

MALAWI

Promoting child rights in schools through involvement of learners, head teachers, teachers and the community

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1. Introduction

The high illiterate rate and poverty, that exists in Malawi continues to reduce the provision, protection and participation of children in child rights. Many people do not have the full understanding of child rights hence, not respected. Most preferably is the child's right to education which forms the basis of one's' life to develop and participate in decision-making. However, they also experience different forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. These include sexual abuse and harassment as well as physical. These experiences are in and out of school settings. In this regard, the government, development partners and well-wishers continue to promote and protect the rights of children in Malawi through interventions.

Assessment still reveals that, the challenge is outstanding because child rights are not observed. In this regard, the ministry developed policy investment framework which focuses on the child's education but keeping in mind the UN convention of the rights of a child to attain quality education. In this context, the legal framework also plays a role in implementing activities which aim at providing support, care and protection as well as giving children chance to participate in matters that affect them.

The enactment of childcare, Protection and Justice Act, 2010 is a milestone for Malawi because it consolidates various child friendly pieces of legislation into one law. For instance, the Education Act, 2013, the prevention of Domestic Violence Act, 2006 and the Disability Act, 2013. Their effect protect and promote the child rights best interest of the child and their participation on matters that affect them .The 2013 Education Act enforces child's education which is free and compulsory in primary schools to achieve quality. Despite the national legal framework institutionalization of laws, Malawi has ratified all core international Human Rights instruments like the Convention on the Rights of the Child CRC in 1991 without doubts and the African

Charter on the Rights and welfare of the child ACRWC in September, 1999. As such, the enactment of all these laws provides the opportunity for joint efforts in promoting and protecting rights of children in Malawi. Some policies are put into effect at school level in both primary and secondary. These include re-admission policy for school drop-outs, 50-50 selection policy between boys and girls, free primary education and child friendly initiatives. These make relevant contributions to a strong legal framework for the promotion and protection of children's right to education. The existence and enactment of all these laws, policies and International Human/Child Rights Instruments create an enabling environment for the enjoyment of the rights of children in the context of schools.

2. Frame of Reference

Although the government of Malawi is working tirelessly to put in place enactments of laws which can enable the realization of child's rights in schools and communities, the challenge remains outstanding. This is due to minimal implementation and monitoring the effectiveness of such laws. However, NGOs and other well wishers are also working on the same to achieve the intended goals. For example, in schools, both primary and secondary, learners are not given space of action. Mostly, they just follow what their teachers tell them to do, as they are not given chance to voice out. This means that people are not fully aware of child rights.

On the other hand, learners do not attend school fully. In most cases cultural beliefs and norms also affect their participation. Girls are seen being forced into early marriages, taking care of siblings and the sick and other household chores. This denies them their right to education as stipulated in articles 28 and 29.

Despite the existence of the education policy on teacher/learner ratio which states that a teacher should teach a maximum of 60 learners in class, the situation on the ground is different. A teacher is seen teaching over 100 learners, as a result participation and observation of their rights is not fully done. This leads to moving towards development at a very slow pace.

As we appreciate the work done by change agents for batch 19 to involve learners through student councils and prefects in various areas in decision making, the project of batch 21 will therefore, ensure that student councils and prefects are fully involved in decision making as they represent other learners in various forums. To achieve these different school stakeholders should be sensitized on the same. This is important because children operate from home to school where their rights ought to be observed and respected. During a term review meeting with student councils at Njewa teacher's Development Centre, it was revealed that some community members are not aware of the rights of the children as a result they respect their cultural beliefs more. Children are not given chance to voice out but rather receive and follow whatever they are told. In CRC students are given various roles and responsibilities as a way of involving them. For example, at school, there are prefects who help teachers in controlling and monitoring school resources and activities, such as the library, prefects ensure that library

materials are in order hence he/she is accountable. Sports prefects are responsible for sporting activities. All departmental representatives report issues to the student council as a main body which looks into all issues that affect the children. If such things are improved, the desired goals by the government can be achieved. This change project is based on 2Ps under CRC which are emphasized below.

2.1 Participation

Although there is this awareness of CRC in both secondary and primary schools in Malawi, children are not participating in activities that concern them both at school and home. The students are only told what to do basing on culture and traditions. This promotes dictatorship hence learners cannot give out their views but just accept what comes their way so that they are not labeled as being rude to their elders culturally. It is therefore, in this respect that rights of children should be heard within education which is fundamental to realization of the right to education. This is stipulated in articles 12, 13, 28 and 29.

Therefore the project is to enable student councils and other learner representatives of Chitedze Community Day secondary School and Muzu in Njewa zone, then Mphandula and the other ten primary schools and two secondary schools in Kalolo zone to fully participate in coming up with their activities from different clubs and societies [debates, football, examinations, field trips etc] to be incorporated in calendar of events. When it comes to planning programmes, Student councils should be given space of action. For instance, they can have priority to build toilets or library instead of imposing on them. This will create a sense of belonging and develop their self-esteem.

2.2 Protection

Protection of a child is critical in both primary and secondary schools if we are to achieve quality education. Protection of children's rights is fundamental that is why the Government of Malawi established the laws, Child Care Protection and Justice Act 2010. The project is carried out to ensure that students are protected in schools. This can be achieved by sensitizing and bringing awareness on rights of children to the community. It is important that they should know their roles, responsibilities and duties of student councils and prefects together with headteachers, teachers, students, SMC, Chiefs other stakeholders at Chitedze Secondary School, Muzu Mphandula, and the other primary/secondary schools. The activities which are to be carried out will create space of action to minimize indiscipline cases like vandalism, drug and substance abuse to the side of students. The issue of corporal punishment will be reduced among teachers. Parents who were lacking their responsibility will start to care and provide for their children. With this a child will be at a safe position.

2.3 Target Area

The project will be implemented in one primary and one secondary in Njewa, eleven primary and two secondary schools in Kalolo zone which are in Lilongwe Rural West Education District. The previous project targeted Njewa zone only but Batch 21 has scaled it up to Kalolo Zone. The project intends to promote the involvement of school stakeholders to observe child rights at Chitedze Community Day Secondary, Muzu, Mphandula and the other ten primary and two secondary schools in the zones. It is expected that this will consolidate the give and gains realized in the projects of the previous batches and replicate best interest of the child. [Article 3]

2.4 Target Group

- 13 Headteachers and 26 teachers from Kalolo zone.
- A total of 32 teachers from Chitedze Community Day Secondary School and Muzu Primary School.
- SMC and PTA from Chitedze Secondary, Muzu, Mphandula and the other 10 Primary and two secondary Schools in Kalolo zone.
- Chiefs from Njewa and Kalolo Zones.

2.5 Stakeholders

- All headteachers from Njewa and Kalolo zones.
- Student councils from Chitedze, Muzu and Mphandula schools.
- Traditional leaders.
- Malawi Batch 19 and 20 change agents.
- Ministry of Education Science and Technology.
- Ministry of Gender Children and Community Development at the district level.
- Malawi Human Rights Commission.
- Members of Parliament in Lilongwe South, Mapuyu North and South constituencies.

3. Purpose

The purpose of the project is to promote and strengthen child rights to students, head teachers, teachers and school communities in Njewa and Kalolo Zones so that students carry out leadership roles and participate in decision making fully.

The specific objectives of the project include:

- To change the mindset of head teachers, teachers, parents and communities perception on child rights.

- To enable them appreciate the values, attitudes and perception towards decision making.
- To enable stakeholders to involve student councils in decision making both at school and at home.
- To involve learners to participate in decision-making.
- To establish student council at Mphandula in Kalolo zone.

4. Methodology

Meeting with the director for basic education in the Ministry of Education Science and Technology

Much as we know, we cannot carry out any project within the ministry before actually meeting the people in authority. There are several reasons for doing this. It could be for introduction, meeting or even reporting so that the ministry is aware, let alone the target areas are its public primary schools and secondary schools. In this context, it would enhance good relationship and support with the ministry during the project implementation. For the success of the project it would require financial and material support.

As CRC change agents for batch 21, we had an opportunity of meeting the Director for Basic Education. Dr. Joseph Chimombo who is also a change agent of batch 20. We met him several times and had a listening ear so much so that he gave us a go ahead. In some instances the Deputy Director did the same. We explained to them that one of the objectives is to enable learners carry out leadership roles and participate in decision making both at home and at school. This would promote children's rights that are participation and protection focusing on CRC.

From a serious note, the Director for Basic Education gave us a green light that he would provide support through the District Education Manager of Lilongwe Rural West where batches 19 and 20 are also implementing their projects. This would be achieved through access of zonal improvement grant and even the district improvement grant in order to implement some zonal activities. He further added that ministry officials would also monitor implementation of the project in the zones especially the targeted schools, hence provide support wherever possible.

Meeting with the Education Division Manager for Central West Division

Batch 21 made visits and carried discussions with the Education Division Manager about what we are doing and how we intend to progress with participation of children in decision-making especially the student bodies.

It is a challenge in our Malawian schools that prefectural bodies feel that they do more at school by working in their specific areas while student's councils feel that they are superior because they are involved in decision making. With this, it brings a mis-

understanding between prefectural body and student council because they underrate each other. The Division Manager liked our project because it will help his division to minimize indiscipline cases which are rampant in the division. He commented that most vandalism acts in the division are a result of student bodies because they do not know their rights and responsibilities at school. He further said that he is happy that this project has started in his division which will make the division to be a role model by becoming a vandalism free division. He stressed that he will be taking us, change agents, to visit all the secondary schools in the division to sensitize the headteachers, teachers, students and communities about CRC.

Sensation of the teachers at Chitedze CDSS and Muzu F.P. School in Njewa zone

Knowing that teachers carry parental roles in school setting, it was important to sensitize them on how to handle issues affecting children in their day-to-day lives. The teachers took it positively, however, the teachers wanted to know the specific duties of the prefects as well as the students council. We explained and gave them some notes at the end of the meeting. The change agents asked teachers to work collectively and not leaving the link teachers and head teachers alone. The change agents stressed that there should be full participation of prefects and students' council by not underrating each other. Teachers were also sensitized not to administer any form of corporal punishment. It was agreed that any misunderstandings should be addressed amicably and immediately. The teachers agreed to work hard and assist where necessary.

Awareness meeting with stakeholders at Mphandula School following the mentor's visit

After scaling up the project from Njewa to Kalolo Zone at Mphandula Primary School, in particular, it was with great pleasure, for batch 21 to carry out the awareness campaign with the support from batch 19 change agents during their mentor's follow up visit. The presence of our mentor, Dr Ulf Leo, from Sweden added more flesh as to having CRC. The purpose of the gathering was to introduce the project as regards to the past experience where learners were/are sidelined in decision making forums. In so doing, learners suffer in silence, despite the challenges encountered both at school and at home. They were/are not heard in any way. Therefore, the project was introduced as an initiative for change through the change agents in order to create a conducive learning environment as desired by the Malawi government policy to respect the rights of the children.

At a shortest notice, Chiefs, School Management Committee (SMC), Parent Teacher Association (PTA) mother group, teachers from Mphandula and all headteachers from the other 10 primary schools in the zone and 2 secondary school heads attended this meeting. Actually, it was also there to promote capacity building of members in school management on issues of child participation through their provision and protection

to learners as main school bodies hence give them space. The participants were taken through some basic principles of CRC and the provisions of the constitution of the republic of Malawi on child rights, the Education Act and how such provisions are applied in schools. This awareness was expected to start changing the various stakeholders' mindsets and perceptions in ensuring that children participate in decision-making on issues that affect them in schools. On this day, over 70 participants attended the meeting.

Much as we know that parents are part of the key stakeholders, we could not leave them out although committee members and chiefs were in attendance. Parents were invited on the same idea of CRC requiring enhancement of children's participation in decision-making. This would better work by putting in place a students' council as a main learner representative body to work alongside with the prefectural body which would also work on issues affecting them.

Parents also expressed their views which showed that child rights are misinterpreted as parents think that learners are given more unnecessary powers. Through this awareness meeting, parents appreciated the initiative through batch 21 change agents. Some of them showed positive attitude although others appeared resistant to change. However, with an ongoing sensitization, things might change for the better as we know that change is a gradual process.

It was learned that cultural beliefs and practices play a major role which indicate that learners are there to listen and receive what they are provided without any say. However, parents' responsibility on provision of all needs and protection in various forms against violence, abuses also depends on them. The CRC message on this particular day went across the borders as different policy makers were also present.

Training of Head teachers at Malawi Institute of Education

Batch 20 change agents organized a training of all head teachers for Njewa and Kalolo zones for one week at Malawi Institute of education in Zomba district. Njewa zone sent eleven primary school headteachers, a head teacher from Njewa community day secondary school and deputy head teacher from Chitedze Community Day Secondary school. Kalolo zone sent eleven primary school headteachers and two headteachers from Namitete and Chiwambo Secondary Schools respectively. The facilitators from Malawi Institute of Education covered topics on fundamental principles of CRC and the way the principles could be used to promote children's rights in schools.

The training covered on the constitution of Malawi, democracy, origin of human rights, concepts of humans in human rights, individual freedoms, human rights for vulnerable groups, environmental and sustainable development, peaceful conflict resolution, human rights and gender, HIV and AIDS as human rights issues and drug and substance abuse. All these topics focus on child rights as provided in the constitution of Malawi basing on the African Charter of Rights and Welfare of Children. The participants were also trained on their roles by ensuring that children in schools participate in decision making on issues that affect them. The participants were trained to create

cultural harmony with learners in order for learners to participate in decision-making in matters affecting them.

The participants were asked to strengthen the already existing students' councils in Njewa and Kalolo zones. All teachers and the deputy head teachers were not to differentiate the student councils and prefects in order to bridge the gap between them. The participants were trained on the roles of student councils and prefects including the link teachers. Emphasis was on the roles and responsibilities of student councils and prefects to focus on the three Ps.

The head teachers and deputy head teachers drew action plans as their way forward for the implementation of CRC. All head teachers and deputy head teachers agreed that they are now change agents and promised that they will pass the information to their communities and teachers in their schools.

PTA sensitization at Chitedze community day secondary school, Muzu and Mphandula primary school

We had PTA meetings which dwelt much on convention of rights of a child. The focus was on the 'three Ps' especially the last 'P' which is participation. Students should be provided with necessities such as food clothing and school materials for the smooth running of their studies. Students should be protected so that people moving along the road with bad intentions should not molest them. Parents were encouraged to invite views from their children at home as it is the case with school administration. For example, Chitedze secondary school has a new library which was initiated by student council. This convinced the PTA and SMC and members of staff. The library prefects are taking care of books and other library assets. There is a mutual relationship between prefects and student council which was sour at first. The MP, the Councillor and the chiefs encouraged parents to involve them in decision making. In his final remarks, the MP promised to assist needy students at the school and asked the head teacher to identify such needy students. He also donated five bags of cement to help in plastering an administration block which was under construction.

In addition, parents were also advised to report to head teachers, teachers and other authorities including change agents on any abuse to either a girl or a boy child. Muzu, Mphandula and other schools have clubs which influence girls to work hard and observe child rights in schools. Some of these clubs are, Theatre for Change, Malawi Girl Guide Association, AIDS TOTO clubs and 18+ CAMPAIGN. All these activities are done to create child friendly schools in line with the Malawi government policy as part of the implementation of Malawi free primary school education guidelines.



Sensitization campaign

Training of students councils and prefects at Mphandula primary school

Following the awareness of child rights at Mphandula School in Kalolo zone, the change agents organized to formulate a student council and empower it together with the prefects to be knowledgeable on their rights as provided for in the constitution, the CRC, other relevant regions as well as human rights and how the rights can be realized in the context. The scope of the training also included their roles and responsibilities as members of the council and the roles of the prefects. This is to make them participate in school governance on issues that affect all learners while at the same time observing acceptable behaviors at school. Emphasis was made on the roles of the council as overseers of the rights of the children at school. The council was advised to report to link teachers if the rights of children were violated at school. During staff and PTA meetings, members of the council were advised to attend and contribute so that teachers and parents should know their views. Prefects were told to perform to their maximum ability and make sure that in their specific areas, rules and regulations are being adhered to. For instance, sanitation prefects are to make sure that the general surrounding of the school is always clean. Similarly, library prefects are to insure that schoolbooks and other related materials are always taken care of. In addition, class monitors have a duty to check that subject timetables are being followed by teachers and each teacher signs against his/her subject in the period register after teaching. The students' council was also advised to form a club so that as students they highlight to each other different topics on child rights.

Training of Link Teachers

After putting in place students' council at Mphandula primary school in Kalolo zone as a pilot alongside other schools in the zone, two teachers per school were identified to work and support the student bodies on their daily activities. These would act as a bridge between the council and the headteacher to promote learners participation in decision-making at the schools. For example, learners' bodies would participate in formulating school development plans, school rules and budgeting for school improvement grants. As such, the link teachers were trained on their roles and responsibilities as to what they would do to sustain the existence of the councils in schools together with the prefectural bodies.

The training of the 26 link teachers was held at Kalolo Teacher Development Centre in Lilongwe, in collaboration of batches 21, 20 and 19. Using our own initiatives, we managed to buy and provide participants with refreshments and this motivated them.

Review meeting with student councils

Review meetings with student councils were held at Njewa and Kalolo Teacher Development Centres. They were drawn from two and thirteen schools from both zones respectively. This was done to share experiences they encountered during implementation of CRC in their respective schools. During discussions they also focused on solutions to address the challenges met. This was conducted in collaboration of batches 19, 20 and 21 change agents in order to check progress.

It was good to learn from student bodies that after the training they work in harmony with fellow learners and other stake holders as a result their concerns are taken into consideration. For example, a council at Mphandula went out into the community to look for desks which were missing at school and brought them back. In addition, another council investigated stolen books and returned them as well. This shows that students are responsible and involved in decision-making. On the other hand, there is cordial relationship among stakeholders.

In addition, council members from different schools met and organized themselves to summon the Primary Education Advisor for Njewa Zone to intervene because teachers had stopped teaching due to unpaid leave grants for the school session. This is a good development because it shows that learners are able to make decisions on their own and voice out.

These prove to be successes because students are now instilled the spirit of ownership. However, issues of some learner dropouts, abuse and harassment were reported by some learners. For example, a sixteen-year-old girl was forced into marriage to a 24 year old man at Muzu. Similarly a Standard 8 girl at Mphandula came back to school after being visited and counselled by student council members. Another issue was at Chitedze CDSS where a Form 3 girl was impregnated but after delivery she was readmitted. All these issues were brought to the attention of SMCs/PTA, Chiefs, mother groups and parents to take their responsibilities over learners to counsel, guide and



Review meeting with student councils

protect them so that their rights are not infringed and they all attain quality education.. In this regard, change agents from batches 19, 20 and 21 with support from Malawi Human Rights Commission, are also working towards zero child abuse. For example, any person who impregnates or marries any one under the age of 18 should be brought to book. Therefore, we will continue and make sure that we follow up these issues so that other people should draw lessons from them.

It was also learned with regret that some teachers are still administering corporal punishments and abandon classes as a solution over disagreements with students. This is completely against the laws and policies as stipulated by the Malawi Government. As such, teachers still need to be sensitized knowing that change is gradual.

Therefore, the government should ensure that policies, rules and regulations are reinforced and followed.

Review meeting with Link Teachers

The review meeting was organized in order to share experiences on how they have started to work with student councils. For example, what changes they have encountered, the challenges and the way forward for them to better support students. The meeting also gave chance to link teachers to seek advice from the change agents on areas where they were not clear. Through discussions link teachers reported that they find challenges with learners who do not respect the council and the prefectural members. As a result, some council members do not work hard. Again, link teachers reported that sometimes they lack support from their fellow teachers who feel that link teachers are supported financially as they work with students' councils.



However, link teachers still tried to work hand in hand with student councils to strengthen the student platform to voice out and participate in decision-making.

Following the discussions, it was agreed that head teachers should meet to discuss and find ways on how best they can be supportive to the link teachers to strengthen and empower the councils. There was also need for change agents to sensitize teachers on the work done by the link teachers which is voluntary. Following teachers sensitization some showed positive attitude.

For the learners who failed to respect the council members, the link teachers and the head teachers continued to advise students on the roles of student councils during assemblies and knowing that they are put in place to fight for rights.

Review meetings with Head teachers

The meeting was conducted in order to get feedback from headteachers on the implementation of the involvement of students in schools and school stakeholders since the programme started. It was further aimed at checking how the student councils have been operating and support given by headteachers to ensure that students are involved in decision making on issues that affect them.

As part of stakeholders, headteachers tried to brainstorm some solutions to the challenges and come up with the way forward. In this regard headteachers worked tirelessly to create child friendly institutions.

Despite the shared efforts it was noted that some teachers still feel that students would overpower them. This challenge needs an ongoing sensitization for teachers to change their mind set and perception towards CRC.

In addition, headteachers should increase their space of action to give chances to the teachers to work closely with students and have full realization of their rights. Through implementation, change was realized in some cases to promote participation for the students. For example, students are able to care for school equipment, formulate rules and regulations and encourage students who dropped out from school to come back.

Open Day

This was another important day which was on 6th November, 2015 which marked the final phase of batch 21 project where Njewa and Kalolo zones held an open day at Mphandula Primary School to consolidate what learners understood in child rights. This was done through displays of different activities like drama, speeches, poems, songs and traditional dances under the theme of “STOP CHILD ABUSE.” On this day various stakeholders were in attendance such as: The District Education Manager (DEM), The Malawi Human Rights Commission (MHRC), The Member of Parliament (MP), School Management Committee (SMC)/Parent Teachers Association (PTA), Chiefs, teachers, parents, Change Agents, students from both secondary and primary schools without forgetting the Guest of Honour, Dr Ulf Leo from Sweden, the mentor.



Student Council on Parade Mganda dance during an Open day At Mphandula

5. Results

After implementation some of the planned activities as explained in this report, the following are the results:

1. Misunderstandings are resolved through dialogue not vandalism. E.g. Student council from Njewa zone forwarded their concerns to the PEA because teachers were not teaching since they were not given annual leave grants.
2. Students are instilled a sense of ownership because they are fully taking care of school properties. For example; they managed to take back schoolbooks and desks which were stolen.
3. Student councils are invited during PTA meetings where they give contributions on matters that affect learners.
4. Students are involved in planning and budgeting of school improvement grants and formulation of school rules and regulations.
5. Formulation of student councils in thirteen schools in Kalolo zone
6. A form three girl and a standard eight girl who dropped out from school because of pregnancy and early marriage respectively are readmitted.
7. Twelve students who dropped out from school at Mphandula are back to school.
8. There is about 15% and 20% increase enrolment at Muzu and Chitedze respectively because schools are right based.
9. Dropout rates have been reduced because students follow up their friends who drop out from school.

Table showing reduction in student drop out due to pregnancy after CRC sensitization at Muzu.

YEAR/CLASS	Std 4	Std 5	Std 6	Std 7	Std 8	TOTAL
2010	-	1	2	2	3	10
2011	-	2	4	4	8	18
2012	-	6	7	7	8	28
2013	-	1	2	4	5	12
2014	-	3	4	5	6	18
2015	-	-	-	-	8	8

6. Challenges

1. Due to CRC the project schools are popular and there is high enrollment rate which results in congestion in classrooms which make teaching and learning difficult.
2. Encroachment of school land at Mphandula primary makes the school to have minimal space for further constructions.
3. There is inadequate teaching and learning assessment resources making it difficult for implementation of the objectives.
4. Some teachers do not want to be reminded when it is their time to teach.
5. Not all teachers are well trained on issues of CRC.
6. There is inadequate financial assistance for running the project effectively.
7. There is a crucial shortage of water at Mphandula which brings a threat of outbreaks.
8. There are a lot of open-air classes (learning under trees) due to inadequate classrooms.
9. Some communities involve learners in decision making at minimal scale.
10. Some learners underrate student council and prefects.

7. Discussion and Reflection

The project started at a very good pace as many stakeholders have welcomed it. The reception is good from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology and community structures: Chiefs, MPs, ward Councilors, Church organizations, teachers PTA, SMC, mother groups, and learners. Again, learners in student councils have shown commitment to work with change agents by ensuring that children's rights are promoted and protected in schools. However, gaps are still noted in some areas as teachers move towards change. Therefore, it is very important for change agents to encourage and work hand in hand with the student councils in decision-making and promotion of child rights. In addition, learners are to share experiences and learn best practices on issues of participation in schools. Stakeholders are to play their roles and should report issues affecting children such as sexual harassment, violence and any other abuse because they violate children's rights. Change agents, should regularly facilitate meetings with all stakeholders as part of implementation by the community at home to maintain good relations. This would lead to working towards a common goal in enhancing learners participation in decision making in schools as well as at home.

Link teachers have formed zonal committee for student councils to monitor progress. Change agents are continuing to encourage the committee to carry out exchange visits in order to check implementation of their student councils on CRC and find solutions to challenges they encounter. Whatever is discussed during visits at the zone should be in line with action plans. Link teachers need to report to change agents on

every development. As headteachers were trained on their roles towards student councils and prefects, change agents must continue to encourage them in order for student councils to be active. Headteachers should always involve learners when there is an issue as part of participation in decision-making. Student councils in Njewa zone held their meeting whereby they summoned the Primary Education Adviser following a sit in which was conducted by teachers in the zone due to unpaid leave grants. This is an indication that student councils are active and taking part in decision-making.

As change agents we are working closely with stakeholders through meetings. The reports for such meetings are showing that the stakeholders have welcomed CRC with positive mindset despite some negatives due to cultural beliefs. However, with ongoing sensitization change might still be observed, community members are free and open that they report some of issues affecting their children to the relevant authorities like the Headteachers, change agents and police.

8. Way forward

1. Since there are challenges which are outstanding, as change agents, we will continue to work on the project with other stakeholders both primary and secondary. In so doing there will be room for sustainability. As batch 21, it is planned that we will monitor implementation of CRC in schools to ensure that learners are now participating in decision making on matters that affect them. Furthermore, we will also check that teachers at school do not violate learners' rights. Learners ought to voice out and be heard.
2. Assessment has shown that some teachers' mindsets have not changed positively towards CRC. Therefore, we will plan and organize trainings for teachers so that most of them are reached. Schools must be child friendly and we will also ensure that School Management Committee (SMC), Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Mother Group and local leaders are also trained after attending sensitization meetings.
3. After carrying out different activities, we cannot do without evaluation. This can better be achieved through review meetings when experiences and best practices are shared among learners. Where challenges are encountered, solutions are proposed to address the existing issues.
4. Empowering the zonal link teachers committee to organize and monitor the exchange visits in schools.
5. Open days should be conducted so that communities and other stakeholders can appreciate the fruits of CRC because learners show various activities.

Table indicating action plan

OUTCOME 1	Indicator/Monitoring	Time
HEADTEACHERS AND TEACHERS MINDSETS ARE CHANGED TOWARDS CRC	One issue addressed	On going
1.1 OUTPUT	Indicator/Monitoring	
Promoting and raising awareness to headteachers and teachers about rights of the child at Mphandula primary	Two awareness meetings conducted	Done
1.1.a Activity		
Sensitization of school managers (Kalolo and Njewa zones) on CRC at Malawi Institute of Education	One awareness meetings conducted	Done
1.1.b Activity		
Training of 26 teachers in Kalolo zone (patrons and matrons)	One training conducted	Done
1.1.c Activity		
Implementation and monitoring of activities at Mphandula primary.	Checking action plans	On going
1.1.d Activity		
Review meeting	Reports from headteachers, teachers and student council	Done
1.2 OUTPUT	Indicator/Monitoring	
Promoting awareness to headteachers and teachers about rights of a child at both Chitedze community Day Secondary School and Muzu Primary school.	Three decisions made.	On going
1.2 a Activity		
Training of a total of 32 teachers from Chitedze CDSS and Muzu Primary School in CRC	32 teachers trained in CRC	Done
1.2 b Activity		
Implementation and monitoring at Chitedze CDSS and Muzu schools.	Six issues addressed	On going
OUTCOME 2	Indicator/Monitoring	
THERE IS A POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF COMMUNITIES TOWARDS CRC AT SCHOOL AND HOME,PTA AND SMC	-Come to schools when invited (3 times) -Meetings in community (3 times) -2 CRC issues addressed -High enrollment (20% increase)	On going
2.1 OUTPUT	Indicator/Monitoring	
Awareness raised on the rights of children in decision-making.	Four meetings with PTA, SMC, parents, chiefs and mother groups conducted	On going
2.1.a Activity		
Training of school management committee, parent and teachers association, mother groups and chiefs in involving children in decision making.	Three trainings conducted	

2.1.b Activity		
Implementation and monitoring.	Availability of Minutes and reports	On going
2.1.c Activity		
Termly review meeting	Number of meetings, minutes and reports.	Done

OUTCOME 3	Indicator/Monitoring	
LEARNERS AT CHITEDZE COMMUNITY DAY SECONDARY SCHOOL AND MUZU IN NJEWA ZONE AND MPHANDULA PRIMARY SCHOOL IN KALOLO ZONE PARTICIPATE IN DECISION MAKING.	-Two decisions made. -A student council formed at Mphandula	On going
3.1 OUTPUT	Indicator/Monitoring	
Awareness of roles and responsibilities of student councils and prefects to bridge a gap between them.	Two awareness meetings conducted	On going
3.1.a Activity		
Training and discussion by student councils and prefects on their rights, values and responsibilities.	One trainings cessation conducted.	Done
3.1.b Activity		
Formation of student council at Mphandula primary school	Existence of student council	Done
3.1.c Activity		
Implementation and monitoring	Minutes and reports	On going
3.1.d Activity		
Open day at Kalolo TDC	Activities having a theme of "STOP CHILD ABUSE" CRC, songs traditional dances, etc	Done
3.1.e Activity		
Review meeting.	Three review meeting conducted	Ongoing

9. List of references

1. Government of Malawi (2010), the Constitution of the Republic of Malawi.
2. Government of Malawi (2010), Child Care, Protection and Justice act.
3. Government of Malawi (2013) Malawi Government Free Primary Education Implementation Guidelines.
4. United Nations Children's fund (2013), Implementation Handbook for the Convention of the Rights of the Child, Geneva: UN Publications.
5. Child Friendly Handbook for Schools.
6. Education for Human Rights and Democracy in Malawi (2006).