

Lund University Education/ SIDA

Advanced International Training on Child Rights, Classroom and School Management

**The Right of a Child to Participation and Protection in Education.
Handling of late comers to School:**

A case of Zomba CCAP Primary and Namikasi Secondary Schools in Malawi.

Final Report

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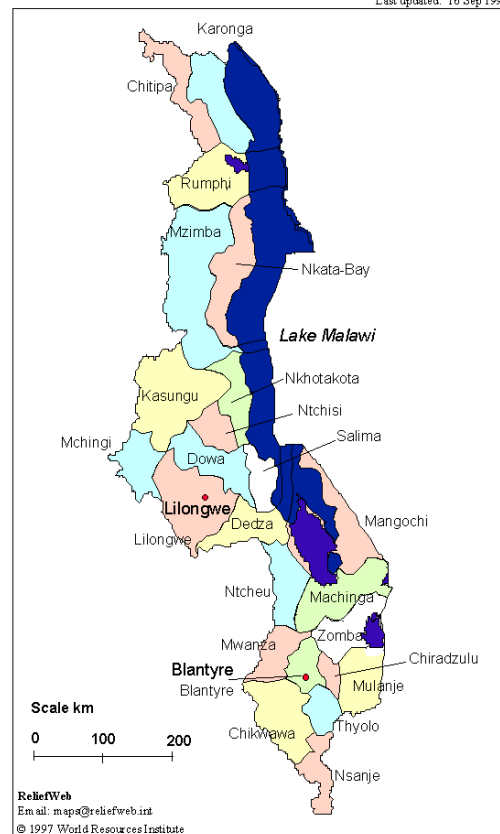
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Malawi districts

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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 program 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 on 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 September-October 2007. 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 outlined a project work to be developed in their countries upon their return. As members of the Malawi team, we decided to focus on **The Right of a Child to Participation and Protection in Education. Handling of late comers to School: A case of Zomba CCAP Primary and Namikasi Secondary Schools.**

The second phase consisted of a follow up seminar to present the progress in the development of the project work during 2 weeks in India in March of 2008.

The third and last phase was a visit by our Mentor from Lund University in August 2008, when we together visited some key people in government and non-government organizations, reported the outcomes of our pilot project and appealed for support for the continuation of the activities initiated by the pilot project.

Our thanks are due to all the District and National Educational Authorities 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 District Commissioner (Lilongwe), the Executive Director (MANEB) and the Education Division Manager (SWED) where the change agents hail from respectively, for the implementation of this Pilot Project. We also acknowledge the support rendered to us by immediate supervisors and colleagues to take time off from our daily duties to do follow up activities in the schools, regarding CRC.

We also extend our thanks to the Head Teachers and staff of Zomba CCAP Primary and Namikasi Secondary Schools for allowing us to be in the schools for the different tasks of the project.

We are very grateful to Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) for offering us the opportunity to participate in this training. We also acknowledge Lund University CRC ITP Staff for all their worthwhile coordination and facilitation, which actually improved our thinking about Child Rights. A very special appreciation to the rare

assistance we have obtained from our mentor *Dr. Bereket Yebio*. He is the architect of the results of this change project work.

ABBREVIATIONS

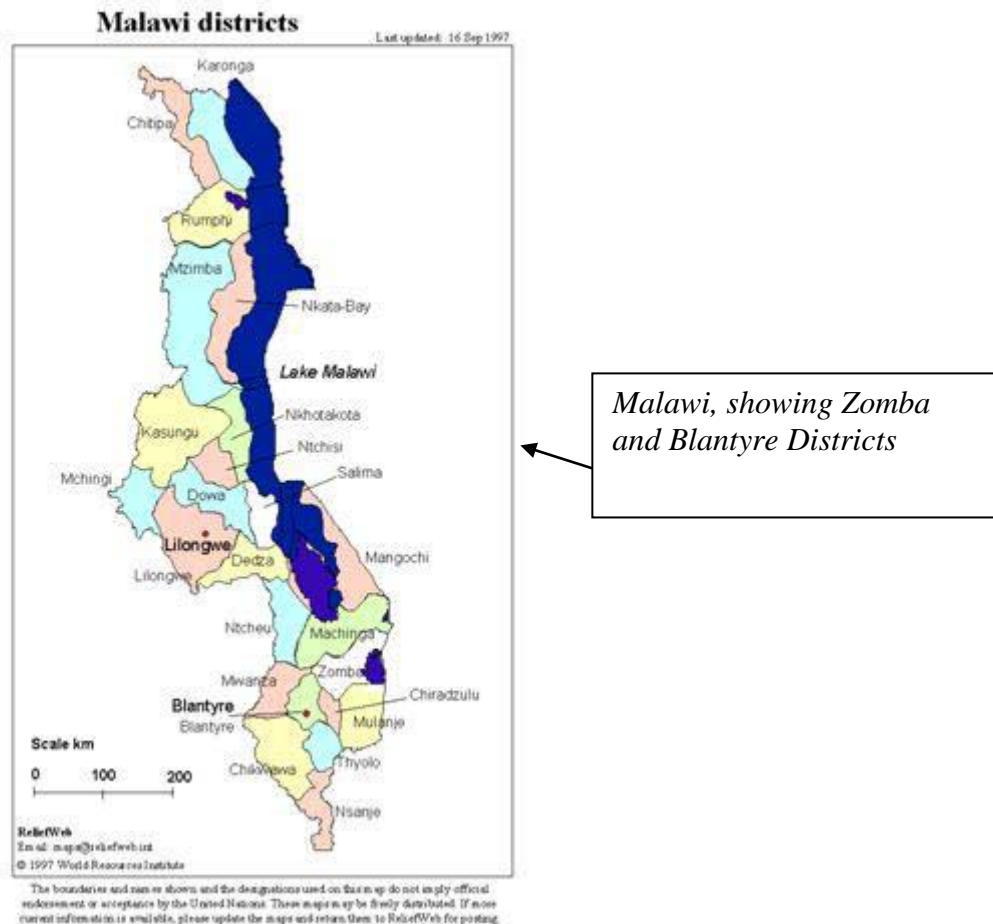
CCAP	Church of Central African Presbyterians
CED	Central Eastern Division
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRECCOM	Creative Centre for Community Mobilisation
DCP	Democracy Consolidation Programme
DEM	District Education Manager
DSS	Direct Support to Schools
EDM	Education Division Manager
HQs	Headquarters
ITP	International Training Programme
MANEB	Malawi National Examinations Board
MK	Malawi Kwacha (Currency)
PEA	Primary Education Advisor
PTA	Parents Teachers Association
SMC	School Management Committee
SWED	South West Education Division

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<i>PAGES</i>
1. Local background to the Project	6
2. Formulation of the Problem, Aim and Objectives	7
3. Implementation of the Project	8
1. Defining the Task, Target group(s) and Limitations	
2. Choice of Methods – How we implemented the Project	
3. Collection of Data/Material	
4. Participants in the Project Work	
5. Resources for the Project	
6. Drawing up a Work Plan and a Time Table	
4. Outcomes of the Project	10
1. Pilot Project	
2. Full implementation of the Pilot Project	
3. After the Pilot Project	
5. Evaluation of the Results of the Project	18
6. Conclusions and recommendations	24
7. References	26
8. Appendices	27
8.1 Teachers' Interview Guide	
8.2 Learners' Interview Guide	
8.3 PTA Interview Guide	
8.4 Policy on Latecomers (Zomba CCAP)	

1. LOCAL BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT

The change project has been carried out in Malawi. Malawi is a country in southeastern part of Africa. It is bordered by Tanzania to the north; Mozambique to the east, south and southwest; and Zambia to the west. Malawi has a total land area of 118484 square kilometres.



The change project has been conducted in southern Malawi in the Districts of Zomba and Blantyre. One School each was chosen from the said districts. This project therefore involved Zomba CCAP Primary and Namikasi Secondary Schools.

EDUCATION SYSTEM IN MALAWI

Malawi's education system follows a structure of 8-4-4 system. This comprises 8 years of primary, 4 years of secondary and 4 years of tertiary or University education. The pre-primary schooling does not fall under the ministry of Education. There are many private institutions that offer primary, secondary and university education. This project focuses on government schools where the ministry of Education is responsible for the organisation, development and financing of service delivery.

2.0 FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Ministry of Education started free primary education in 1994/95 in accordance with article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This resulted in the increase of about one million learners at the start of the Free Primary Education and a 60% increase in standard one enrolment. However, total primary enrolment has stabilised at around three million a year since 2000. At the start of the primary cycle, 50% of those enrolled are girls, but the ratio falls to 43% at the end of the cycle. Similarly, at Secondary School level, entry ratio between boys and girls is 1: 1, thus 50% of those selected are girls but by the end of the senior secondary level only 44% completes.

As a result of this, the Ministry of Education's mission statement according to the Policy and Investment Framework (PIF) document, focuses on the expansion of the secondary school system with a view to accommodating the drastic increase in the number of primary school graduates; and also allow more dropout girls back to school. Most of the policies like the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), and Policy Investment Framework (PIF) are derived from International Charters like the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and Education For All (EFA), with the aim of achieving the global standards of Education access and attainment.

However, with the increasing rate of school dropouts, repetition and absenteeism, it remains a challenge whether the set goals will be achieved. One of the contributing factors is lack of effective integration of School-based Child Rights Principles in our schools.

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. These Child Rights activities are organised by both Government and Non Governmental Organisations. Amongst them are Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare, The Eye of the Child, Save the Children, UNICEF, Plan International, and CRECCOM, just to mention a few.

Despite all these, Malawi still has a long way to reach the required international standards stipulated in the CRC document. Apart from school dropouts, gender imbalance continues to exist in schools with boys outnumbering girls. As this is not enough, a good number of absenteeism cases attribute punishments as the reason they choose to absente themselves from school at certain times. While punishment is regarded as one factor encouraging regular attendance at school, on the other hand it is a way that prevents students from reporting to school when they notice an impending punishment on the way. It is with this background that we embarked on this project to help schools find ways in which they can prioritise Child Rights based management in Schools as well as the community, under the theme "The Right of the Child to Participation and Protection in Education.

2.1 AIM OF THE CHANGE PROJECT

The aim of this project was to investigate how schools handle latecomers in the context of promoting participation and protection of a child as he /she labours to meet the right to Education.

2.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

By the end of this project we intended to:

- Assess the causes of late coming to school
- Sensitise learners on the impact of late coming at school
- Reduce number of learners coming late at school
- Improve learners' participation and involvement in school activities
- Encourage formulation of school based policies on late comers accepted by all stakeholders

3.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT

3.1 *Defining the Task, Target Groups and Limitation*

The main focus of the project was to investigate how schools handle latecomers in promoting participation and protection of learners in education. Thereafter Head teachers, teachers, learners, parents, Parents Teachers' Association (PTA), School Management Committees (SMC), Primary Education Advisors (PEA), District Education Managers (DEM) and Education Division Managers (EDM) were to be sensitised on the impact of denying learners participation in Education due to late coming at school. These school level stakeholders were then to be encouraged to formulate school policy accepted by them all that will improve learner participation in school activities.

The target groups of the project were:

- Primary and Secondary school learners
- Head teachers and teachers
- Parents
- Education Authorities
- Parent Teachers Associations and
- School Management Committees

The project was not without limitations. Firstly, no direct funding was available. Secondly, there was pressure of routine work, which limited the operation of the project work as the change project was carried out concurrently with our daily duties at work. Thirdly, during the course of the project, learners had to break off for summer holiday, which delayed the conduction of some interviews.

3.2 Choice of methods- How we implemented the Project

Two schools were chosen to participate in the change project. One of the schools is Zomba CCAP primary school in Zomba and the other is Namikasi secondary school in Blantyre Rural. Both of these schools are day schools where learners commute to and from school.

SAMPLING

Purposive, random and convenience sampling methods were used. Firstly, the primary school was taken from an urban environment while the secondary school was picked from a rural setting so as to source behaviours of learners in regard to late coming and participation from two different environments. Secondly, the learners interviewed comprised latecomers, prefects and randomly selected groups. Even learners doing self-boarding (those renting accommodation on their own from local house owners) were also picked.

3.3 Collection of Data/ Materials

In this project work, we used interviews, observation, focus group discussion and documentation review to collect data from learners, head teachers, teachers, support staff, PTA members and owners of self-boarding facilities.

In the actual process of interviews, semi-structured interview guides were used, *see appendix 8.1*. While interviews were in progress, a digital camera was used to take pictures of events as well as interviewees who were willing. It was also planned that apart from interviews, information on late coming to school be verified by independent observation. This was done at least twice a week in Zomba from January to February 2008; and three times at Namikasi in Blantyre early in the morning as children were going to school. Common views from groups of targeted respondents were also sought through focus group discussions. These discussions were conducted with a group of teachers, support staff, learners, PTA and SMC members.

School administrative and management documents were also scrutinised. This was aimed at ascertaining whether responses given during interviews were supported by sound documentation. Examples of documents scrutinised were: School rules and regulations (which were heavily screened on the basis of their child friendliness); enrolment figures, staffing list, see table below; dropouts, latecomers' statistics and others. During data collection, notes were taken.

3.4 Participants in the Project work

Participants in the project have been the three change agents (compilers of this report), EDMs, teachers, learners, support staff, PTA and head teachers.

3.5 Resources for the Project

Office resources were used at times like vehicle and computers, but mostly personal resources have been used since the project was not funded. Even production of copies for the report has used personal resources.

3.6 Drawing up a Work Plan and a Time Table

We designed the Project activities to run as follows:

October 2007	November 2007	December 2007	January 2008	February 2008	March 2008
Formulation of interview guide. Choice of schools Seeking consent from EDMs, DEMs, H/T	School visit for data collection Interviewing stakeholders Conducting focus group discussions and observations	Data analysis Report writing	Feedback to schools	Monitoring Report writing	Presentation in India
April 2008	May 2008	June 2008	July 2008	August 2008	
Implementation of the project in schools	Follow up visits in schools	Follow up visits in schools Formulation of school based policy	Finalisation of detailed report writing Report sent to Mentor for comments	Mentor's visit Final report ready for submission	

4.0 OUTCOMES OF THE PROJECT

4.1 Pilot Project

The preparations for the pilot project commenced during the ITP period in Sweden in September 2007 where we drew the entire work plan. Upon arrival back home, we started by seeking consent from the EDMs and DEMs as well as the Head teachers of the participating schools. Written and verbal permissions were granted in Zomba and Blantyre respectively. The Head teachers gave us verbal permissions. After obtaining permissions we came up with a common interview guide for use in both schools.

School visits began in November 2007 in Zomba with interviews to both teachers and learners including the Head teacher. Two visits were conducted by December 2007. In Blantyre, only one visit was carried out to the school in December 2007. However, all these visits mostly involved interviews with teachers as learners were on a two-month summer recess between November and December 2007.

When schools opened for 2008 academic year on January 7, between January and end February, a total of three visits were made to each of the schools. This is when more

information/data was collected. Though most of the information the interview guides looked for was basically qualitative, some quantitative data was purely inevitable.



Zomba CCAP Headteacher during interviews

Data Collection in progress at Zomba CCAP



Interviewing late comers at Zomba CCAP



Meeting with Prefects at Namikasi



Interviews with teachers at Namikasi

Initial Data Analysis

The interview guides sought information from the respondents in the areas of: knowledge of child rights and connected issues, child participation in decision making in schools, participation in instruction delivery process, involvement of parents and community in school activities, cases of late coming and extent, reasons for coming late to school, mode of redressing the problem and how it is conducted.

With a view of having a clear and fair analysis, the two schools were treated separately.

Zomba CCAP Primary School

Zomba CCAP Primary School is an urban school right in the heart of the former colonial capital (municipality), Zomba, which during the course of the project work was elevated to status of a city. The city of Zomba is in the southeastern region of Malawi. As a mission school, it was established by the Church of Scotland missionaries. It is under the jurisdiction of Blantyre synod of the CCAP. The school is situated along the main road to Lilongwe, the current capital, and Mangochi, the southern lakeshore town of Malawi. The school has a catchment area of nearly 4-5 kilometres. The community it serves is of mixed economic status. On the mountain slope is a middle class community, while overlooking this, is a poor class community who supply industrial labour to businesses within the city. It has an enrolment of 568 children, where 288 are boys while 280 are girls. The staffing list is 24 in total with the Head teacher inclusive. 20 of these teachers are female and 4 are male.



Zomba CCAP
Administration Block

The school has adequate number of classrooms, 19 in total. There are 5 pit latrines each for girls and boys. About 14 flash toilets for girls, which were vandalised, have been rehabilitated. The boys' block of 7 toilets is yet to be rehabilitated. The school is enclosed in a fence. The tables below show additional information on infrastructure, enrolment and staffing for the two schools.

INFRASTRUCTURES AND UTILITIES

	ZOMBA CCAP	NAMIKASI
Playing field	Available	Available
Administration Block	1	1
Classrooms	19	8
Laboratory	N/A	2
Library	N/A	1
Hall	1	1
Fence	Available	Available
Water	Available	Available
Electricity	Available	Available
Toilets	Adequate	Adequate
Teachers' Houses	Available but not adequate	Available but not adequate

STAFFING AND ENROLMENT FIGURES

	STAFFING		ENROLMENT	
	MALE	FEMALE	BOYS	GIRLS
ZOMBA CCAP	4	20	288	280
NAMIKASI	11	6	142	122

Knowledge of Child Rights

All the learners interviewed indicated that they knew that they have rights. Among the rights cited were: right to education, and the right to play. However, their level of knowledge of child rights is minimal. Their source of knowledge in child rights are class activities and “Galeta ya Ufulu”, booklet, which is simply put, Trolley of rights booklet.

Participation in Decision Making

Learners in the school participate in decision making when it comes to choosing school and class monitors. Here they are given chance to elect monitors and the results are taken as recommendations to school management. The management team then looks at other factors like behaviour to come up with a final list of prefects. Secondly, it has already been stated that the school is along the main road. The school established a road safety committee to oversee the safe passage of school children across the road in the morning of every school day. Originally, traffic controllers, selected among school children themselves, were apportioned days on which a number of them were to work on the road. However, it was noted that others were not managing to come in time to the road for their duty. When learners were consulted, they expressed dissatisfaction with the arrangement. As a response to a way forward, learners suggested that the opportunity be left open to all traffic controllers so that anybody who got early to the road should control traffic for fellow children. The suggestion was taken and since then, everything is working smoothly. However, it was noted that most of the times where involvement of children is applicable; children are not consulted nor involved.

Participation in Class Activities

Children mostly participate in class activities through role-playing in lessons such as life skills. They also give responses to questions posed during lessons. However, they are not involved in planning what and how they are supposed to cover or learn. They are rarely involved in the preparation of learning materials like models, realia, charts as well as textbooks.

Though the school is under the Direct Support to Schools (DSS) initiative under World Bank, only teachers and School management committee (SMC) are consulted when procuring teaching and learning materials. There is no indication that children or their representatives are consulted.

Cases of Late Coming

There are indeed cases of coming late to school in the morning. For example, in the conduction of our project work, the first day had a record of 7 children, the second day had 12, the third day had 8 and the fourth day had 20. These numbers compared to the school enrolment are not worrisome quantitatively, but when looked at from the way this influences others to toe in the same line, then it could be dangerous. There is also an indication of a fluctuating figure of late comers from day to day. This if not checked might have an impact on children's participation in class activities.

Amongst the reasons cited as causes for late coming were: playing on the road as they go to school; doing of morning household chores; and sleeping late in the previous night due to watching Television. The fact of distance was not mentioned as the major cause.

How Late Coming is addressed

Late coming to school is addressed by administration of punishment to learners concerned. Firstly, names of those late are written by monitors and submitted to teachers. Punishment is given by teachers and monitored by school monitors. All teachers interviewed indicated that punishment is given after classes. However, this was disputed by learners who said that most of the time they are given punishment in the morning before being admitted to class.

The common mode of punishments given is generally lighter and appropriate to the age of learners. These include: sweeping the classroom floors and the school grounds, collection of waste papers and litter, mopping, slashing/ clearing grass and at times, digging of rubbish pits.

However, there are still cases where heavy and undue punishments are meted out to learners. A good example is a boy, between 9 and 11 years old who was assigned to uproot a big tree stump while his friends were learning in standard 4. The teacher only withdrew the boy from the spot upon observing that one of the project members was concerned and drawing much attention to the matter. The second incident is a girl between 10 and 12 years old, who was found very late in the morning coming from home with a hoe in her hands. It was learnt that the girl was sent back home to specifically pick own equipment to perform a grass clearing punishment in the school. This was done while others were busy learning. The project team found that in this practice, the girl was arbitrarily denied her right to learn for the day.

There were also some reports of teachers whipping learners when found in the wrong, including late coming to school.

NAMIKASI SECONDARY SCHOOL

Namikasi secondary school is a modern co-education day school located along the main road to Mwanza and Lilongwe in Blantyre Rural Education District. It was built under World Bank support project. It opened its doors to the public in 2003. It has double stream arrangement of classes. It has comparatively adequate teaching and learning facilities except teachers' houses. There are ramps for persons with disabilities and is enclosed in a fence. Its catchment area goes as far as 10-13 kilometres radius. The community it serves is mostly dependent on subsistence farming and therefore, poor. Currently it has an enrolment of 264 but has a capacity of 320.



↑
 Administration Block

Knowledge of Child Rights

Interviews with both teachers and learners indicated that they know that children have rights. Examples given by teachers include: rights to education, privacy, life, to be heard when found by the law to be in the wrong. Learners also gave similar forms of rights plus the right to participation. Only one teacher amongst those interviewed, expressed doubts on the concept of child rights.

Participation in Decision-making

Learners' participation in decision making is reasonably good in the school. For example, there is a student body, which is very active. This holds meetings 2-3 times in a term and takes student concerns to school management for consideration. Some other notable decisions made by learners include:

- Decision to start self-boarding in premises close to the school;
- Roll calling of students going for studies during week ends
- Suggestion to allow selling of foodstuffs from small scale business women in school campus
- Decision for a student contribution towards procurement of additional computer accessories.



↑ Girls ↑ Boys
 SELF-BOARDING PREMISES

All above decisions were either initiated by, or arrived at with students' maximum influence and opinion. Management team also holds focus group discussions with the student body and concerns raised during such meetings are looked into with a view to addressing them.

Learners are also involved in planning for activities in the term. However, it was further noted that the student body is not involved in the entire annual planning and budgeting for the school. This is one of the areas that the school needs to look into if maximum provision is to be realized.

Participation in Class Activities

Learner participation is mostly in the form of take home assignments, other wise their participation during lessons is mainly that of listening and giving responses to questions posed in a fully question and answer dominated system of instructional delivery. Teacher centred methodology is used in the school. When asked to explain why this is so, the head teacher attributed the problem to lack of teachers. But after verification, the number of teachers was found to be within manageable levels.

This means therefore that learners' interests are not borne in mind when teachers are planning for the lessons and during the actual lessons. There is a lot the school has to do in this area.

Cases of Late Coming to School

There are many cases of late coming in the school. Almost half of the learners come late to school in the morning of every school day. The following are reasons given for coming late to school:

- Most students cover long distances to and from school. There is an average of 8-10 kilometres of distance covered.
- Starting off late due to fear of thugs on the way
- Household chores in the morning
- Late preparation of food.

Apart from the latter three reasons, it was verified that indeed learners cover long distances.

Modes of Addressing the Problem

School day starts at 7.40 a.m. and any one who comes 10 minutes before starting time is pronounced late. All those coming later than that are pronounced very late. Once students are late, their names are initially written by prefects and later recorded by teacher on duty. They are then allowed in class to learn for the whole day. Punishments are then administered after classes. The learners themselves also verified this. Only those who wilfully skip punishments are then forced to do them in the morning of the next school day. The sort of punishments given, include; mopping, sweeping, grass clearing, flower gardening among others. Punishment is given as many times as it is applicable to an individual regardless of distance one covers every day. This is based on the principle of equality.

However, after noting that a lot of learners were struggling to get to school in time, a meeting of parents, community, and the school management together with students themselves, resolved to recommend self- boarding for those that could afford.

Currently, a good number of learners are now residing in premises close to the school.

At the beginning, there were no communication and collaboration between the school and landlords. As a result, there were increasing cases of pregnancy and subsequent dropouts. When the issue was reviewed, the meeting resolved to start a girls' hostel construction project. A proposal was written and submitted to well-wishers. At the start of the change project, the hostel project had just secured funding to the tune of MK4 million from the LION'S CLUB of Blantyre. The actual construction is scheduled for commencement in June 2008. However, with the change project in the school, communities have mobilized themselves to kick-start the project a little bit earlier. At present a foundation has already been set up.

This is believed to be the only solution to the problem, as continued efforts to punish the student are not bearing any fruits. In other words late coming is still high and punctuality has not improved. The factor of distance is still rising highly.

These findings were compiled and a report was given and explained to each participating school in April and May 2008.

4.2 Full Implementation of the Pilot Project

The full implementation of the change project commenced with the giving of feedback to each participating school soon after attending the second phase Workshop in India in March 2008. We briefed the schools on the results of pilot project phase between April and May 2008. During this time we centred much on sensitisation of teachers on Child Rights concepts and issues after noting that there were big gaps in awareness amongst members of staff in matters of child rights. Adequate copies (11-14) of CRC were distributed to each school so that they could acquaint themselves with detailed issues. A booklet by CED of the Ministry of Education, on active community participation in whole school development, was also shared and handed over to each of the schools. We also had time to talk to some of the landlords for self-boarding students at Namikasi Secondary School.

Issues raised During Feedback Sessions

Among the issues raised during discussions are: lack of proper record keeping on late coming to school at Zomba CCAP School. Still at Zomba CCAP, other issues raised were concentration on Punishments without exploring other avenues for problem solving, none admittance by some teachers that children have rights, lack of parental involvement in solving problems such as late coming to school.

Similarly for Namikasi Secondary School, though some efforts are being applied, we advised teachers to conduct own soul searching that they may see merits in participatory approaches in lesson delivery. Secondly, since the school had not yet formed a special child rights club, teachers were advised to explore ways in which such a club could exist and hence contribute positively in the management of school affairs.

Lastly, we sensitised schools on the need to have a school policy on Child Rights in general, and late coming, in particular.

Currently the schools are working on the areas raised. For Namikasi Secondary School, the hostel block whose foundation is now made solid with concrete is now under construction.

They have also intensified their collaboration with the land lords to safe guard the welfare of learners accommodated in their premises. A new child rights club has been formed but no report of its activities has been recorded.

For Zomba CCAP Primary School, fellow teachers have started sensitising colleagues on the merit of observing child rights principles in school. They have emphasised much on ensuring the well being of children through enhancing the value of responsibility in taking care of their school environment.



Teachers being briefed on school policy formulation- Zomba CCAP

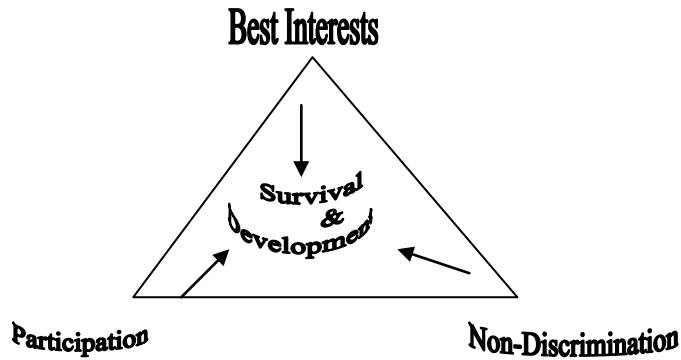
Both schools are in the process of developing school-based policy on child rights with special emphasis on late coming to school. Since the policies are just being developed, we shall keep on monitoring the schools on the extent of their adherence to the set policies up until June 2009.

4.3 After the Pilot Project

Lessons drawn from the pilot project will serve as guiding platform for extension of the child rights based school management concepts to other schools.

5. EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

Child Rights, as a special category of human rights, exists with the understanding that children are mostly vulnerable in society and that people need to take deliberate efforts to help children see the essence of humanity within themselves. This evaluation is based on the findings obtained in the project schools in relation to the 2Ps (Participation and Protection), which were the major focus of this change project. To begin with, it is important to bear in mind that the project was geared towards achieving the following: assess the causes of late coming to school; sensitise learners on the impact of late coming at school; reduce number of learners coming late to school; improve learners' participation and involvement in school activities and encourage the formulation of school based policies on late comers accepted by all stakeholders. The child rights perspective, upon which this project is solely based, is summarised by four main principles, namely: *non-discrimination*; *the best interest of the child*; *survival and development*; and *participation*. Generally, the interdependence that exists amongst these principles is represented in the diagram below.



Save the Children (2005)

Once all the principles above are adhered to, the school environment will be motivating to the child. The Non-Discrimination Principle aims to reduce discrimination in three areas: i.) *against individual children*, ii.) *against special groups of children such as children with disability*, and iii.) *against the population group as a whole*. The best interest of the child Principle implies that when making decisions that affect children, the institutions such as schools must clearly assess the corresponding impact on children (learners). In this case the best interest of the child should be “of primary consideration”, relative to the interest of adults (teachers, support staff, parents and community). The Participation Principle allows children to participate in decisions and actions that may affect them, the participation of which should be in line with their growing (evolving) capacities. The Survival and development Principle appeals to those in positions to ensure that the child’s right to life is safeguarded to the maximum extent possible in their operations.

So far it has been found that cases of late coming exist in both schools. However, there are differences in that, late coming is more acute at Namikasi Secondary School than Zomba CCAP Primary School. This arises from the fact that learners at Namikasi travel very long distances compared to their counterparts at Zomba CCAP. Despite these differences, it has been observed that late coming has an impact on children participation at both schools. At Namikasi, for example, classes commence at 7.30 a.m. and once late, learners miss the first 40 minutes period. This means that a learner misses a total of 3 hours and 20 minutes of learning in a week, which is quite substantial. At Zomba CCAP, a good number of learners who are late are punished right away in the school grounds while lessons are in progress. This problem was immediately addressed by school management in the course of the project. Learners are now allowed in classes up until the day’s lessons end and then do punishments. However, the Namikasi problem requires a rather long-term solution, but still the school has already started doing something on the problem (*refer to 4.1*).

As a result of these observations, learners in the habit of coming late in both schools were sensitised on the extent of loss in their educational attainments weekly, monthly and annually. Upon understanding the size of loss, the learners expressed their commitment to make all efforts to control the factors that directly border within their own attitudinal shifts such as being playful on the way to school, and waking up late in the morning. *See the table below.*

REASONS FOR LATE COMING IN PERCENTAGES

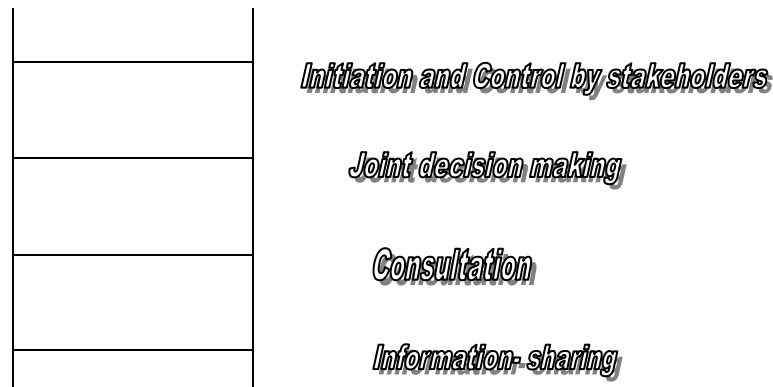
20 LEARNERS INTERVIEWED FOR EACH SCHOOL

REASON	ZOMBA CCAP	NAMIKASI
Distance	10%	50%
Household chores	40%	25%
Rising Up late in the morning	40%	5%
Playing on the way	10%	5%
Television viewing	40%	0
Fear of thugs	-----	15%

Shaded parts are typically related and refer to the same point

Due to this commitment, late coming in the two schools, has greatly been reduced. It has taken the collaborative understanding between learners, parents, the community and school management to achieve this. The stakeholders have even pledged to work harder to reduce further, current levels of late coming to school. And it needs to be stated here that this is more apparent at Namikasi.

Still on participation, the two schools have gone a step ahead in ensuring that learners participate in the running of affairs. Prefect bodies are available in both schools. These bodies are helping to promote the spirit of responsibility and independence in decision-making. At Zomba CCAP Primary, children choose clubs and societies as they wish, yet still with some guidelines, and contribute to activities in the clubs. The road safety club is another example of student involvement. The Prefects also supervise Manual work (cleaning classrooms). In both schools there is greater opportunity for play within the school grounds. This is done in various sporting areas like football, netball, table tennis, volleyball, basketball, and others. This is found to be in line with the provision in article 31 of CRC. Namikasi Secondary School has gone ahead in supporting the smooth and conducive integration of disabled children in school activities in line with the stipulation in article 23.3 of CRC. Students also participate in school activities in many ways. The Prefect body meets twice a term to consider issues arising. Pertinent suggestions are brought to the attention of the Head teacher and his team for consideration. In decision-making, students have been involved in a number of areas as indicated above. However, the level of participation is compromised when there is little involvement of learners during the teaching and learning process. As most of the teaching is teacher-centred, this practice is denying students, chance for creativity in knowledge development. Child participation cannot be only on other issues in school minus teaching and learning process. It has also been observed that the level of student participation is not as empowering as is supposed to be. According to DCP (2004), Participation is not just consultation, it is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over the priority setting, policy making, resource allocation and access to public resources and services. Its different stages are represented in form of a ladder as shown below.



The Participation Ladder

In this ladder, the bottom level involves sharing information with stakeholders (*learners, parents, fellow teachers and community*). This is a level where only messages are shared, but decisions are made by the manager alone without asking for opinions or suggestions of other people and these people have no direct influence on the decisions; there is little or no participation. The second level is Consultation. This is where opinion is sought; however, it does not imply any obligation to incorporate into the final decisions all the perspectives expressed by stakeholders. The third level is Joint decision making. This implies that stakeholders have the right to negotiate the contents of a plan, activity or programme. In this case, the leader (school manager) has no more influence over the final decision than any other participant. The top most level is Initiation and Control by stakeholders. This is where stakeholders are considered able to initiate, implement, monitor and evaluate their issues and activities. This is a level similar to delegation. Here, prior approval may or may not be required before the decision can be implemented.

In our participating schools, despite that children are involved in decision making at certain level, that level mostly ends at the consultation step of the ladder. Learners are mostly consulted when a lot has been worked out already. For example, Learners still believe that teachers are the sole depositories of knowledge hence they expect the teacher to do everything for them, and this results in putting more pressure on our teachers. If lessons are planned with the children's involvement, learners will learn to take control of their learning process. Another example is where students at Namikasi were consulted in making the termly calendar of events. This is a good development, but should be expected to yield better results if learners are also involved in annual planning and budgeting of activities that reflect on them like budgeting for more computer accessories.

Our schools must be encouraged to allow students to participate both in planning and decision-making. This is so because learners who have considerable influence in making a decision tend to identify with it and perceive it to be their decision. This feeling of ownership increases their motivation to implement it successfully. Participation also provides a better understanding of the nature of the decision problem and the reasons why a particular alternative was accepted and others rejected. Participating students gain a better understanding of how they will be affected by a decision, which is likely to reduce any unwarranted fears and anxieties about it. When adverse consequences are likely, participation allows learners an opportunity to express their concerns and help to find a solution that deals with these concerns. Finally, when a decision is made by a participative process considered

legitimate by most learners, then the group is likely to apply social pressure on any reluctant members to do their part in implementing the decision. (Yukl G. 2006).

On Protection, there are apparent strides in child protection at both schools. . Learners at Zomba CCAP Primary School are protected from road accident as well as dangerous criminals due to the fencing of the school premises. This is in line with CRC article 3.2 and 3.3. For Namikasi Secondary School, protection of girls according to article 19 of CRC is being partially enhanced through the creation of Self- boarding facilities. Apart from aiming at the reduction in cases of late coming, the move was also geared towards encouraging regular attendance and reduction of dropouts as is stipulated in article 28(e) of CRC. The collaboration that exists between the school and landlords also furthers the protection of children from sexual exploitation, which was rampant before clinching this agreement with the landlords. However, there is still nothing done to curb the attacks by thugs on students, early in the morning on their way to school. This is another factor that affects the participation of students in class, as they always have to miss lessons in at least the first forty-minute period. With the construction of the girls’ hostel, girls’ protection will improve further. Sanitation is also compromised in the Self-boarding facilities, and there is no one to guide them. For example, bed making has proven to be a problem for boys in Self-boarding.

On the treatment of late comers, it is clear fact that the two schools have relied much on punishment with the aim of deterring the habit of late coming to school among learners. Even some learners support the idea of punishment as a solution. *See table below:*

OTHER ISSUES ON LATE COMING

	TEACHERS	LEARNERS	PTA
Knowledge of effects on children’ attainment due to late coming	Completely aware	Mostly aware	Aware
How late coming is addressed from day to day	Punishment	Punishment; sometimes whipped and slapped- Zomba CCAP	Punishment
What to be done to curb late coming	-Continue punishing -Self-boarding (Namikasi) -Need full boarding facilities	-Continue punishing -Self-boarding (Namikasi)	-Talk to parents -To start building a girls’ hostel

However, a few reports indicate existence of corporal modes of punishments meted on learners by teachers. This has since been stopped by the school concerned. At Namikasi, the issue of punishment, despite that the school has used it so often; has proven not to be a solution, as the factor of distance still remains overwhelming. Currently, the two schools have started collaborating with learners, parents and the community to come up with sustainable solutions to the problem. While not planning to fully abandon punishment, they are now

trying to make school discipline adhere to provisions in article 28.2 of CRC. For example, levels of punishment mostly administered are now reasonable.

Indeed, while we all agree that punishment has a deterrent effect on misconduct, it has proved ineffective at Namikasi. In writing on the same subject, Coulter E.M. (1997), shares that “punishment *may* deter if it is swift, and if it is *seen* to be effective.” According to Coulter, “punishment meted out to an individual, must be done in such a way as to prevent, within tolerable predictability, the recurrence of the crime by that individual. Many teachers confuse punishment with vindictiveness or vengeance, with rehabilitation (a doubtful proposition), and even, unfortunately, with the deterrence of others who might commit a similar crime. However, that is not the purpose of punishment. Indeed, if one thinks about the subject logically, one can see the flaw in the goal of deterrence through punishment.” Coulter concludes by saying that “Deterrence is ultimately an individual, not a collective, matter. A pupil’s punishment should relate to the real world of his/her action and the conditions under which it occurred.”

While we appreciate that the two schools have made some headway in child rights, there are pockets of disbelief and resistance over child rights in schools amongst teachers. Some of whom categorically refused the notion that children have rights. There is therefore need for in depth school-based institutional audit on opportunities that exist for child rights improvements, by in one way, conducting regular sensitisation sessions among members of staff. There is also a strong element of fear in the children that might block the smooth implementation of child rights issues in these schools. A good example was at Namikasi, where students were not comfortable with the introduction of the Suggestion Box, fearing that it will be used by fellow learners to fabricate bad reports about others. Still at Namikasi, some students complained of teachers’ lack of confidentiality when reporting to fellow students on private issues involving them. This means that the school management has more work to do for it to be able to adhere to article 16 of CRC which prevents deliberate interference with children’s privacy by those in leadership positions. Hence, when working on child rights issues, schools need not relax, but continue to learn from events as they come.

Basing on the standards that have been set by Save the Children, it is imperative to say that the two schools have already started to meet the benchmarks. According to Save the Children (2005), as a child rights based institution, it calls for emphasis on children’s protection, participation and accountability to children. This implies going beyond “listening” to children in the context of managing school affairs to exploring the possibilities of children’s involvement in the areas of the school, including its strategic choices, monitoring and review systems. How far children can become an active part of the management systems of schools is yet to be seen, but the responsibility is clearly ours, the adults, to take necessary steps to try and learn from a range of initiatives. The book above sets the following benchmarks, as signs of child rights based schools: First, such a school should be one where children are part of governing structures; this is courageously being sought by both schools, with the installation and utilisation of prefect and monitoring bodies. Secondly, the school should involve children as part of planning processes; a thing which to a minimal extent is being done. This is also similar to the third benchmark, the making of children part of devising, implementing and reviewing, monitoring and evaluation systems. Such a thing is mostly happening up to consultation level of the participation ladder. The fourth benchmark is the creation of child friendly spaces within the schools, giving access to facilities and resources. This is being provided for in relation to schools’ available resources. Both teaching and learning resources as well as recreation facilities are available in the two schools. The fifth and last benchmark is

that of establishing child friendly communication strategies. Opportunities are there where teachers communicate to learners through morning assemblies at both schools, and the creation of a suggestion box at Namikasi secondary school.

Due to these interventions, the two schools now testify that late coming among learners has since been reduced; and with a better understanding of child rights issues currently, there is improved participation and involvement of children in some issues in the schools.

However, regarding sustainability of these good practices, the two schools were briefed on the need to have a school-based policy on latecomers. At Namikasi, groups of PTA, student representatives and teachers were separately engaged. They are now in the process of developing a school-based policy which will be acceptable by all stakeholders. Zomba CCAP has already come up with their policy which stipulates commitment from all stakeholders to work together to improve the situation at the school. *See appendix 8.4*

In the policy, issues of children involvement, creation of good stakeholder relationship, use of guidance and counselling and abolition of corporal punishment are tackled. Once policies for both schools have been duly launched, a special monitoring tool will be devised by the schools for use as means of checking their adherence to the set policy.

We rest this discussion by saying that the head teachers of both schools and their management teams have now accepted to work as change agents in their schools. They have now began to be accountable to children in every way possible. At Zomba CCAP, for example, children are being consulted and given reports on all purchases in the DSS programme. Since this seems to be working and promising, schools therefore should bear in mind that in whatever they go through, they should have child rights issues as addressed in CRC, as their reference point. However, these changes should fit in well in the norms at work in the school environment; and these adoptions should not forget the goal the schools would like to achieve.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

Child Rights in schools is a concept that hinges on provision, protection and participation. While provision of services would be enhanced with more external support, active child participation is a principle that demands commitment of internal structures within schools for it to be realised.

Because most of the schools in Malawi are still not within easy reach to children, late coming is a major problem that threatens full participation of learners in school activities, bearing in mind the consequences that come with it. The distance problem also threatens the safety of the girl child and this leads to more school dropouts compared to boys.

Since there are different reasons for coming late to school in urban areas, from those in rural schools, such as sleeping late due to Television viewing in urban areas, and covering of long distances to school in rural areas, there is need for different approaches to curbing the problem of coming late to school. In both circumstances, active community participation will help improve the situation; not only in infrastructure development, as they are currently much concentrating on, but also in the daily teaching and learning processes to ensure quality attainment of children. The policies that the two schools have formulated and are still fine-

tuning before launching should focus on all these areas of the school, as participation of children focuses on all these areas combined. Much as Malawi embraced human rights in 1994, the concept of child rights is still a new phenomenon that requires adequate sensitisation of stakeholders in all education institutions in Malawi.

6.2 Recommendations

To Ministry of Education

- The Ministry of Education should consider expanding child rights management to other secondary schools countrywide as it is currently doing with child friendly schooling in the primary sub-sector.
- The Ministry of Education in conjunction with other partners should increase access to schooling by constructing more schools in areas where children are still travelling long distances to school.
- The Ministry of Education should consider constructing girls' hostels at Namikasi Secondary School to ease the problems girls are facing.

To Schools

- The schools should embark on exploring ways in which they can utilise learner potentials in participation in all areas of school operations. This may help bring sense of responsibility in children, and hence take care of school facilities and reduce problems that come with student suspicion and dissatisfaction in management handling of issues.
- Schools should use more counselling sessions, as it has proved effective in other schools like mission schools.
- Punishment should be given in line with the level of misbehaviour and should not be meted out of anger, but to correcting the behaviour of the culprit.

To Communities

- Communities need to actively participate in all areas of school operation through their SMCs.

To Parents

- Parents should limit television viewing for their children to shorter durations, since if left unchecked, may not only result in sleeping late, but also reduce their active capacities in school.
- Parents should prepare for their children for school in the evening, so that there is little to do in the morning in order for children to get off earlier for school.

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Verhellen E. (2006). *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Background, motivation, strategies, main themes: 4th ed. Antwerp-Apeldoorn. Garant

Yukl G. (2006). *Leadership in Organisations*. 6th ed. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall

8.0 APPENDICES

8.1 INTERVIEW GUIDE ON CHILD RIGHTS FOR (Head teacher and Teachers)

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

NAME OF OFFICER: _____

POSITION: _____

DATE: _____

- 1a) Are you aware of Child rights issues?
 - b) If yes, what examples of Child rights issues do you know?
- 2a) Does the School have a Child rights Club for learners?
 - b) If your answer is No, why is the Club not yet established?
 - c) If yes, how is the Club run?
 - d) How often do members meet?
 - e) What issues are commonly discussed?
 - f) Are issues discussed in Child rights meetings, reported to School Management?
 - g) Has the School taken on board any ideas and recommendations by the Child rights club?
- 3 a) Does an annual work plan exists in the School?
 - b) If yes, which bodies/ departments are involved in its development?
- 4 a) How does the School ensure that learners get involved in learning areas?
 - b) What learning methods are commonly used in the School?
 - c) Are the learning methods Child friendly? Explain.
- 5 a) Are there any Internal and External threats to the education of the Child in this School?
 - b) If yes, give examples of the threats.
 - c) Has the School handled any violent cases amongst learners?
 - d) If yes, what nature of cases were these?
 - e) What measures does the School take to prevent such cases and threats from occurring?

- 6a) Are there frequent cases of late coming by learners in the School?
 - b) If yes, what factors contribute to late coming by learners?
 - c) Can late coming be minimized in the School?
 - d) If yes, what measures are, and can be, used?
 - e) If punishment is one of the measures, what mode of punishment is commonly Used?
 - f) When are these punishments administered?
 - g) How often are punishments given?
 - h) Do the administered punishments result in changing learner behaviour?
7. How does the School ensure that learners become responsible leaders?
8. What role do Parents play in the management of the School?
9. What channels of communication are established, which guarantee effective flow of information among all stakeholders in the School?
- 10a) Does the School have regulations on school safety?
- b) How were these regulations developed?
 - c) Are the issues in the regulations Child centred and Child friendly? Explain.

8.2 LEARNERS' INTERVIEW GUIDE

NAME OF SCHOOL: _____

NAME OF LEARNER: _____

CLASS IN WHICH LEARNER IS: _____

AGE: _____

SEX: _____

1. Do you like your School?
2. What factors make you like or dislike the School?
3. Have you ever heard of child rights?
4. Which rights of a child do you know?
5. Is it good for a child to participate in school activities?
6. Why do you think it is good for a child to participate in school activities?
7. Are you allowed to participate in any activity in your school?
8. What kind of activities do you participate in?
9. How many clubs and societies do you have in the school?
10. Do you make most of the decisions for running the Clubs?
11. What student leadership roles are there in the School?
12. Have you ever been given punishment?
13. What was the reason for the punishment?
14. What type of punishment was given to you?
15. What time of the School day do you do the punishment?
16. Did you learn anything from that punishment?
17. Would you wish the punishment to be conducted at any different time from that mentioned above?
18. How far is your home from school?
19. Have you ever been late for school / classes?
20. What makes you to be late for school/ classes?
21. What happens to you when you are late for school/ classes?
22. What do your parents/ guardian do to make sure that you are not reporting late for school?
23. What problems do you face outside the School on your way to and from School?
24. How many of those problems are reported to School?

25. Were you assisted when you ever reported such problems to School?
26. What would you have wanted your School to do for it to be better than it is now?
27. What role do you think you can play to improve your School?
28. Do you have anything to say in addition to what you have said which you feel worth mentioning concerning rights of a child to education in your school?

8.3 INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PTA MEMBERS

NAME OF MEMBER: _____

ROLE: _____

SEX: _____

1. As a parent, are you happy with the way your school operates?
2. Do cases of late coming to school by children, happen?
3. Have you ever been concerned by this late coming?
4. What are the reasons behind coming late of learners to school?
5. What effect do you think late coming to school, has on the learning of children?
6. What happens here at school when children come late?
7. Are you in support of what is done to learners when late?
8. Have parents ever been involved in solving the problem of late coming?
9. How would you wish the problem should be handled?
10. Is there any other way in which, as parents, you are involved in matters of teaching and learning of children?
11. In general, how do you rate your relationship with the management of the school?
12. Have you ever heard of Child Rights?
13. What examples of rights do children have?
14. Do you believe the rights of children to education will help them acquire quality education?
15. How would you wish matters in the school should be handled for it to improve?

8.4 POLICY ON LATE COMING AT ZOMBA CCAP PRIMARY SCHOOL

	<p>THE HEADMASTER O. M. C. A. P. PRIMARY SCHOOL 2008-08-18 P.O. BOX 279 ZOMBA</p>
	<p>ZOMBA CCAP PRIMARY SCHOOL</p>
	<p>POLICY ON CHILD PROTECTION AND PARTICIPATION</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Rewarding the children who come to school early2. Publicising the learners who come to school at assembly3. Rewarding the top ten achievers in all classes4. Guide and counsel troublesome children and reward those who change their bad behaviours5. Create good Parent, Teacher, child relationship6. Involve children in decision making in all school activities7. Involve all stakeholders in Educational and developmental issues8. See to it that NO corporal punishment is administered, instead guidance and counselling should be emphasised

9. See to it that all children are learning properly
10. See to it that all stakeholders make the school child friendly by providing all the required facilities
11. Protect the children from all forms of abuses.