

Lund University, Education/Sida

Advanced International Training on Child Rights, Classroom and School Management

**Participation, Provision and Protection of the Child.
Assessment of Awareness at School Level: The Case of
Sakata Primary, Domasi Demonstration Secondary and
Primary Schools, Zomba, Malawi.**

Final Report

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FOREWORD

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in co-operation with Lund University has developed a Programme covering Child Rights, Classroom and School Management. The guiding principle in the course and the whole training programme is the right to education of all children. The programme also tries to develop a child rights based approach in education. It is designed to give opportunities to compare and share experience with participants from other countries while taking into consideration the Convention of the Rights of the Child, Education for All and other internationally agreed declarations. A child rights based approach has the potential of contributing to the broader efforts of improving educational quality and efficiency, which is the goal of most developing countries.

The training programme consists of three phases. The first phase took place during 3 weeks in Sweden in May-June 2006. The main content of the first phase consisted of studies in the subject area, combined with visits to relevant Swedish institutions, including different schools. The training was aimed at stimulating the transformation of conventional top down approaches to teaching and learning to those that are participatory, rights based, learner friendly and gender sensitive. One of the objectives under this aim of the training was for the participants to develop skills, understanding and attitudes in favour of child rights based education at classroom and school level. By the end of this phase participants-30 from ten countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America outlined a project work to be developed in their countries upon their return. As the members of the Malawi team, we decided to focus on **Participation, Provision and Protection of the Child. Assessment of Awareness at School Level: The Case of Sakata Primary, Domasi Demonstration Secondary and Primary Schools, Zomba, Malawi.** The Malawian team consists of Gilbert Phiri and Misheck Munthali from Domasi College of Education and Florie Chagwira from Creative Centre for Community Mobilisation (CCRECOM).

The second phase consisted of a follow up seminar to present the progress in the development of the project work during 2 weeks in South Africa in October-November of 2006.

The third and last phase was a visit by our Mentor from Lund University in March 2007, when we together visited some key people in government and non-government organizations, to report the outcomes of our pilot project and appeal for support for the continuation of the activities initiated by the pilot project.

Our thanks are due to the Malawi Ministry of Education and Vocational Training for all arrangements that made it possible for us to undergo the training in child rights, classroom and school management. We acknowledge the help rendered by the South East Education Division Manager and the District Education Manager for Zomba rural in the implementation of this Project. We also acknowledge the support rendered to us by Domasi College of Education management and CCRECOM management which assisted us to undergo this training, as well as to take time off our daily duties to do follow up activities in the schools, regarding CRC.

We also extend our thanks to the Head Teachers of Sakata Primary and Domasi Demonstration Secondary and Primary Schools for allowing us to be in the schools for the different tasks of the project.

We are very grateful to Swedish International Development Co-operational Agency (Sida) for offering us the opportunity to this training. We also extend our gratitude to the people of Lund University for their technical support.

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1. LOCAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The study is being carried out in Malawi, which is in Southern part of Africa. It is bordered by Tanzania, Mozambique and Zambia to the North North-East, East-South-West and West respectively. It is 900 Kilometres long and its width varies between 80 Kilometres and 160 Kilometres. Malawi has a total area of 118, 484 square Kilometres. *Refer to map of Malawi below.*

Map of Malawi



Malawi has 3 political regions namely; northern, central and southern. The total population is about 12 million people and the southern Region is the most densely populated. The study is being conducted in the southern region and in Zomba District. The study does not involve the whole district but only two educational zones namely Mchengawedi and Nsondole.

Education System in Malawi

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the organization, development and financing of the formal public system of education in Malawi. The system of education is 8-4-4 comprising 8 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education and a minimum of 4 years of university education with few opportunities for pre-school.

This system is not rigid. There are some private institutions, which offer primary education in seven years. Such institutions follow 7-4-4 system. Some students join private educational institutions to pursue courses of their interest upon their Secondary School completion. Others join Universities at third year for their Bachelor Degree after obtaining their Diplomas from other colleges.

Organization of Education System

Ministry of Education

It is headed by the Minister of Education, who is assisted by the Principal Secretary for Education. All issues concerning education at a national level are handled by this ministry. Its offices are in Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi.

Division Education Level

It is headed by Division Education Manager. Malawi as a nation is divided into six educational divisions. Each division has more districts. All issues concern education in each division, are handled by the Division Education Manager. All educational developments in each division are reported to the ministry.

District Education Level

It is headed by District Education Manager. Each district which is divided in zones has an education manager who deals with educational issue at a district level. All educational developments in each district are reported to the Division Education Manager.

Zonal Level

It is headed by Primary Education Advisor (PEA). All educational issues at a zonal level are handled by PEA. They are the ones who supervise teaching, learning and assessment processes in primary schools.

Community Level

It is headed by Parent-Teacher Association chairperson. It is comprised of parents and teachers. It addresses issues concerning education at a community level for a particular school.

2. FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

Since the ratification of the convention on the rights of the child in 1991, Malawi has tried to carry out a number of child rights activities. It is one of the few countries that now boast of the children's parliament. It also has a Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare, which takes care of children's issues. There are also a lot of child rights activities in Malawi organised by Governmental and Non Governmental Organisations, amongst them: The Eye of the Child, Save the Children, UNICEF, Plan International, CCRECOM etc.

Despite all these, Malawi has not yet reached the required international standards stipulated in the CRC document. Gender imbalances continue to exist in schools, with boys outnumbering girls, and also cases of corporal punishments continue to haunt the school and the teaching and learning methodologies are predominantly teacher or content centred.

The learning environment, especially in rural areas is in many cases in a pathetic state. For instance, many schools do not have adequate educational facilities such as classrooms, toilets, desks, teaching and learning materials and recreational facilities.

Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to evaluate or assess the extent to which stakeholders (parents, pupils, teachers and the community at large) are aware of the rights of the child, especially in the context of the provision, protection and participation of the child, which in the long run affects the overall development of the child and the nation.

Objectives of the study

By the end of the study, we should be able to:

- Assess the level of awareness of CRC in the context of participation, provision and protection amongst different stakeholders at primary and secondary school levels of education.
- Conduct awareness campaigns amongst different stakeholders on CRC in the context of participation, provision and protection.
- Initiate the opening of child rights clubs in the three schools.
- Sensitise learners in these schools to form school and class councils.
- Bring a balance between rights and responsibilities of the child for better education in Malawi.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

3.1 Definition of the Task

The main focus of the study is to assess the extent to which stake holders (parents, learners, teachers and the community at large) are aware of the right

of the child in the context of the three pillars of CRC namely participation, provision and protection of the child. Thereafter the stakeholders will be sensitised on these three pillars for the best interest of the child.

Target Groups of the study

- Primary school learners
- Teachers
- Parents
- Education authorities
- Parents, teacher association (PTA)
- School management committees

Limitations

There are several limitations towards this study. Firstly, some targeted respondents refused to be interviewed. Secondly, transport was another major limitation in this study, since there is no direct funding to the study at hand. It was difficult accessing one of our targeted rural schools (Sakata Primary).

Another limitation is the pressure of work as we are expected to perform our daily responsibilities fully along side the study. This scenario forced us to be unable to meet some of the obligations of this study in a timely manner.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

Methods used include;

Individual interviews: These were used to collect quantitative data from learners, parents and educational authorities using structured questionnaires.¹



Interview in progress

Participatory appraisal. This method was used to collect qualitative data using the following tools: Focus group discussion and partial transit walk/

¹ Copies of research instruments used when collecting data are available on request.

observations. The interviews were carried out in both Chichewa and English languages depending on the choice of the respondent. Notes were taken during the discussions, interviews and observations.

Prior to this research, we asked for permission to conduct the study from District Education Manager of Zomba rural, Primary Education Advisors of Mchengawedi and Nsondole zones, head teachers of Sakata Primary, Domasi Demonstration Secondary and Primary schools. In all cases an oral permission was granted. We also sought permission from our respective immediate managers, to allow us conduct the study.

3.3 Resources for the project

The implementation of the pilot project in schools was not funded. As a consequence, our personal resources went into executing this study.

3.4 Work plan

The project activities were carried out as follows:

June 06	July 06	August 06	September 06	October 06	November 06
Briefing of DEM's office Meeting with head teachers, teachers, School Management Committee [SMC], Parent Teacher Association [PTA] and pupils	Interviewing pupils, head teachers, SMC,PTA, and community leaders	Follow-up on sampled children in their respective homes.	School visitations and observations Group discussions with different stakeholders	Data analysis and Report writing Presentation of the pilot study in South Africa	Presentation of the pilot study in South Africa Holding school open day meetings with teachers, parents and pupils on child rights

December 06	January 07	February 07	March 07	April 07	May 07
Holding media awareness sessions on CRC – radio, print and TV	Initiating and instituting CRS clubs in schools-schools-reinforcement of student councils	Holding public debates on CRC in schools	Meeting with the Mentor	Putting the report together	Finding a way forward

4. OUTCOMES OF THE STUDY

4.1 Pilot Study

Data Analysis:

A total of fifty (50) structured questionnaires were administered using individual interviews to twenty (20) learners and thirty (30) different education stakeholders (parents, teachers and educational authorities). There were also participatory appraisals in which ten (10) focus group discussions were also conducted to eighty (80) learners.

Findings and Discussions

Due to limited number of respondents and the nature of our instruments, we have analysed our data qualitatively. To guide the proper flow of the findings and subsequent discussions, the presentation of findings have been grouped and discussed in the following thematic areas.

(a) Awareness

With regard to awareness of CRC, Focus Group Discussions have revealed that most of the respondents have awareness or that they have heard of the rights of the child. This is also true with educational stakeholders. The study has revealed that almost everybody is aware of CRC. Interviews on learners have also revealed positive results on the awareness of CRC such most of them are aware that children have rights. This is the result of an aggressive way in which issues of child rights are disseminated in Malawi. There are different forms of media of communication through which CRC issues are disseminated to people. Some of them are: Radio, News Papers, Parents, and Teachers.

The study has also revealed that apart from the above mentioned sources of knowledge of rights of children; information is also disseminated through: The local TV, non governmental organizations that deal with rights advocacy, peers, during refresher courses, during informal or formal meetings or gatherings.

Quizzed on what rights children are endowed with a variety answers came out, most of which dwelt on the following: Education, choice of what they want, to be heard, to be brought up by parents, to object when ill-treated, to be protected, to speak their mind, to food, clothing and shelter, to association, to play, to life, to entertainment, to dress etc.

Thus, on rhetoric or theoretic knowledge on rights of the child, most respondents did well. Implying that in terms of awareness, there is generally a high degree of rights awareness as at this point. It is very questionable if this

exceptionally high level of knowledge, translates into practical upholding of children’s rights, as is observed by the findings of the Safe Schools Project (SSP) currently taking place, which notes that; “although the Malawian population is youthful (about half) being below 25 years, the Potential of the youth is undervalued, underutilized and at times misdirected”²

Such a situation according to the same report translates into critical challenges facing children and youths in Malawi, which includes: inadequate vocational training, sexual harassment, HIV/AIDS and other sexually Transmitted Diseases, unlicensed entertainment, non-involvement in decision making, and general abuse and exploitation, among other things.

(b) Participation

According to the SSP, children (youths), constitute a very important human resource whose being and contribution, is a major determinant of the current as well as future development of a nation. That granted, this study also sought to seek views of how pupils (children) participate either at home or in schools. It must be said that most of the respondents agreed to the fact that children participation is indeed paramount. Specifically, the table below summarizes forms of participation that were mention.

PARTICIPATION IN HOMES	PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS
<p>Household chores</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooking • Sweeping • Wash clothes/dishes • Draw Water • Farming or gardening • Going to church • Playing • Singing • Doing community work • Helping to make a decision (only one respondent) 	<p>In Lesson through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group work, pair work etc • In different talent e.g. PE, Soccer, Netball • Watering flowers, sweeping, cleaning windows • Belonging to Clubs • Playing • Singing • Having field trips • As school prefects.

² SSP

Thus, although most teachers, and, or parents are aware that it is important to engage pupils at various levels, generally the findings in the study reveal that, mostly, parents and teachers associate child participation to manual and supportive roles such as cooking, cleaning, farming, sweeping the surrounding environment etc (see the table above). Altitudes seem to indicate an accepted belief that beyond the above prescribed roles; children cannot be involved and taken seriously of other levels of participation such as decision-making and or problem solving either in the home or the school.

Although pupils are given leadership roles in the schools, and or classroom, it mostly is with an aim to help control or manage fellow pupils. With regard to the schools under this study it was apparently clear that not much involvement of pupils is beyond that, case in point being having a say in the formulation of school rules or nominating their school or class leaders.

In addition, the study has also revealed that teaching methodologies of most teachers in these schools are teacher centred. Most teachers dominate much in the lesson thereby hindering deep learning in their learners. Learners in such lessons have no access to teaching and learning materials.

However, at Domasi Demonstration Primary School, learners in junior primary are taught using learner centred methodologies. *Refer to the picture below.*



The study has also shown that most learners do not participate freely in cultural life and the arts at school since there is no time for that. At home most learners are not given time to rest or leisure as they are expected to work all day long. All these contradict with Article 31 of CRC in A World Fit for Children which states that *States Parties shall recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.* It continues to say that *States Parties shall respect and promote the rights of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life.*

(c) **Provision**

The study has revealed that it takes a lot to raise a child that grows and develops into an effective citizen. The following are some of the suggestions respondents put across to ensure that a child grows into a productive citizen:

- Ensure that teaching and learning materials are available in schools.
- Provide learners with their basic needs.
- Learners should be supervised and monitored in their work.
- Teachers should use participatory methods of teaching.

Despite that the respondents are aware of all these, in reality learners are poorly provided in schools and at home. The study has revealed that some teaching and learning materials such as learners' books are not adequate for learners hence they scramble for books when it is time for lesson activities. Several learners may use one book and this hinders full utilization of the school resources by learners. *Refer to the picture below.*



Pupils scrambling for one book at a primary school. Learning in a hard way.

In addition, classrooms at Sakata Primary School are not enough for the learners hence teachers tend to use every tree, which is around the school as a class.

However, at Domasi Demonstration Primary and Secondary Schools the situation is different. Learners are provided with enough and good classrooms.

In addition, Sakata Primary School is poorly furnished in its classrooms to an extent that learners sit on the floor using bricks as their chairs. However Domasi Demonstration schools are properly furnished that every learner sits on the desks. *Refer to the pictures below.*



This obvious gap between the two schools (one semi-urban and another rural based) can mean that a certain sector of rural learners in Malawi tend to receive second if not third class of education. Their right to education is thus heavily compromised.

The study has also revealed that libraries are not common in Malawian Primary Schools. In both primary schools, learners responded that they have no access to library. At Domasi Demonstration Primary School, we found the library, however learners stated that they have no access to it.

While at Sakata Primary School, both learners and teachers admitted that there is no school library. In addition this school has no toilets. Learners at this school use the bush, which is close to the school whenever they want to answer the nature's call.

However, at Domasi Demonstration Schools learners have good toilets with sewage system. Refer to the picture below.



In terms of sporting facilities, the study has revealed that both primary schools have inadequate facilities. Domasi Demonstration Schools have one football and netball each. At Sakata Primary School, there is no ball for learners.

The study has also revealed that the majority of the learners interviewed are poorly fed. In all our sampled schools, the schools do not give learners food during break time and lunch. Worse still, most learners are not given food as they are going to school hence they scramble for food, which is sold at the school by villagers. *Refer to the picture below.*



Even in their home they are poorly fed as most of them only have two meals in a day. Such a group of learners go to school without breakfast. The implication is that these learners learn while they are struggling with hunger. As a result, it can easily be assumed that their levels of concentration are bound to be affected.

In terms of learning materials, majority of the learners interviewed stated that they do not have any reading, and writing materials. Thus learning ends at school, there is no continuity of learning at home. The study has also revealed that most learners have no enough clothes. Most of the respondents stated that learners have few clothes. They stated that some learners have only school uniform as their clothing while others have few clothes in addition to the school uniform.

The study has also shown that majority of the learners interviewed are poorly housed due to high levels of poverty. Most of them live in grass thatched houses, which are normally small in size, but tend to accommodate more occupants.

Most of them do not study at night due to the absence of electricity, thus there is little or no education that goes on in such homes. All these contradict with **Articles 3 and 7** of CRC in *A World Fit for Children*.

(d) Protection

The study has revealed that the majority of the teachers, parents and other education authorities interviewed rated kids to be mostly safe in either schools or homes. Most of them generally denied physical beating of kids/pupils when they are on the wrong side of the law. They reported that they resort to counselling the pupil, especially in matters involving minor offences. When counselling fails, other forms of punishments are offered to learners, such as:

Sweeping,

Mopping and general cleaning of the surrounding

Calling parents to come and be part of the child discipline hearing team

Write reports of what happened.

Institute discipline Committee that hears children's cases.

Elastication (2 weeks) or suspension (3-6 weeks) from school depending on the offence.

The study has revealed that parents and teachers' concept of safety is different from that of pupils. According to SSP, unsafe environments constitute situations where teachers, parent or guardians are abusive towards pupils through verbal insults, giving unfair punishments and making sexual advances towards pupils. Basing on this definition, the study has revealed that the majority of the learners are not safe both at home and at school. At home, learners are not safe due to some or all of the following reasons: intimidation, denied to play, forced to do work all day long, sexual harassment by even their relatives, witchcraft, and corporal punishment. At school, learners are not safe mainly because of some of the following reasons: fights, sexual harassment by fellow learners or teachers, unsafe classrooms, lack of toilets, theft by fellow learners, and corporal punishment. Although there is little evidence that beating takes place in schools, the reality on the ground seem to condone and suggest that there is nothing wrong with beating a learner. It is not rare to see children being beaten by their parents when they have done something wrong. Teachers therefore find nothing wrong in doing the same. This act contradicts with **Article 37 section (a)** of CRC in *A World Fit for Children*, which states that *States Parties shall ensure that no child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.*

The study has also revealed that less than half of the learners are not safe due to poor and uncompleted classrooms. Learners at Sakata Primary School are really unsafe due uncompleted classrooms, which are currently used. In such classes learners are exposed to direct heat from the sun during dry season, rains during rain season, and cold during cold season. *Refer to the picture below.*



At the same school learners are also not safe due to unsafe classrooms. Some classes at this school have plunks hanging loose above learning kids. *Refer to the picture below.*



Such type of environment is so hazardous to learners since the plunks may fall on the learners while the lesson is in progress. In Malawi, the Nkomachi incident is still fresh in many peoples' mind, where a tree infested with bees fell on unsuspecting learners learning under it. Two innocent and young lives were lost in the process. Seeking education became a sad affair that ended in death. This contradicts with **Article 19** of CRC in *A World Fit for Children*.

The study has also revealed that learners are not safe in schools due to sexual harassments, which are prevalent there. Three-quarters of the learners interviewed, stated that schools are structures of sexual harassments especially on girls. They stated that in schools girls are faced with the following sexual harassments:
 Unsolicited sexual advances – whose rejection can lead to physical (slapping) or emotional abuse (mocking or sending out to class for no apparent reason).
 Unwanted touching of breasts or buttocks of girls.
 Peeping at their private parts when marking their work thus in case of teachers or using mirrors in case of boys.

These findings concur with those of SSP survey. *Refer to the table below.*

<i>Factor for unsafety</i>	Girls % Rating	Boys % Rating
Teachers Insults	55	56
Unfair Punishment	49	52
Fighting/bullying	44	34
Teachers Proposing girls	23	10
Teachers Proposing boys	4.2	0.5
Boys Proposing Girls	15.1	3.1

Source: SSP Findings

According to this survey, most of these forms of violence seem to take place in absence of teachers, although at times, it does take place in their presence, thereby condoning it.

All these contradict with **Article 34**, which state that *States Parties shall protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.*

According to these findings, although parents/teachers may not necessarily see clear forms of violence amongst pupils (children), children do indeed experience many forms of abuse that create fear in their minds. Teasing and bullying, sexual advancements from either teachers or fellow pupils or from members of the larger community- can, if unchecked, create emotional fear in a child. This can lead to a child dropping out of school, or developing other academically inappropriate behaviours.

4.2 Full implementation of the project

During the full implementation phase of the project, the Malawian team was guided by the following set of activities;

DATE	INSTITUTION	ACTIVITY
25/01/07	Sakata Primary	Meeting teachers, Parents & Class prefects
26/01/07	Domasi Primary/Secondary	Meeting teachers, Parents & Class prefects
01/02/07	Sakata Primary	Meeting Student council and all pupils
08/02/07	Demo Primary	Meeting Student council and all pupils
09/02/07	Demo Secondary	Meeting Student council and all pupils
12/02/07	DCE	CRC presentation to DCE community
10 th – 15 th March 2007, mentor's visit to Malawi, and to all the schools and other offices directly or otherwise involved with this program.		

Note: This is as the program appears in the letter communicated to schools, before commencement of the 3rd phase. However, due to realities on the ground, there were unavoidable changes to the dates, although the activities remained as outlined. (See the full letter in the appendix)

Meeting Teachers, Parents and Students Council members

These meetings took place at Sakata Primary, Domasi primary and secondary schools on different separate days. During this meeting, the team briefed the audience on the findings of the research based on the three major pillars that were being studied i.e. participation, provision and protection. Parents, teachers and learners were told of the deeper meanings and implications of the three pillars.



Parents and pupils pose for a photo after the awareness meetings and also in another room, pupils listen attentively during the awareness process.

The team also made an appeal to the audience, to offer the learners chance to participate fully, both at school and in their homes for them to learn better. It was also pointed out that the work given to the learners should match their ages. This emphasis was necessitated by the study findings that at times parents, and or teachers, overwork

the learners. For example, there were some reports by some students that before they come to school, they are first made to work in the gardens or do some other physically tasking manual work. This makes them mentally and physically tired, such that their level of concentration and participation in class is severely affected.

There was also an emphasis on the need to allow learners to positively and meaningfully participate in the teaching, learning and assessment procedures. This was also in view of discoveries of some classroom methodologies that were still centred on teachers.

Participation was also explained as involving the learners both in school and homes, in some form of decision making to promote high levels of acceptance levels of those rules. Learners themselves were asked to make full use of their opportunity to be in school by participating fully in all the school and classroom activities to enhance their learning.

Regarding provision, parents were asked to provide with basic necessities for learning such as books, pens, uniforms, packed meal, and exercise books to make their learning joyful. With regard to Sakata Primary school, we also made an appeal to the Parents Teacher Association (PTA), to provide learners with toilets, good classrooms; teacher office block, to ensure that there is a friendly, healthy and proper learning environment for learners. This concern arose from the fact that hitherto this meeting, Sakata had no toilets for the school, and the classroom infrastructure was in a dilapidated state. To make matters worse, the onset of rains had blown off the roofs of two classrooms – the only classrooms that previously had a proper roof.

On the same note, the students, through the students' council members present, an appeal was made to ensure that they take care of school surroundings and property.

As regards protection, it was noted during the meetings that although study findings showed that teachers and parents alike largely thought that the learners were protected; a deeper analysis of the situation had in essence revealed a lack of protection for the learners. For example, an abusive comments or treatment of a learner by teachers inflicted psychological fear in the learners, which resulted in learners fearing going school. Abusive parents in the homes in terms of beating or overworking the child also meant that in general, the child was not protected as well. As for girls, sexual advances by adults around the community, teachers as well as fellow pupils, all resulted in an atmosphere where there was no real security or protection for the girl learner. Worthy mentioning was the fact that if parents overwork a girl child before school, she may delay in coming to school, as a result of which she is exposed to more dangers of being sexually harassed as she walks alone to school.

With regard to Sakata, absence of toilets and unroofed classrooms as well as poorly finished structures, all contributed towards a teaching and learning environment that was very unsafe for the learner.

Meetings with the learners

There were also three meetings of this nature in the three study schools where we met learners on their own, although teachers were not necessarily barred from the meetings. During the meetings we emphasized the following issues:

Duties and responsibilities of the learners. We highlighted among them the following:

To realize that they are important and that they must take responsibility for their actions

Must respect themselves and also others

Must demonstrate respect for authority such as teachers and parents or other adults in their community

Must accept to lead when given a chance, as well as accept leadership of others

Should also safeguard their rights as well as rights of others.

There was an interactive process where we engaged learners by asking them CRC and rights related questions such as the following;

Explain the meaning of CRC

Explain the meaning of ‘the dignity of all persons shall be inviolable’

Discuss three things that children (youth) in Malawi need in order to grow into useful citizens.

Mention the three pillars of CRC

Who is the child according to Malawian constitution

What should the learners do to enjoy their learning in their respective schools

Mention three things that affect the education of the girl child in Malawi

Explain the meaning of ‘All are equal before the law’

What is the meaning of Universal Declaration on Human Rights

Explain the importance of the constitution of Malawi

Discuss the duties and responsibilities of school and classroom prefects

Through the token gifts given to those that contributed to these questions, lively discussions and debates followed.

There was a session where we emphasized on the expectations and duties of the students’ council (prefects). Prefects were instructed that apart from assisting the teachers they should also take part in decision-making. They were also reminded that they are learners as such they have to behave as learners not teachers. This was in view that some prefects were torturing fellow learners instead of assisting them to learn better. They were also told that they are a bridge between the administration and learners as such they have to present the views of the fellow learners and not what they just think.

The class prefects (monitors) were advised to conduct weekly meetings with their classes to evaluate their performance in that particular week. For example they would discuss how they came to school, to class and how they participated both at school and in class. They were also advised to be honest and exemplary as leaders in class. Depending on the urgency of the matter, they were encouraged to take these issues to class teachers.

The discussions also dwelt on the school council’s role where it was advised to conduct monthly meetings with the class prefects and receive reports on how they fared both at school and in their classes. During such meetings they are to find their successes and failures and find solutions to those they can. The findings should be taken to the administration for further discussion.

On the overall, the learners were encouraged to cooperate and be open with the prefects, while the prefects were encouraged to respect the rights of fellow learners as well as teachers.

CRC Presentation to Domasi College of Education Community

This meeting took place at Domasi College of Education where both lecturers and students attended. During this meeting the audience was sensitized on CRC, which is the most universally embraced human rights treaty in history and contains a comprehensive set of international legal standards for the protection and well being of children. The audience was informed that CRC takes into account the best interest of the child. It has three pillars, namely, participation, provision and protection. The audience was also informed of the principles that govern a World Fit for Children. Then we presented our research findings. The presentation was an eye opener to the audience. They appreciated the work done and the new message they got from us on the rights of the child. Some suggested that it would have been better if the project had covered the whole nation. Others questioned on the feasibility of the message we were disseminating. However, after telling them some of the developments that have already stated in the areas of study, they were convinced.

4.3 After the Pilot Project

It is difficult to precisely determine what the long term effects of this study will be like on the students, teachers, parents and the larger communities around which we conducted our study, in absence of a formal evaluation or impact assessment study. However, we could not help but to note some of the immediate results of our intervention, amongst them, the following;

At Sakata, it has been possible to revive the PTAs role into looking after the welfare of the school at large, and the students in particular. For example, after our meeting with parents and teachers, we have witnessed a commitment from parents to build toilets for the schools, as depicted in the picture below:



In the picture, a new toilets stands where previously, only a bush stood and was being used as a toilet- a result of intervention programs.

It was also pleasing to note that parents and teachers alike were indeed of the view that indeed learners have not been involved much in decision making both at school and in their homes. It is yet to be seen how deep and seriously the learners will begin to be involved in the decision making processes.

However, the prefects also agreed that their duty went beyond mere execution of punishments on their fellow pupils, but rather that they can help to mobilise and conduct meetings with fellow pupils be it at classroom or whole school level, to assess how best they can involve ideas from pupils in collective decisions that affect the daily running of their school life.

As is the case with change, some parents were still sceptical of the practicality of the interventions that we were suggesting. This is understandable putting into consideration the fact that many adult Malawians are coming from a background where the voice of a child or a learner was the last one to be heard in any serious decision making agenda. However, such meetings and gatherings if they continue will soon even reach the unreachable hearts.

Notable limitations

This study had a share of its own challenges, amongst them the following; Time factor was a challenge. The study was being done amidst the daily demanded normal duties in our usual core business as college lecturers. It was therefore critical to balance our time between this study and what is expected of us. This was not always easy.

The other challenge was mobility between our place of our work and the study area. Much as two of the study schools were within reach, one was slightly to the outskirts and we could only access it using hired bicycles. Faced with limited financial resources, it was also demanding on our part to meet all our practical logistics and appointments that would ensure that our study went according to plan and gave us desired findings.

It was not always possible to ignore basic and visible needs or necessities of the schools we visited and studied. So regardless of the financial challenges, we were at times challenged to dig deeper and assist. It was also felt amongst our respondents that we were funded, and so we could perceive that they had their own expectations, beyond what was possible from us. However, we were able, in many circumstances to explain that we were merely trying to find out the issues on the ground, and how, together with them, we might possibly find some solutions to the same.

High expectation from teachers

5. EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

Our own assessment of results of the project is that this has indeed been an eye opener, not only to us as players on the ground managing the study, but also to the entire education process in Malawi i.e. the parents, teachers, learners as well as school administrators as a whole. We have collectively gained greater insights in what indeed constitutes safety (protection), participation (involvement) and provision of and for the child, to enhance their learning process. There were many a time, when we were unable to isolate ourselves from the painful realities being experienced by teachers and students in some of the schools. As a result, although we were heavily constrained ourselves, we tried the best we could to go beyond mere words of encouragement. For instance, Sakata primary school had neither netball nor football to engage pupils into

some form of play during their free hours or time. We thus provided the same, not only to Sakata, but also to Domasi Demonstration primary and secondary schools.



In the pictures above, to the left, students receive a token gift of football and netball, and just after that, excited students take to the field to the play.

We were also able to buy for Sakata School, five litre chemicals (solignum) to guard against termites that destroy poles with which schools build their toilets. We hope that with this minimal insignificant help, the build toilets will be able to last longer than they have done in the past, as we await better and more permanently well built toilet and other school block infrastructure.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This survey has been an eye-opener to us since we have learned a lot from it and some of them have been discussed below. We have learned that when the community is not taking part in school management, learners' participation, provision and protection are negatively affected. We have also learned that when participate in decision making both in the school and in the home, their contribution towards the development of these two is great. There is mutual relationship between learners and teachers hence good learning environment is created. In addition, even their involvement in the implementation of the agreement made is high. We have also learned that when children, parents and teachers have been sensitised on child rights issues, they are aware of what is required for the child/learner to participate, be provided for and be protected. We have also learned that despite the campaigns on child rights in Malawi, the majority does not fully know what rights of the child are and how to respect them.

Basing on findings, there is a great need for an intervention in Malawi especially in sensitizing people on how they can assist learners in attaining quality education. This sensitization should be focused much on the three pillars of CRC namely participation, provision and protection. As of now, there is apparent high degree of awareness of the rights of the child. This is yet to be matched by tangible and practical efforts to translate this awareness into school or home friendly environments for learners and children of Malawi.

In order to sustain the initiative that has been made, we recommend the following:

There should be a national sensitisation of the rights of children basing much on the three pillars namely participation, provision and protection.

The Ministry of Education should consider incorporating issues of child rights by orienting all education officers on child rights. In addition, child rights should be taught in all education institutions.

Non-Governmental Organisations especially those with a focus on child affairs should take child rights issues as a priority so that in most of their activities the best of the child should take the central focus.

Head teachers and teachers should perceive children as partners in teaching and learning process to enhance issues of teaching and learning in Malawian schools.

There is a need for all organisation that are involved in issues of children, especially in education sector, to form a common front that will coordinate monitoring, making follow-ups on issues of child rights in Malawi.

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