

**Lund University, Sweden  
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**IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD RIGHTS IN SCHOOLS  
A PILOT PROJECT IN KABALE ZONE, MPIKA DISTRICT, ZAMBIA**

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

### **Country profile**

**SIZE:** Zambia is relatively a big country. It is Switzerland, Belgium and France put together. The country is situated in Southern Africa and shares borders with Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Angola and Democratic Republic of Congo.

**POPULATION:** There are 10.5 million people and women are in the majority. About 65 percent are between the ages of 18 to 35 years. There are 73 ethnic groups, which belong to the same language group of the Bantu.

**CLIMATE:** Zambia has tropical climate with 3 distinctive seasons- Rain season between October and March, Dry and Cold season (winter) from April to mid August and Dry and Warm season between mid August and mid October (summer).

**TOURIST ATTRACTIONS:** Major attractions include the Victoria Falls one of the wonders of the world and game reserves in Luangwa and Kafue National Parks.

**TYPE OF GOVERNMENT:** Zambia gained its independence in 1964 from Britain. It is a Republic with a multi-party democracy. Politically, Zambia is the most stable and peaceful country in the sub – region. It is an active member of regional and international organizations. The country made a lot of sacrifices in terms of human lives and economic development to help neighbors such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Namibia, and Angola including South Africa to gain freedom from white oppression.

**ECONOMY:** Zambia has had a mono economy of copper mining. Over 80 percent of foreign earnings come from copper. It is the third largest producer of this mineral in the world. However, there are now efforts being made to diversify the economy to agriculture and tourism.

### **Education System**

There was massive investment in education soon after independence in order to meet manpower requirements for the new republic. For example in 1964 Zambia had only 70 university graduates. Currently, there is free education for the middle Basic school sector (Grade 1-7). Plans are under way to include Grades 8 and 9 as the economy improves in order to meet the millennium developmental goals. There are 3 levels in the education system: Basic education (Grades 1-9); High school (Grades 10-12) and Tertiary Education (Universities and Colleges).

The government through the Ministry of Education runs most of the schools. However, because of limited financial resources, the government cannot meet the education demands of the people. This is why the government has encouraged individuals and the private sector to complement its efforts in education provision and delivery by setting up schools and colleges, hence the existence of private and community schools. Either an individual person or a company establishes a private school while a community school, as the name implies, is community demand driven initiative. Community schools have very flexible conditions on enrolment ages and school requisites in order to allow children from poor families to have access to education. In towns and cities there are mostly found in shanty compounds. They are also found in remote parts of rural areas.

The Ministry of education has a structure in order to facilitate efficient education delivery in the country. In Lusaka, the capital city, are the headquarters run by the Permanent Secretary. Down to the nine provinces are provincial education officers, who are responsible for education delivery at all, levels (Basic, High schools and Colleges). In the 72 Districts of the country are found District Education Boards. These are mainly responsible for basic education provision and delivery. For the sake of educational administration, the Districts are divided into Zones. Schools in the District are put in groups according to geographical location.

### **The Child Rights Convention- CRC**

Zambia is one of the eighty-seven Countries of the World, which adopted the CRC in 1989 and ratified it in 1991 respectively. Our government believes that we need to show respect for the dignity, quality and rights of all people, including children in order to have freedom, justice, and peace. To this end, the Ministry of Youth Sport and Child Development has been created to ensure that children's interests and rights are protected. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry recently assured the nation thus;

*International conventions on Children's and Women's rights will be domesticated by the end of this year.....The international conventions on the protection of Children's and Women's rights will be implemented locally because there are of great significance to the Nation (The Post number 3037—9<sup>th</sup> February, 2005).*

Legal instruments:

1. Use of corporal punishment in school is illegal
2. Child labour below the age of 18 years is not allowed
3. Negligence of children by parents is punishable by law.
4. Marriage below the age of 16 years is not allowed.

## **2. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT**

### **Reasons for the project area**

The project took place in the Kabale Zone one of the 22 Zones in Mpika. Mpika is located along the great North road and near the Tanzania Zambia Railways. The first country team introduced class and school councils at Kabale Basic School in line with Article 12 of the CRC, which looks at the involvement of children in decision making. Indicators of success have emerged from the project. Therefore, we decided to build on the work of the first team by expanding the project to other schools in the Zone.

### **Objectives:**

- Expansion of school and class councils to other Zones in the District
- To increase child participation in decision making and participatory planning
- To create awareness on CRC in school.

### **Target groups:**

- Head teachers (12)
- School In-service Providers (12)
- Pupils from Grades 1-9 in Kabale Zone (6000)
- Teachers (105)
- Parents

### **Methods employed**

Sensitisation on Article 12 of the CRC to school in - service providers, head teachers, teachers and pupils was done through the following methods:

- a. Discussions
- b. Group work
- c. Interviews
- d. Participatory observation

## **WHY PROMOTE CHILD PARTICIPATION?**

- a) Children are capable, resourceful people whose individual, histories, feelings and opinions must be respect.
- b) Children must be treated as active participants in the development process.
- c) Theory and practical parts are two ways of developing child participation of children.

There are four lines to promote child participation.

## **The Justice Argument**

- Social group's demands that we hear what they want.
- Children themselves should be involved in generating and analysing data, which concern their own lives by working with children rather than working for them.

## **Human Knowledge Argument**

We need to listen to children in order to understand their experience and know how they view their childhoods. If we do not listen to children we risk missing out on rich and informative perspectives they can offer.

## **Social Policy Argument**

We need to work with children so that their lives are attended to (and future secured) and in order that interventions will be appropriate.

## **The Child Development Argument**

Children's participation helps them to develop a sense of their identity both as autonomous individuals and as members of a community.

- Through genuine participation, school programmes which offer practical solution to real problems, children can develop the skills which are essential if they are to determine their political beliefs and contribute to the democratization of society.
- In recognition of these and other arguments for focusing on children the world summit for children adopted the convention on the rights of the child (**UNCRC 1989**).

Alongside the rights to protection and provision, the convention specifically endorses the rights of a child to participate. A crucial principle of the convention is that children must be given a voice and their views and opinions respected and acted on. Article 12 states that:

*Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the rights to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the view of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child. (UNCRC 1998)*

The convention is now the most widely ratified document of international law in the history of human rights. However, signing the convention is one thing and meaningful practice is another. We need to pay attention to the gap between theory and reality and

consider the impact of culture on what children are allowed to participate in and whose end their participation is serving.

### **WHAT CAN CHILDREN PARTICIPATE IN?**

- Working in groups (mixed group/age/ability)
- Organizations such as school health groups, student health council and student councils, safe clubs etc.
- Through art (song, dance, role play drama)
- Through innovative educational approaches such as child-to-child, which is a process of participatory learning and action
- Through life skills
- Through child centered learning

### **Difficulties encountered during the implementation process**

- Transport logistics in monitoring the schools as school are far apart.
- Negative attitude by some teachers
- No fixed time for class and school councils in schools.
- The concept of school and class councils have not been understood fully by some teachers.

### **Surprises**

- Grade 1 pupils were able to bring out challenging ideas, e.g. A Grade 1 class at Nyanji Basic School talked of having tap water and the school to provide cups to use for drinking water.
- At Chibansa school children were able to point out the late coming of their Head teacher who lives about 8 km away from the school. Children suggested that their Head teacher should move near the school.

## **3. OUTCOMES**

Teachers were asked to brainstorm on their understanding of Article 12 of the CRC. The responses were as follows:

- Children should be given the chance to talk about their likes and dislikes in school.
- We should respect and value whatever a child says without considering the age.
- The views of the child should be respected and listened to at all levels.
- Politicians should uphold the feelings of individual children without any infringement. In short, there must be freedom of expression.
- Age and maturity of the child should be recognized.
- Teachers should look at children as their partners in school programmers.
- Children's rights should be confused with indiscipline.

- Children should be trained in decision-making.
- Children should be given chance to exercise their leadership roles.
- Promoting good communication between teachers and pupils.
- Children’s rights should go side by side with discipline and responsibilities.

During the sensitization of 89 Head teachers in Mpika District, their responses regarding the importance of promoting child participation in schools were as follows;

- To promote or develop self confidence in pupils
- To help the children discover their talents
- Help the children discover their talents
- Train them to be responsible in society
- Prepare them to the near future
- To develop teacher-pupils interaction
- Develop leadership qualities in pupils
- To let pupils feel or realize that they are part and parcel of the school body
- Help the pupils to be responsible
- Promote confidence and self-esteem
- For identification of pupils values, talents, survival skills and life skills
- To uproot abilities in children
- To enable teachers learn from children’s views and their experiences
- Children’s participation motivates their learning
- Children exercise their human rights through participation
- It brings creativity and innovativeness in children
- Children’s participation promotes good governance in schools
- Develops self reliance in children
- Promotes self discoveries and good presentation of ideas
- Promotes mutual understanding
- Implementation becomes easy since they are involved
- Assists teachers in planning and evaluation
- Promotes the skill of decision making in children

**Responses from pupils (see table 1 below)**

**Table 1. Responses from pupils**

SCHOOL	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
NYANJI BASIC SCHOOL	- need to be involved in sports - doors on toilets - window panes - tap water - cups for drinking water	- tap water - enough tables and desks - wall fence - roofing toilets - more toilets		- piped water - flashing toilets - wall fence - computers	- plaiting hair - need for an ablution block - security guard for the school - school vehicle - need a playing field	- paint the classrooms - need to have tap water - ablution block - change uniform

<p>CHIBANSA BASIC SCHOOL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- long grass to be cut</li> <li>- more toilets</li> <li>- school flag</li> <li>- roofing toilets with iron sheets</li> <li>- need electricity in the school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- physical education to be taught</li> <li>- toilets to be cleaned</li> <li>- need to be learning outside the school</li> <li>- school is very far from our homes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- renovate G 8-9 classroom block.</li> <li>- more furniture</li> <li>- late coming to school should stop.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- put iron sheets on toilets</li> <li>- nets for goal posts</li> <li>- need a school flag</li> <li>- digging of rubbish pits in school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- more desks</li> <li>- renovate G 8-9 Classroom block</li> <li>- teachers need tables to keep their books</li> <li>- iron sheets to be put on toilets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- need electricity</li> <li>- renovate G 8-9 classroom block</li> <li>- buy school tools</li> <li>- need library books</li> <li>- construction of teachers houses</li> </ul>
<p>MUKUNGWA MIDDLE BASIC SCHOOL</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- pupils should stop urinating anywhere</li> <li>- not to touch what is stuck on the wall</li> <li>- teacher to check our cleanliness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-need proper chalk boards</li> <li>-school uniform to be introduced</li> <li>-provide windows in classrooms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-introduce school uniform</li> <li>-construct new better classroom blocks</li> <li>- we need electricity</li> <li>- a good pole must be sourced for the school flag</li> <li>- bore hole must be drilled to provide us with water.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- learn in proper classroom block</li> <li>- roofing the school with iron sheets</li> <li>- we want new boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- introduce school uniform</li> <li>- provide enough teaching and learning materials</li> <li>- make nice floors with cement.</li> </ul>

<p>NTUNTA COMMUNIT SCHOOL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- parents to complete the classroom block</li> <li>- need a chalkboard</li> <li>- Ministry of education to provide us with books, pencils and pens.</li> <li>- more teachers are needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teachers to report in time, teach accordingly and look clean.</li> <li>- more desks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no late coming by pupils</li> <li>- more teachers are needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-parents should clear areas for football and netball grounds</li> <li>- more desks needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no short skirts with slits by girl</li> <li>- no long shorts by boys.</li> <li>- more teachers are needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- parents should finish teachers houses so that they shift from their farms to the school</li> <li>- absenteeism should be avoided</li> </ul>
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**Table 1. Responses from pupils (continued)**

SCHOOL	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
NYANJI BASIC SCHOOL	- window panes - tap water, more toilets - more desks - computers - plaiting hair	- no working we have paid money. - is it right to be sent home when you are sick?	
CHIBANSA BASIC SCHOOL	- more text books in all subjects needed - G 8-9 classroom block to be painted - need electricity - head comes late - head to have a house near the school	- maintenance to be done at 14 - avoid making our uniforms dirty - put doors in classrooms - change of netball pitch - renovate G8-9 classroom block	- provide locks to classrooms and toilets - more desks we get dirty because of sitting on the floor. - one teacher to teach one subject
MUKUNGWA MIDDLE BASIC SCHOOL	- classes to have proper boards - school should have a borehole - to build teachers houses		
NTUNTA COMMUNITY SCHOOL	- school to be cleaned every day - both girls and boys to slash and sweep the school surrounding.		

**Responses from teachers (see table 2 below)**

**Table 2. PROMOTING CHILD PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS:  
QUESTIONNAIRE TO TEACHERS**

In April 2005, a Teachers' meeting was held at Kabale Basic School. 106 teachers met for a professional development meeting. Teachers' responses on the questionnaire on Child Participation were as shown in the Table below.

Question	% Of Teachers YES	% Of Teachers NO
1. Do you know anything about CRC	50.2	50
2. Have you ever heard about school and class councils	74.5	23
3. Do you involve learners in decision making in your school	98	2
4. Is group work encouraged in your school?	94.5	5
5. Is teaching without corporal punishment an effective way of teaching?	50	50

6. Are classes and school council effective ways of involving children in decision making?	94	4
7. Has school and class been of much benefit to the school?	97.3	2.7
8. Will school and class councils help in improving the standards of schools?	95	5
9. Are children encountering problems in decision making in the school?	76	24
10. Is it important to promote child participation?	97.3	2.7
11. Do you allow children the freedom to express their opinion freely?	98.2	1.85
12. Are school and class council the best way of involving children in decisions making?	95.5	4.5
13. Do you think class and school councils will improve the involvement of children in decision-making?	96.35	3.56
14. Is corporal punishment a hindrance to good performance by children?	45.5	54.4

### **Examples of Minutes from class and school council meetings**

#### Chibansa Basic School: Grade 6A Class Council

The secretary went through the previous meeting's minutes. The class had the following suggestions, which they felt were important for them and would make their learning easy.

- Desks
- Teachers houses
- Electricity
- Cement
- Clearing the surrounding
- Water in the school
- More classes
- Buying cobra for the classes
- Schools tools

The chairperson requested her friends to prioritise their suggestions so that they should be able to take them to the school council. During prioritisation many children after voting felt the following needed to be worked upon quickly:

- Desks- children said that desks were very important to them because sitting on the floor makes their uniforms dirty and they don't write properly hence making them to have bad handwriting.
- More classes- there are few classes in the school and this makes them wait too long to start learning as they wait for their friends to knock off. They said parents should build more classes. As children they can as well assist their parents by drawing water for building.
- Water- water is very important in our day-to-day lives. The school can put up a borehole. We always find problems when we need water for drinking. We always go and drink water from the teacher's homes. This is inconveniencing to the teachers. We also have problems in watering flowers in the schools.
- Accommodation for teachers – the school is experiencing shortage of teachers. Therefore, in order to have more teachers, parents and teachers should work together to build more houses. Parents can contribute towards the building of houses. Parents who fail to pay should be made to make bricks or they should be taken to the chief such parents can as well be called to the school and talk to them.
- Children felt it was their responsibility to make sure that they clear the surroundings and make the school surroundings look clean. Other things the children felt the school should look into were.
- School tools- they felt it was going to be better if the school bought the tools, which they should use during preventive maintenance.
- Balls- the balls for football and netball in the school be separated from the balls to be used by all in the school.
- Electricity is also needed in the school in order to make us study in the school.

#### Musakanya Basic School: School council

The school council was held on 14<sup>th</sup> may, 2005. It was chaired by the Head teacher for Musakanya Basic School, at 11:25 to 12:25 hours.

One class representative brought out the problem of water in the school. The head teacher responded that the school was going to work on that problem immediately because that concerned her too. The other class representative talked about the mixing of pupils when using the toilets. The head teacher in response to that problem said that since the school has six toilets, three will be for girls and the other three will be for the boys.

Another representative among the grade nines wanted to know why prep was not being conducted at the school. The head teacher told the pupils that they only come to make noise, they are never serious about their studies and that was very true. Another class representative complained that the head teacher refuses to handle certain problems they take to her such as fighting in school. She told them that they must follow the right channel of communication before the pupils take their problems to her.

The last problem, which was brought out, by one of the class representatives was the writing of notes on the board by pupils. The pupils were told that it was wrong for them to be writing notes on the board on behalf of the teachers.

The interesting meeting ended with a prayer, which was offered by a pupil, at 12:25 hours.

### **Achievements**

- a) Expansion of class and school councils to 12 schools in Kabale Zone and 4 Schools in Central Zone.
- b) Sensitisation of 89 Head teachers in Mpika District on school and class councils.
- c) School visits to 13 government schools and 6 community schools
- d) Formation of children's rights club at Kabale Basic and Icengelo community school in Kabale Zone.
- e) School administrators have started recognising the participation by pupils in decision making.
- f) Child participation has also improved the relationships between teachers and pupils.
- g) School administrators have started recognizing the participation by pupils in decision-making. This is seen by acting on their decisions.
- h) Participated in the workshop organized by the university of Zambia and Sheffield Hallam in England on the implementation of school and class councils in Zambia.

## **4. THE WAY FORWARD**

Implementation is needed through dialogue taking into account our dynamic nature of culture and the importance of culture continuity.

Hence the need of school and class councils in schools.

*Dr Pat Pridmore, Institute of Education University of London, 20 Bedford way, London. Children's Participation in Research and programmer development for school Health. Paper presented at the XVI world conference on Health Promotion and health education. (June 1998), San Juan, Puerto Rico.*

- Scaling out school and class councils to all schools in Mpika and eventually, the whole of Zambia.
- Strengthening family Pacs in schools in the Zone.
- Contributing to the writing of a manual on setting up and running class and school councils at national level
- Sharing the Mpika experience of child participation with interested parties
- Setting up an effective monitoring and evaluation system for implementation of class and school councils

- To continuously document the growth of class and school councils
- Continuously reflect on practice and find ways of ensuring the sustainability of class and school councils