

# ZAMBIA

## Establishment of School, College and Class Councils, a Pilot Project in Four Basic Schools and one College of Education

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### 1. Frame of Reference

Every child has a right to their childhood. The environment in which they live and grow should be one free of exploitation, violence, neglect, and extreme poverty. In order for children to experience childhood to the fullest and develop into healthy citizens who would contribute positively to national development, they need education, health services, consistent support systems as well as love, hope and encouragement. They need to be provided with relevant and quality education and other basic facilities. They need to be protected from all forms of abuse. Furthermore, they need to be given the opportunity to participate in making decisions in all matters affecting them.

Zambia is a signatory to the Child Rights Convention and since the adoption and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; much has been accomplished for children. Several programmes have been put in place with a view to improve children's well-being. For instance, information dissemination programmes on child rights issues were organised and carried out through various communication media such as community radio stations, national television and newspapers. In addition the aspect of child rights has been captured in the school curriculum under such subjects as Civic Education at high school and Civics at upper basic school levels. At college level, it has been integrated into study areas, especially in Social, Spiritual and Moral Education Studies. Such programmes have helped to raise awareness amongst Zambian citizens.

Various government ministries such as Ministry of Health, Ministry of Local Government, Ministry of Community Development and Ministry of Education have integrated issues of child rights in their work plans. The Ministry of Education has addressed issues of child rights through such policies as the 'free education' policy, school health and nutrition policy and 're-entry' policy. This shows government's commitment in implementing child rights convention recommendations.

Child rights education has also been strengthened by the work of the earlier change agents through class and school councils which have so far been established mostly in high schools. Mrs. Getrude Mwape, lecturer at University of Zambia, initiated the idea of school councils through the Tool Kit booklet she and her colleagues have written. The booklet contains guide lines on the establishment of the councils.

Most of the programmes or interventions which have been undertaken so far put much emphasis on articles related to provision and protection. The aspect of participation of children in decision making has been accorded less attention. For this reason, Change Agents who have undergone training in Child Rights, Classroom and School Management have so far been addressing the aspect of participation of children in decision making in high schools. On the Copperbelt Province, Batch 7 team piloted the establishment of school councils in three high schools. Batch 10 change agents later focused on evaluating the impact of child rights on the three piloting schools and made the following recommendations in order to improve the child rights situation in Zambia:

- Need to organize workshops to oversee child rights
- School councils must be introduced to schools at lower levels, i. e. Grades 1 to 7
- Government must implement article 4 – budgetary aspect towards child rights
- College lecturers must be actively involved in the child rights training.
- Change agents must form an association in order to share experiences
- Re-launch of 'Education for All' to include aspects of child rights

In the Northern Province the team has managed to sensitize teachers and headteachers through their project 'Raising Awareness on Child Rights through formation of School and Class Councils'.

Central Province change agents have also contributed to the realisation of child rights through their project entitled, 'Impact of Civic Education in the Transmission of Child Rights'. Head teachers, teachers, pupils and the community at large have all been sensitized. However, there is need for continuous sensitization of stakeholders and also to strengthen child rights clubs in schools in order to ensure pupil participation in matters affecting them.

Batch 14 focused on establishing class, school and college councils in four basic schools and one college of education respectively.

## 2. Purpose of Project

The project had a two-fold purpose;

- (i) To provide knowledge and skills that will enable basic school pupils to participate in decision making activities in their learning institutions.
- (ii) To equip college students with knowledge and skills of strengthening pupils' participation in decision making issues.

## 3. Methodology/Activities Done

- **Meeting as batch 14 change agents:**

Meeting was held on 13<sup>th</sup> June, 2011. The purpose of the meeting was to compile a summary report of our phase two training experiences in Sweden for our supervising officers namely the Provincial Education Officer, the Principal Education Standards Officer, the District Education Board Secretary, the Principal of Kitwe College of Education and the Education Officer for Teacher Education.

- **Reporting to Authorities:**

Following our meeting on 13/06/ 2011, a report was given to our supervising officers. We shared with them the vision of our project. During this meeting batch 14 shared their project vision with batch 10 change agents and requested them for continued support in implementation of the project.

- **Meeting With Other Change Agents:**

This was done on 18<sup>th</sup> July, 2011 at Kitwe Provincial Teachers Resource Centre. The purpose of this meeting included; debriefing batch 10 change agents about our phase two training in Sweden, review of the project plan, reporting to the national coordinator and Permanent Secretary for Ministry of Education and to prepare for the baseline survey. During this meeting batch 14 shared their vision with batch 10 change agents. The change agents expressed their willingness to support the implementation of batch 14 project.

The vice national coordinator was mandated to submit our report and project plan to the national coordinator and the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education. The project plan was revised by adjusting the dates for activities. Preparation for baseline survey was postponed to the following day, 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2011.

- **Preparation for baseline survey on July, 19<sup>th</sup> 2011:**  
Sample schools were selected in Kitwe and Chingola towns only because we were behind schedule. The survey was also planned to be conducted at Kitwe College of Education. Focus of the survey was on the two indicators for output in our project plan and questions for the questionnaire and interview schedule were based on the same.
- **Baseline survey:**  
This was conducted in the last week of July and in September, 2011. It was not done in August as per project plan because schools were on recess. The survey was conducted in four basic schools and at Kitwe College of Education. The four basic schools were Nakatindi, Matero, Mama Monty and Buntungwa.
- **Analysis of baseline survey data:**  
This activity was done on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2011.  
In relation to our first project output, the following were our findings:
  - The level of awareness about child rights was very low
  - College lecturers had high knowledge on children's rights
  - Pupils had very little knowledge gained from what they learn from their teachers in class and college students also had very little information from what they learnt from their lecturers.
  - Teachers were just basing their teaching of child rights on what is found in the text books.
  - Only one school out of the four schools visited had a child rights club (Nakatindi basic School). The membership in the club was however very low, only a small percentage of learners had access to wider information about child rights.
  - School councils were non-existent in the basic schools and at Kitwe College of Education.
  - Prefects bodies were existing in basic schools.
  - At the college there was what is referred to as Student Representative Council whose operation was different from that of a school council establishment.

In relation to our second project indicator for our survey output, the following were our findings:

  - Pupils are not given wider opportunity to participate in decision making.
  - On average, college students participate in decision making through their student representative council.
- **Participated in the Malawi Progress Review Conference in October, 2012.**
- **Sensitisation workshop** for college lecturers and students representatives on child rights and school councils. This was carried out on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2012 at Kitwe college of Education.

- **Sensitisation workshop for our supervisors**, Senior Education Standards Officers, District Education Board Secretaries, headteachers, principals, and Provincial Resource Centre Coordinators in child rights and school councils. This was done on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> February, 2012.
- Participated in **School council review workshops** together with the pilot basic school representatives so as to identify strengths and weaknesses in implementing school council activities and also to identify teachers and pupils who would assist in training their counterparts in basic schools.
- In March, 2012, we **visited the pilot basic schools and the College of Education** together with our mentor, Dr. Bodil, in order to monitor progress of establishing school councils and to provide additional support according to the needs of the specific institution.
- Held a **National School Council Review and planning Conference** at Moba Hotel in Kitwe in conjunction with all Change agents in our country. All Districts on the Copperbelt province were represented. In addition all batches of change agents across the country were represented. The workshop helped in strengthening activities of school councils in our pilot basic schools and the College of Education. This activity was done in March, 2012, when our mentor came to visit us. During this workshop, each province had to elect its regional Chairperson, Vice chairperson and secretary. In addition all change agents had to vote for a national secretary since the national chairperson and vice chairpersons were already in office.
- **Planning meeting for training of teachers, college lecturers and link teachers.**  
This was done on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2012 in liaison with batch 10 and 16 change agents and the office of the Provincial Education Officer. There was a wider period between this activity and the previous one due to circumstances beyond our control e.g. bereavements and illness amongst the batch members.
- **Training of teachers and link teachers in child rights, leadership and school councils.**  
This activity was carried out from 18<sup>th</sup> September to 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2012. The four pilot schools participated in the training programme together with two other basic schools in Kalulushi District. The two basic schools were added on to the team of piloting schools because of strong appeal/ demand from the Kalulushi district Education Board secretary, Mrs Misozi Mwenya who participated actively in our sensitisation and training workshops felt that it was important to include schools in her district to help maintain order in the schools. Each of the three districts was trained separately.  
Training for the college lecturers and students was scheduled for December, 2012 due to constraints in the college calendar.

## 4. Results

- Circulation of training report and project plan to our supervising officers, the Provincial Education Officer, the Principal Education Standards Officer, College Principal, District Education Board Secretaries, Education Officer- Teacher Education Department and to other change agents. This made them become aware of our project plan and to share our vision of the plan. Our supervising officers have provided continuous support through providing time, financial, professional and moral support to the project.
- Obtained data on levels of awareness by teachers, lecturers, pupils and students and levels of participation of children in decision making through the baseline survey that was conducted.
- Through sensitisation workshops held, key stakeholders have increased knowledge on child rights, and class and school councils.
- Sensitisation and Training workshops for lecturers, college students, teachers and link teachers from the four (plus two) pilot basic schools. This helped in increasing their knowledge on child rights and school councils and in the establishment of class and school councils in the six basic schools. It has also increased participation levels of basic school pupils in decision making within their learning institutions. Trainings conducted have assisted teachers to understand their roles in class and school councils.
- Identification of competent link teachers and training of link teachers and school council leaders in leadership skills.
- Inclusion of two basic schools in Kalulushi District in our pilot project. These are Mitobo basic and Kalulushi Basic schools. This was necessitated by the request from the district education board secretary for Kalulushi district, Mrs. Misozi Mwenya after the sensitisation workshops.
- Held planning and review meetings as batch 14 change agents as well as with other change agents. This helped in evaluating progress of our project.
- Held a national school council review and planning conference. This helped in networking with change agents across the nation and strengthening children's' participation in decision making through class and school councils. It also strengthened the activities in our project.
- Teachers and parents have come to appreciate the benefits of positive discipline and children's participation through the trainings conducted.
- Establishment of class and school councils in six basic schools has increased participation levels of basic school pupils in decision making within their learning institutions.

## 5. Discussion

Most of the activities planned were carried out although not in the intended time due to circumstances beyond our control such as bereavements and illness. Our project has contributed to the realisation of child rights within basic schools and to the effective participation of primary and basic school pupils in decision making. The project also contributed towards raising awareness on child rights in various stakeholders such as pupils, teachers, district education officers and provincial education officers. Shared vision with supervising officers and networking with other change agents provided a lot of strength for implementing our project. Team work amongst batch 14 members also helped in achieving most of our activities. To a large extent communication with our mentor has made our project to succeed.

However, a few of our planned activities such as training of lecturers have not been carried out due to challenges. These include busy schedules of our target groups, political atmosphere due to national tripartite election campaigns, involvement of batch members in the electoral process, appointment to new position and change of working station, inadequate financial resources, timing of national examinations for pupils and students.

## 6. Way Forward

As batch 14, we intend to roll out class and school councils to all basic schools in Copperbelt province and to continue with the training of college students and lecturers so as to strengthen participation of basic school pupils in decision making within their learning institutions. We will continue networking with all change agents and other stakeholders in ensuring that class and school councils in basic schools receive maximum support.

## 7. References

MWAPE, K.G, et al. (2006). **TOOL KIT FOR ESTABLISHING CLASS AND SCHOOL COUNCILS**. UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA, LUSAKA.

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