

# NAMIBIA

## Reducing the Dropout Rate at Omhanda Combined School in Ohangwena Region

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### 1. Introduction

Team Namibia, comprising of two HOD's and Inspector of Education were nominated to attend the training on Child Rights, Classroom and School management in Sweden. During the training we came up with a project proposal on reducing dropout rate of learners in Ohangwena Education Directorate at Omhanda Combined School which is a continuous of an already piloted project at Eputuko Combined School in Ohangwena Region by batch 17.

### 2. Frame of Reference

The government of Namibia ratified the Child Right Convention in 1990, after it was passed by the UN in 1989. Article 28.1 of the CRC states that, "State parties recognizes the right of the child to education with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall in particular (1) (a)" make primary education compulsory and available free to all" (1) (e) State Parties "take measures to encourage regular attendance at school and the reduction of dropout rates".

The government of the Republic of Namibia passed the Education Act (Act 16/2001) that emphasizes the regular attendance of the children in schools and obliges parents to make sure that their children attend school regularly. The state further came up with a social grant that is given to orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) as well as the children whose parents are pensioners. This grant is used to pay for the school fees and uniforms. The Ministry of Education came up with the pregnancy policy that encourages learners who became pregnant to attend school until close to delivery and also return to school after delivery as long as there's proof that the baby is being taken care of. The Ministry also came up with a school feeding programme whereby learners

in primary schools benefit. This is to encourage learner's attendance and performance. Compulsory free primary education was also introduced.

Despite all efforts made by the Republic of Namibia, dropout is still high particular in Ohangwena Region. Most of the school dropout is caused by teenage pregnancies, high failure rate and lack of interest. Since batch 17 Change Agents already have started with the pilot project on reducing dropout, we, batch 19 Change Agents decided to continue with the same project initiated by batch 17 to ensure sustainability. Omhanda Combined School is a rural school that accommodates boys and girls (383). Parents are subsistence farmers. The school has electricity, water and internet. There are 17 teachers in which 15 teachers comes from others parts of the country.

Dropout statistics for Omhanda school year 2013

- Term 3, 26/39 (67%) failed grade 10
- 4 learners fell pregnant



### 3. Purpose

The main idea of the project is to create awareness among target groups (parents, teachers and learners on CRC and high school dropout rate). By the end of the project we expect the target groups and stakeholders to have a thoroughly understanding of the CRC and the consequences of learner's dropout themselves, the region and country at large. We will mainly focus on the most three causes of dropout to the majority of our learners according to statistics from Ohangwena Education Directorate. i.e.

- Failing
- Pregnancy
- Unknown (Unspecified)

## **Expected Outcome**

As Change Agents we expect parents, teachers, learners themselves and all other stakeholders should understand the CRC and try to reduce the dropping out of learners from school, due to pregnancy, high failure rates and all other causes which are sometimes unknown. Parents should be conscious about the education of their children.

### **Target group and stakeholders.**

The target groups of this project are all the parents, 17 teachers and 383 learners of Omhanda Combined School in Ohangwena Education Directorate. Meanwhile the stakeholders are Inspector of Education, Principal of Omhanda Combined school, the community of Omhanda Combined School, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Child Welfare, Civil Society, Church leaders, Ministry of Safety and Security, Headmen and Planning and development section.

## **4. Activities / Methodologies**

### **Consultation**

After the team came back from Sweden, they have consulted batch 17 members for informing them that the team that is batch 19 will continue to their piloting project at Eputuko Combined School, but batch 19 project will be conducted at Omhanda Combined School.

Thereafter the team met the Education Directorate Management (Deputy Director (as the director was out of the region) and briefed them about the training they underwent in Sweden and sought the permission to go to Omhanda Combined School to carry out the project. The management was very supportive and permission was granted.

Thereafter the team went further to inform the Inspector of Education were Omhanda Combined School is resorting and collect the dropout data, due to pregnancy, failing and other. The team went to the (school) Omhanda Combined School to introduce themselves to the School Management and inform them on the proposed project on the whereby the School Management were excited about the project. On the 26 February 2014, the team started with the sensitization meeting for the target groups (parents, teachers and learners)

Due to the level of target groups understanding on CRC, the team members divided themselves so that each could address the certain group as per their understanding.



The sensitization meetings mostly touched on the Child Rights in Namibia. The presenters asked the target groups to reflect on the child rights in Namibia by brainstorming their understanding. Then the team introduced the CRC (especially that it is related to the CR and also reflect on the link between the CRC and the dropout rate.

After the presentation, the team gave the target groups an opportunity to ask questions and give their concerns.

The groups cited as follows:

- The teachers felt that the abolishing of corporal punishment in Namibia led to high indiscipline among the learners.
- Teachers also felt that the Child Rights is contradicting with religion perspectives, because they interpreted some of the verses from the Bible (on Christianity perspective, (Quote) “Spare the rod and spoil the child).
- They also felt that teachers are disempowered, that makes it very difficult to control learners. - They felt that learners misunderstood their rights and forget their responsibilities.
- Learners responded that:
- Poverty and livelihood in the community is the major challenge. Despite school feeding programme and free universal primary education in place, pupils still drop school when their basic bodily needs are not satisfied.
- Indiscipline: teachers bullying learners, learners bullying one another and teenage pregnancy stigma.
- Failing: learners tired of failing lose interest as the current curriculum seems to be more challenging and demanding to slow learners.
- Low understanding of the importance and benefits of education.
- Insubordination: pupils are hardly complying toward their parent, guardians and teachers.

For the team to get the information on why the learners are dropping out of the school, questionnaires were designed, translated into vernacular language for parents to understand and distributed to the target groups parents and teachers.

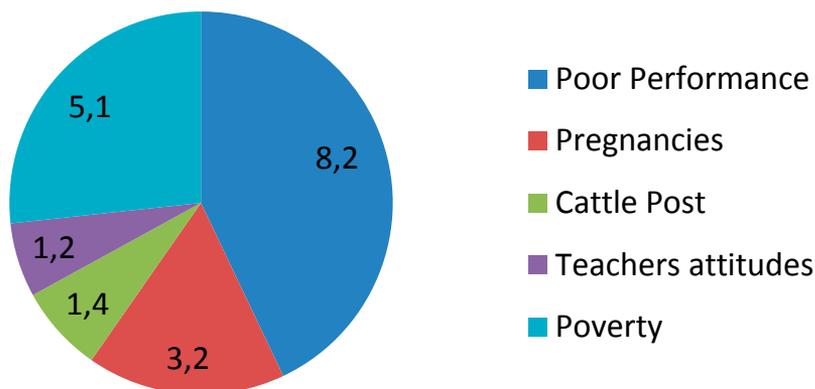
Learners were selected randomly to answer the questionnaire and thereafter the team members analyzed the response and found out that the causes of dropping out, compiled them and gave the questionnaire outcome to the target groups. Thereafter all the parties discuss and solicit the possible solution and implemented the processes (see results).

The sensitization meeting will be continuing throughout until almost 95% of the parents, teachers and learners understand Provision, Participation and Protection in education.

### **Causes of dropout by respondents**

All respondents have suggested the following as the main causes of dropout at Omhanda Combined School.

## **Causes of drop-out**



## 5. Results

After conducting the interview by means of questionnaire most of the targeted groups cited the following:

In addition both parents and learners have discovered that poor relationship between teachers and their learners will lead to dropout of learners. Furthermore parents added that peer pressure and alcohol abuse will contribute to the dropout of learners as well. Apart from that teachers have cited that relocation of parents and tired of failing as the other cause of dropout. Learners also speak out that they dropout because of unsafe school ground which might have of bullying and fights. They (learners) revealed that most of them lose interest on school work.

- After all the activities are completed, it was agreed that the LRC (Learners Representative council) should be strengthened.
- The school-board members should also be well informed on CRC and work for the benefit of the learners.
- The community committees to be introduced and work closely with the Principal and Headmen.
- The LRC should be well trained on how to support the teaching and learning at school in collaboration with the teachers.

### *Learners*

- Peer support on both morally and academically.
- Encouraging learners to do their best on their school work.
- To have more Life Skills teachers

### *Teachers*

- The school to enforce the code conducts of corporal punishment.
- Strong bonds between parents and school (good relationship teachers-parents)
- The school to follow-up on dropouts.

### *Parents*

- Regular visit by outside officials
- Motivate their children to love school and do their best in their school work.
- Strict actions to teachers who use corporal punishment as a mean of disciplining.

## **Motivational strategies**

The interviewer revealed some of the motivation factors that will keep learners on school till finished their school.

### *At school*

- Teachers and parents must talk regular to learners motivating them.
- Use positive reinforcements such as rewarding good performance of learners.
- Learners should be provided with their needs.

### *At home*

- Telling learners the truth about today's life.
- Awarding fixed attendance of learners.
- Motivate learners to have supportive friends and good friends.
- Encouraging learners to be open to their teachers and parents.
- Make sure that learners are living in a safe environment.

## **Support needed by learners from different stakeholders**

During interview the three groups indicated that they need support from other stakeholders such as Principal, Headmen, Church leader and regional education directorate in order to bring down dropout on mediate effects. They outlined the following support from other stakeholders.

- Learners need equal treatments from all directions.
- They demand good communication with both teachers and parents.
- They need to be taught Life Skills as the power to all issues that troubling learners.
- School need to abolish corporal punishment.
- The Life Skills teacher to counsel learners.
- Expected parents to provide their children basic needs.

## **The visit of our mentor Lena Anderson**

Lena Anderson, the mentor to the Change Agents came to Namibia as from 2nd – 7th February 2015 to assist the Change Agents for them to help the school to improve on the teaching and learning and reduce the failure of the learners that lead to dropping out of learners.

Visited the two schools that are involved in the project, Eputuko Combined School and Omhanda Combined School. She met with the learners and educators and addressed them on Rights of Children and observed participation in classroom

and outside. She also addressed 43 Cluster Centre Principals (CCP) from Ohangwena Education Directorate in Ohangwena Region on Child Rights, classroom and school management and lastly she also managed to gather eleven (11) Change Agents from different batches to discuss issues pertaining to Child Right programme.



## Discussion and Reflection

The project sensitization meetings were well attended and the targeted groups were well aware of the child's rights. The emphasis was only about the connection on Child Rights Convention (CRC) and dropout rate of learners. Teachers were very impressed, they were ready to implement the CRC in the school and they wanted to work together with the parents, community members and learners. Learners knew their rights and also would like to be heard and also to participate in decision making at school and in the community, however it was observed that they fully understand their rights but not their responsibilities.

Upon our arrival back from Sweden, our Director and Deputy Director were pre-occupied by meetings that delayed our activities. As change agents, we were too loaded that we hardly get time to attend to the project. Poor network communication in the region was also one of the challenges when the team was planning and arranging to meet.

## 6. Way forward

The team will go with strengthening the monitoring and evaluation processes to assess the project success. We will also try to expand the project to the surrounding schools and visiting other change agents in different projects around the country. The following long-term resolution strategies can be used by parents, teachers and stakeholders to compact school dropout:

- Educators should make school safe and nurturing environment for learners for them to curb dropout.
- Parents must ensure that they have a tight communication with the school to have access to the information, education policies to enable them to control learners.
- Parents should often encourage school dropouts to return to school.
- Parents and learners must seriously take the national policy that seek to return pregnant and delivered learners to school.
- All stakeholders must prioritize and take all-appropriate measures to prevent unwanted teenage pregnancy as it prevent access to basic education and affecting access to employment and livelihood.
- Introduce and actively promote child rights and their responsibilities through curriculum.
- Sexual education must be strengthened, as it remains a key compact strategy to teenage pregnancy and encouraging behavioral change.
- Educators must encourage and monitor provision, protection and participation to ensure equal access and quality education.
- Learners need to refrain from negative social issues such as alcohol abuse and sexual relationships that interfere with their education and realize how to make responsible choices.
- Other learners must stop stigmatizing pregnant teenagers, bullying and all forms of disrespect.
- Seek for sponsors to help with basic need of the learners: shoes, groceries and school uniforms.

## List of references

Towards Education for All (1997). A development brief for education, culture and training. MOECN  
 Education Act (Act 16/2001). MoE, Namibia  
 Education Sector Policy on the prevention and management of learners pregnancy (2012)