to eat from</b>	The contribution came from grade 5 only
<b>Turning school into boarding school</b>	This came from grades 6 and 8
<b>Desirable rules/participation in decision-making</b>	Contribution came from grade six only
<b>Accountability</b>	This was brought up by grade 8
<b>Children in difficult circumstances</b>	Only grade 5 commented on this

The preceding tables show that some issues were common to most grades as shown below.

- Keeping classroom/school clean
- Personal appearance/cleanliness

- Electricity
- Teaching/learning process
- Furniture
- Infrastructure
- Recreation/extra curricula activities
- Security around the school
- Outside surroundings

It has also been observed that at least three topics were confined to the higher grades. These were the one to do with teacher behaviour, turning the school into a boarding school and accountability.

Some topics were only mentioned by one or two grades but this does not make them any less important. The findings suggest that perhaps younger grades need to meet on their own for the school council meeting but children should also have the opportunity to meet as a full council so that they get to know each others' concerns and assist each other in problem –solving in association with the school administrators.

## **DAY SEVEN**

Meeting with teachers

### Aim

Identify training needs for the implementation of CRC (article 12) at Kabale School.

### Participants

The participants in this meeting were teachers

### Materials

### Method

The following, according to the teachers, were the areas in which children needed training for the successful implementation of the CRC:

- (a) The right attitude
  - *Respect of other people's views*
  - *Children should realize the importance of self-responsibilities*
- (b) Access to information
  - *Background of information on the subject matter*
  - *Orientation to children on their rights*
  - *Community should be oriented on children's rights*
- (c) The role of children

- *Children should be used as tools to disseminate information to their fellow friends through drama, poems, cultural, etc.*
  - *Steering committee for pupils to be put in place to spearhead the program and the group should have full information on the subject matter*
- (d) The role of the school
- *Integrate the program in all subjects*
  - *Patron or matron to monitor the program*
- (e) Psychosocial life skills needing to be promoted
- *Self-confidence/self-esteem*
  - *Negotiations*
  - *Assertiveness*
  - *Critical thinking*
  - *Awareness*
  - *Interpersonal relationships*
  - *Human rights awareness*
  - *Health education*
  - *Debating skills*

Comment: Attention needs to be paid to changing teacher attitudes as well as those of parents and other community members.

## **DAYS EIGHT AND NINE**

Grade teachers meeting at the centre (GRACE).

### Aim

Introducing children's school councils in seven other schools in the zone

### Participants

Sixty-five teachers in the eight schools (zone) met at Kabale Basic School as part of professional development. The schools were Chibansa, Chibaye, Kabale Malambwa, Mukungwa, Nyanji, and Sabwa

### Method

The teachers discussed the CRC and children's school councils.

The views expressed by the teachers were as follows:

- (a) Benefits of school councils
- *The council is welcomed but children need to be guided by teachers.*
  - *All new things that are coming in education reforms or school-based curriculum will enable teachers to gain a lot of development even when someone retires*
  - *Children council can promote democracy and handwork among learners and lessen the overload of work to teachers*
  - *The councils will help us negotiate the human rights that have come*

- *For what I have understood councils for children is good because I also experienced when I tried to find out from them at Sabwa middle basic school. The task they chose to do was done with no or other wise with minimum supervision and the work they did was excellent*
  - *This will be well because pupils will do what they will suggest*
  - *The introducing children school council is welcomed through learning from each other as work through*
- (b) Forging partnerships with the community
- *Why can't we invite the community and discuss with parents on the issue of abolishing corporal punishment and if their attitude is positive because at home some pupils are beaten to the fullest, if they go wrong.*
- (b) Concerns about pupil behaviour
- *The idea is good but pupils need to be guided*
  - *Give it a chance and see how it works*
  - *On the children council this should be introduced with diplomacy so else we shall have no say as teachers*
  - *There is need to have the school councils but what is important is to have the guidance of the teacher as children work out. Pupils will be very happy to have their voices heard and considered by all means*
- (c) Child rights and culture
- *A very good initiative but as teachers we need to put in traditional moral aspect, which the society would uphold*
  - *As we accept the council, let us think of our cultures, value, norms and morals.*
- (d) Need to work with administrators
- *It is a good idea and it can be implemented quite okay but first the administrators has to be sensitised fully because they always hinder these new programmes e.g. you talked of hair fashions. Some will refuse even though is one way of improving the cleanliness and neatness of all pupils*
- (e) Teacher attitudes towards children's rights
- *Pupils should know their rights and should be taught respect. Children to know the do's and don'ts.*
  - *It is a good idea because most of the children will be able to air out their views.*
  - *School council is welcome as it may promote the pupils in decision making and planning*
  - *On introducing of children council, according to my opinion, I can say that it can be good to introduce this programme because it can help pupils in schools*
  - *The school council is just in order because it is there to promote a child's rights. Gone are the days when pupils were harassed and succumbed to human torture using a strong stick. My appeal is that let it go on and on it is welcome*

Most teachers welcomed the idea, however, some emphasised the need to consider the need to consider Zambian culture. Others were concerned that teachers would have no

say while others emphasised the need for guidance and bringing the community on board.

## **DAY NINE**

### **CONTINUATION OF THE PREVIOUS DAY'S GRACE MEETING**

#### **The benefits of human rights to children in class**

(a) Participation

- *Children participate fully in answering and writing questions and other class activities*
- *It helps children to express their views freely in class*
- *Children learn a lot, as they are free to express themselves fully*
- *There is free participation among pupils*
- *There is interaction between people, parents and teachers*
- *Ideas are shared both to teachers and pupils*
- *Children will be involved in decision making at school*
- *They are advantaged to express themselves and be able to do according to their ability maximizing their ideas*
- *Freedom of speech*
- *Self-expression and free participation*
- *Liberty to express themselves in different situations*
- *Pupils are able to ask and answer freely*
- *Because they can be able to express themselves*

(b) Relationships/interaction

- *It increases interpersonal relationships*
- *Interaction with other pupils*
- *Good pupil teacher interaction also to pupil interaction and love and respect for one another*
- *It can also help the teacher to know the pupils better*
- *As a teacher you will know their needs*

(c) Responsibilities

- *Children remember if given rights properly, that they have an obligation to fulfil as they remember their rights*
- *They can enhance learning and teaching as children can become responsible given their rights responsibly and carefully by their teacher*
- *Children rights enable the child to be more responsible towards education and other social responsibilities*

- (d) Improved Learning
- *Problem pupils are able to learn because teachers are told not to beat/cane them as part of discipline*
  - *Children are able to learn what they want*
  - *Freedom of learning freely*
  - *The learners learns freely without fear*
  - *Pupils are free to learn because they are free to participate without fear*
  - *Knowledge to all children even slow learners are shared and taken up*
- (e) Protection against abuse
- *Human rights safe guards the rights of pupils like the basic rights such as food, clothes, shelter and education*
  - *It acts as a guide to people intending to violate children rights there by helping children to develop into responsible citizens*
  - *Some teachers are cruel to pupils over small issues and chase them anyhow. So it is really beneficial to pupils to have these rights, though ignored*
  - *It can be a shield in case of abuse to them*
  - *It is about check and balance*
- (f) Personality development
- *Pupils are able to value themselves as they ask each other*
  - *Children will have freedom and integrity*
  - *Children will have respect for each other*
  - *Every child feels accepted as they are given chance to air out their views*
  - *They need to respect others in terms of ages*
  - *Children can feel honoured*
  - *They help children inculcate self-reliance upon themselves*
- (g) Increased awareness about their rights
- *Children know about their rights*
  - *It enables the child to consider education as a personal authority and that the child is more vulnerable in society*

One participant did not talk about the benefits of children's rights in the classroom, he instead talked about the responsibility of the school/teachers: "Pupils have the rights in classroom no restriction should be made by the teacher."

### **How best should children be handled in class since corporal punishment has been abolished?**

Corporal punishment is a violation of children's rights. It was removed from the Education Act last year (2003). This has been a great challenge for teachers who have depended on it as the most effective way of disciplining children. In earlier discussions with teachers, much concern was raised about how to discipline children in the absence of the cane. It was therefore necessary to discuss with teachers how to proceed.

The views of teachers are presented below. An attempt has been made to categorise the responses.

- (a) The disadvantages of corporal punishment and some other punishment used by the school
- *Corporal punishment used to hinder attendance in school or class hence attendance will improve*
  - *Corporal punishment used to cultivate fear in pupils so with this abolition participation in classes will improve*
  - *Pupils will have that fear of sending them away from class or school*
- (b) Sending children out of class
- *If one misbehaves then he or she must be sent out of a class*
- (c) Counselling the children
- *Trouble some children should be counselled from time to time*
  - *Teachers should discuss problems with pupils*
  - *Counselling children i.e. Telling them the badness and goodness of their conduct*
  - *Counselling should be encouraged*
  - *Guidance and counselling should be encouraged*
  - *By proper guidance and counselling on a daily basis*
  - *Discuss and talk to pupils to be responsible people*
  - *The disciplinary committee should help them by counselling them*
- (d) Keeping children occupied/giving them responsibilities
- *It is by giving them work to do and be kept committed at any time and also involve pupils in leadership*
  - *I teach them to be good and responsible always in class and out and that they lose nothing by so doing*
  - *Give a lot of responsibility to be kept busy*
- (e) Use of role-models
- *Giving pupils noticeable examples of people with good conduct and how they have benefited*
- (f) Promotion of psychosocial life skills
- *Children should be equipped with necessary life skills. Cooperation between teacher and pupils as partners in education*
  - *Observe them and see how you can tackle the psychosocial skills to enable them be on the right track*
- (g) Praising Pupils
- *Praise the pupils on whatever good one has done*
- (h) Forging links with the home
- *According to acceptable norms by taking them to their parents*
  - *Meeting with parents, teachers and the child where there is a problem*
  - *Call the parents of the pupils and discuss the problem together*

- *Work together with parents on any new negative development of behaviour on pupils*
  - *Call the parent to the child and him or her together*
- (i) Involving children in decision-making/finding solution to the problem
- *Decision will be made with inclusive child participation*
  - *Ask the pupil himself or herself what she or he can do if he was a teacher at that time*
  - *Asking children to evaluate their day-to-day actions and behaviours at school*
- (j) Getting to know children better
- *To know the child's strengths and weaknesses*
  - *Know their problems that they face by being friendly with them and visiting them and sit with their parents and guardians*
  - *Teachers should understand pupil's needs so that they are helped*
  - *Be watchful to individual and give time to listen*
- (k) Other things teachers could do instead of corporal punishment
- *Pupils should be treated according to ones behaviour as a teacher we should learn individual pupils*
  - *A teacher should keep herself or himself busy and prepared*
  - *By making them be aware of what is wrong or good*
  - *Application of psychosocial approaches having it acquired by teachers*
  - *By behaving as a parent who does not always beat or insult to correct the fault or situation*
  - *By sensitising the pupils on the importance of education*
  - *Encourage pupils to like schools*
  - *Through democratisation*
  - *Be tolerant to each one's problems*
- (l) What not to do
- *With care and no scorning them, punish them where necessary and use the right language to them. Do not punish when in class*

The teachers' suggestions on how to deal with children's misbehaviour will need to be monitored carefully in order to be able to assess the impact of the alternative measures. It is surprising that none of them mentioned measures such as detention, cleaning the school or reparation, which are often used in schools. It is important for the schools to reflect more deeply on measures that can be used to deal with children's misbehaviour. It is also important to get views from the children themselves on how to deal with disciplinary problems. The school council could be a forum for this. The Department of Psychology of the university of Zambia in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University in the United Kingdom is developing a handbook on alternatives to corporal punishment. This handbook has been developed as an outcome of research on alternatives to corporal punishment carried out in five basic schools in Lusaka. The Department is willing to let Mpika schools be part of the process of piloting the use of the handbook.

## **4. THE ACHIEVEMENTS**

Several achievements have been made during this pilot phase of the project. These are shown below:

- Discussions have been held with teachers, children and administrators on article 12 of the CRC.
- Class councils and the school council have been established at Kabale Basic School
- Class school council meetings have been held
- Training needs for teachers for successful implementation of the CRC have been identified.
- Ms Mwape has discussed the possibility of linking this project to the one on child rights one based in the Department of Psychology at the University of Zambia. The Department has supported the idea.
- Support of the school and District Education Board has been garnered.
- Children are able to speak out and articulate their views and concerns both among themselves and to their school management.
- Some of the children's concerns have been addressed by the school, e.g. setting up a suggestion box and reducing the number of times assembly is held from two days to one.

## **5. SOME REFLECTIONS AND FUTURE PLANS**

### **Reflections**

As the three members of the Zambian team, we greatly appreciate the privilege we had of attending the training programme in both Sweden and Tanzania. We have learned a lot through this experience. It was great to meet with all the other participants from all over the world. It was indeed a unique experience.

Working on the project has been a very rewarding experience as we feel that we are contributing to making children's rights a reality in our home community. We have, however, faced a number of challenges in our work, especially with regard to communication as well as being able to meet as a team. The challenges are mostly related to lack of finances. Despite this, the three members of the team have given much priority to the project and put whatever capacities we have into the project. We look forward to its success.

The sustainability of this initiative seems secure as one senior member of the school said, "We do not regard this activity as a project, but as an idea. Projects can end and die but ideas live on".

### **Future Plans**

- To scale out the activities in schools in Mpika and to some schools in

Lusaka where one of the team members, Gertrude Mwape, is based. This would be after an evaluation.

- To draw up a training programme on children's rights in the classroom and school at the University of Zambia. Gertrude Mwape would be responsible for this.
- To draw up a manual for teachers on children's right to participate.
- Organising workshops for other heads and teachers beginning with those in the same zone as Kabale Basic School. An action plan will be drawn up to this effect.
- To distribute copies of the project report as widely as possible to Sida, UNICEF, the British Council and the Curriculum Development Centre to try and garner further support for the project.
- To link this project to another one based on children's rights at the University of Zambia. Gertrude Mwape is coordinator of this project. It is a partnership project between the Department of Psychology (University of Zambia) and the Department of Psychology at Sheffield Hallam University in England. This is a Higher Education Link programme administered by the British Council on behalf of the Department For International Development (DFID). Through the said project, the Department of Psychology (UNZA) has carried out research on alternatives to corporal punishment in selected schools of Lusaka. The partner institutions have developed a handbook on alternatives to corporal punishment as a result of this study. Some copies of the handbook will be given to the team in Mpika for their consideration.

The UNZA-Sheffield link will in June-July 2004 carry out a small-scale study on discipline techniques used in the home. One expected outcome of this activity is the development of a manual on parenting with a special focus on discipline. Plans are in place to carry out a similar study in Mpika at a later stage and to prepare a similar manual for use in that part of the country.

The two projects will also co-operate in drawing up a manual for teachers to use on children's right to participate.



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## APPENDICES

### TOPIC GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

#### Procedure

Begin by giving some background to the CRC i.e. from the Education Policy, Teachers' Curriculum Manual and contents in the school textbooks dealing with children's rights.

1. Present article 12 of the CRC to the teachers.  
Ask them to say what they understand from it.
  2. What are the implications of article 12 of the CRC in the context of the school?
  3. How much have pupils been participating in decision-making in the school?
  4. In what areas have children participating with regard to decision-making in the school?
  5. How beneficial has this participation been to
    - (i) teachers
    - (ii) children themselves
  6. What issues in the school might children wish to have a say in?
  7. What benefits do children derive from being involved in decision-making in the school?
  8. What are the hindrances to children's participation in decision-making in the school?
  9. What difficulties might you as teachers encounter in involving children in decision-making in the school?
  10. What difficulties might children face in participating in making decisions in the school?
  11. How can the difficulties be tackled?
  12. What is the best way of ensuring that all the children have equal opportunities of being involved in decision-making in the school?
  13. Suggest a model of what we can use to ensure that children participate in decision making in the school?
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## TOPIC GUIDE FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

### Procedure

Explain the purpose of the discussion to the children. Encourage them all to participate in the discussion. Ask them to draw up rules for conducting the discussion so that they all participate freely. It might be a good idea to divide the children into groups of about 8 so that even those who might be inhibited from speaking in the larger group feel free to do so.

1. What do you know about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child?
2. Present article 12 of the CRC and ask the children what they understand from it.
3. How can article 12 of the CRC be applied in the context of the school?
4. In which areas of school life have you been having a say?
5. What benefits have you derived from being involved in making decisions in the school?
6. What benefits have teachers derived from your involvement in decision-making in the school?
7. In which other areas of school life would you like you have a say?
8. What benefits would you derive from having a greater say in school matters?
9. What hinders your participation in decision-making in the school?
10. What would be the best way of you having a say in matters that are important to you in the school?
11. What difficulties would you encounter in trying to be involved in decision-making in the school?
12. What can we do to tackle these difficulties?