

ZAMBIA

Child Rights Activities in Schools with special focus on participation: A Sample of three (3) selected schools in Lusaka District (Lake Road PTA School, Lusaka Girls Primary and Libala Secondary School)

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1. Brief background about Zambia

Zambia is situated in the southern part of Africa. It is a land-linked country and is surrounded by 9 neighboring States and these include Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, Mozambique, Botswana and Namibia. It has a surface area of 752, 614 square kilometers. The country is divided into 10 administrative provinces with over 108 districts. Zambia has more than 73 ethnic groupings but bound together under the motto of One Zambia One Nation which was coined by the then United National Independence Party (UNIP) Government in 1973 under the leadership of Dr Kenneth David Kaunda to promote unity and peace among all the peoples in the country. Since then the country has remained a unitary state and successive governments have continued to promote the motto of One Zambia One Nation from time to time.

2. Frame of reference

The notion of human rights which until recently was a subject outside educational settings has now become centre stage in this area with more attention being given to the understanding of child rights, which was rooted in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (Muleya, 2008:1). There is a growing concern that children should be placed at the centre of the teaching and learning process. As noted by White (cited in Muleya, 2008) instead of being passive targets of the good intentions of others, children

should become active participants in their own development. The arguments above are consistent with Article 29 paragraph 1 in UNCRC and states that setting out the agreed aims of education, not only adds a qualitative dimension to the rights of education recognised in Article 28 but it also insists on education as being- child- centred, child-friendly and child-empowering. Thus the goal is to develop the child's skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self-esteem and self –confidence (UNICEF 2007:439). Central to this has also been the shift to seeing children not as the objects of others, but as active subjects in their own right. The human rights approach to education is equally showing signs of shifts in attention from the direct activity intervention to policy engagement and advocacy, though some challenges are being met during the process and the implementation phases. Hydén (as cited in Wickenberg et al, 2009: 129-150) contends that the rights do potentially involve a range of actors for whom an obligation exists to take action. It would appear that the Convention is calling for a wider participation of the rights agenda not only in the context of education but also going beyond education to touch on all facets of life where children are mostly found at the weakest point and able to fully defend themselves from the actions of the adults or those that claim to protect them. In this connection the CRC opens the door or doors where children should be treated as full holders of human rights especially that there are also full human beings who are in the process of attaining full development. Freeman (as cited in Wickenberg et al, 2009:151-166) argues that the Convention should adopt a concept of childhood that sees it as a period during which children are to be protected and their developing capacities respected and this is consistent with Article 5 of the Convention which recognises the responsibilities, rights and duties of the parents, as well as those of the extended family or community to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the Convention rights.

Through Article 12 of the CRC children are seen as capable of forming their own views with regard to the right of expression which is supposed to be freely in all matters affecting them. We find this interesting in the context of the work for change started through this, where the children need to engage effectively in matters affecting them through their participation in the schools. This also resonates very well with the Committee on the Rights of the Child's observations that the effective promotion of article 29 (1) requires the fundamental reworking of curricula to include the various aims of education and the systematic revision of text books and other teaching materials and technologies, as well as school policies (UNICEF, 2007:441). Additionally, Freeman in Wickenberg et al (2009) believes that the child or children have the right to open future and they ought to be given such an opportunity to enjoy that. We think that in this project is important that we revitalize this aspect by ensuring that schools in Lusaka District begin to take a look at child rights activities as the best practices in the realisation of the CRC especially with regard to participation. Wickenberg et al (in Wickenberg et al 2009: 111-125) have observed that at local school and community level in projects in Tanzania, Indonesia, Uganda, India-Kerala, Zambia, Colombia, Namibia, Egypt, Malawi and Vietnam had experienced some interesting examples of

participation such as school and class councils that were established and had functioned for some years.

2.1 Zambia education policy on child rights convention (CRC)

According to the Policy document on education provision in Zambia of 1996, the Ministry of Education has affirmed the centrality of the child in the entire education process. The policy recognises that each child is unique with his or her own individuality, fashioned in family and community backgrounds that are themselves unique. This contributes to a rich diversity to the entire educational enterprise which should seek to cultivate the qualities and potentialities of each learner, without trying to mould all children according to the same pattern. Further, the Government of the Republic of Zambia has pledged itself to protect the right of every child and promote healthy, happy and caring upbringing. As such the policy contends that the school environment should be such that it ensures each young person's joyful safe and formative childhood and early adolescence. This principle informs the statements of educational goals and objectives and the curriculum principles to which they give rise. The education system exists for the sake of the learners and the institutions in which the learning takes place. At the level of the schools, the system aims at enabling them to provide an education and learning environment which facilitates the cultivation of each pupil's full education and potential. With all this, the policy gives an overarching aim of the school in promoting the full and well rounded development of the physical, intellectual, social, affective, moral and spiritual qualities of all pupils so that each can develop into a complete person for his or her own personal fulfilment and the good of society. From this picture it is very clear that policy is in conformity with Article 29 of the CRC whose content is focusing on education which is child centred, child friendly and child empowering. The goal of this article is to develop the child's skills, learning and other capacities, human dignity, self esteem and self-confidence and this fits well with the current policy for the Zambian child. In addition, various reports that have been made on Zambia through Change Agents, the Ministry of Education remain committed to the provisions of the United Nations on Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

On top of this, the Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training and Early Education (MESVTEE) has reaffirmed its commitment to the child rights education in the new curriculum dubbed 'Zambia Education Curriculum Framework of 2013'. For instance, under international conventions and agreements the ministry has stressed that ... in order to promote and have respect for human rights and freedoms which includes access to education by all, focus has been paid on the 1989 Convention on the rights of the child aged between 0 to 18 years. As such the ministry through the new framework contends that it is therefore, imperative that through the curriculum these rights should be explicitly defined and taught to all learners (MESVTEE, 2013: 15). Further the document also states that Zambia is a signatory to the United Nations conventions on Human Rights and in view of this, learning institutions should integrate Human Rights across the curriculum by way of involving learners in activities and practices that

expose them to Human Rights awareness. Programmes for students pursuing Bachelor Degrees at University of Zambia in the School of Education, Colleges of Education, Secondary and Primary Schools have already integrated CRC issues through civic education and social studies.

Clearly from this scenario, one gets the sense that what is being encouraged is child rights education and this resonates very well with the project that we have undertaken in three (3) selected schools in Lusaka District.

2.2 Experiences from Zambia

It is important to note from the outset that some strides have been made in the area CRC in Zambia. For example the school councils and other CRC activities are running in some of the schools on the Copperbelt (Batch 16) Other areas of CRC that have been done so far in Zambia have been on raising awareness among the pupils, teachers and parents on the rights of children through school and class council (Batch 12, 2010); child rights implementation in Zambia (Batch 10, 2009); school curriculum and child rights (Batch 9, 2009); Empowerment of child rights in schools (Batch 7, 2008); testing the practicability of the guidelines for the establishment of school councils in Zambian schools (Batch 5, 2007); child rights in education (Batch 3, 2006); implementation of child rights in schools (Batch 2, 2005) and the implementation of Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the rights of the child in schools (Batch 1, 2004). At the moment Batch 18 focused on creating a platform for the two student administrative bodies on the Copperbelt schools to work together in decision making according to CRC norms. With such it is undoubtedly clear that something is being done in the schools in Zambia regarding CRC though the focus is mainly on the schools on the Copperbelt province. However, there is need to focus on the way the CRC is or has been applied in other areas such as Lusaka taking into account that Batch 3 and 5's focus was on some of the schools in Lusaka. The choice of Lusaka in this project was arrived at in the light of its diversity which gave a very good opportunity for such a project.

3. Project purpose

The purpose of the project was twofold:

1. To find out the current practices on Child rights Education with regard to participation in the three selected schools in Lusaka District namely; Lake Raod PTA School, Lusaka Girls Primary and Secondary School and Libala Secondary School
2. To create and strengthen platforms for students to get involved in CRC Activities

The three schools chosen were based on the information extracted from Ministry of Education and Zambia Civic Education Association. We wanted also to investigate

from the Head teachers on how active their schools have been with regard to activities of CRC and also the possible challenges they faced. Additionally, to find out best practices on CRC activities especially in the manner they have been running in their schools in Lusaka.

3.1 Target groups

The project targeted students, school management from the three schools namely Lake Road PTA, Lusaka Girl Primary, Libala and Kabulonga Boys Secondary School.

The stakeholders were Parent Teachers Associations (PTAs), Head teachers Association, Ministry Officials, University of Zambia (UNZA), Save the Children International, Zambia Civic Education Association (ZCEA) and Human Rights Commission.

4. Main activities implemented

- Visited the project schools and had sharing and learning experiences/meetings with head teachers, students and link teachers with regard to CRC activities.
- Visited the Swedish Embassy and had meeting with the Acting Ambassador on CRC activities together with our mentor – Mrs. Bodil Rasmusson from Sweden.
- Training/orienting teachers, head teachers and other Ministry of Education officials in CRC.
- Learning and sharing experiences with the Provincial Education Office, District Education Board Secretary, University of Zambia and other stakeholders in CRC activities.
- Meeting with the Permanent Secretary, in the Ministry of Education
- Meeting with the Director for Directorate for Open and Distance Learning, Ministry of Education Science Vocational Training and Early Education.
- Meeting with the Provincial Education Officer (PEO)-Southern Province, District Education Board Secretary, Provincial Resource Centre Coordinator and other key officials at the District.
- Met also with students, head teachers and link teachers from different schools in Livingstone District on CRC and the school councils
- Following up implementation of agreed actions in all the targeted schools

5. Achievements

The project has made progress in accordance with the project plan and the progress report that was presented in Kerala-India.

5.1 Lake road PTA school

As soon as we got back from India we undertook various activities in the targeted schools for instance we had a learn and share meeting with the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) representative at Lake Road PTA School to explain what we were doing and how their school was selected and what the whole project was about. The response from the PTA representative was positive and shared also the views of the parents and they were in full support of the CRC activities in the school. In fact what could be said about this school is that it is a model school in so far as the CRC activities are concerned. We saw it as a school where other schools could learn how to establish and organize an effective school council.

As for Lake Road PTA School, the administration and Parent Teachers' Association ensure that what learners complain in school council was acted upon because they would not like to infringe on their rights as children.

5.2 Lusaka girls primary and secondary school

After we had finished with Lake Road School, we went to another school and this time it was Lusaka Girls Primary and Secondary School. We made an appointment through the Head teacher to have the PTA representative so that we could equally share and learn from them how they were responding to the CRC activities in the school. As much as the appointment was secured, we did not have the parents come through due to circumstances beyond their control. However, we were able to learn and share with the school administration the expectations with regard to the CRC in the school.



School Council Session At Lusaka Girls Primary And Secondary

In our interaction with the Head teacher and Link teacher at Lusaka Girls, we saw the need in near future that we could support the school as change agents in working with them in ensuring that there is harmony between the school council and the school authority.

The team had an opportunity to visit Lusaka Girls Primary and Secondary School to learn and share their experiences on how they carry out their school council sessions. The team appreciated what was coming from the learners and we further encouraged the school to be conducting exchange visits so that they learn from other school councils.

The issues that learners voice out in School Council at Lusaka Girls Primary and Secondary School resulted into allowing school administration to open a block of toilets which was completed a long time ago in awaiting the Vice President to officially open it, since it was constructed by the community through Community Development Fund (CDF) but when the team visited the school to attend their school council, it was reported that the block was opened for the learners.

5.3 Libala secondary school

We noted in our discussion that Libala had a well established school council; they needed support from the change agents to work with them so that the council could be strengthened. This helped learners to know that when they complain to issues that affect them in the school, the administrators needed to listen and attend to those issues which can be resolved sometimes even without any financial cost, this was clearly demonstrated when learners demanded to be writing their Termly Exams and this was implemented.

5.4 Collaboration with save the children and human rights commission.

We also managed to establish some good working rapport with Save the Children International and Zambia' Human Rights Commission in the area of CRC and hope to continue working together in matters of CRC for a long time to come. In fact, the Human Rights Commission appreciated what we were doing and as a result, they have included the three schools in our project in their plan of action. They have also included the link teachers from the project schools in their training programme. In addition to this, they have also agreed to work with us as change agents in the production of Child Rights Radio programmes.

As a Radio Producer, this is Christina Kafulo's area of expertise hence, she needed to be supported financially because it is very costing to produce and record such programs. The coming of Human Rights Commission to collaborate with the Ministry in the production and broadcasting of such programs will enable many learners, duty bearers and the community to benefit a lot to such child rights learning programs

5.5 Training of trainers workshop organized by batch 21

We also facilitated at the workshop organised by Batch 21 to train administrators, teachers and link teachers from schools within Lusaka. The idea was meant to develop a model for the training of trainers which could be used to spread CRC activities in the schools in Lusaka Province. The training for Batch 21 included also our Link Teachers from our three sampled schools as well and equipped them with the necessary information pertaining to child rights. We have also initiated the formation of Lusaka District CRC Committee to help roll out CRC activities in the province.

The members of the CRC Committee were nominated by their participants based on the interest towards issues of child rights and what they are doing at their respective schools in promoting the rights of children. These were mainly Head teachers, School In-Set Coordinators who comprised the committee. On the last day of the training, the committee drew their Action Plan so that they could roll out to so many schools within Lusaka District, see the attached log frame.

S/NO	ACTIVITIES	INDICATORS	TARGET GROUP	TIME FRAME
1	Conduct Sensitization meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of Reports produced Availability of photos/video 	Head teachers Teachers Learners Community	16-17th March, 2015
2	Hold training of key stakeholders in issues of CRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of Reports produced Availability of photos/video 	Learners Link teachers Class Representatives	23/03/2015
3	Formulation of School Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of School Councils established Availability of photos/video No. of Reports produced 	Head teachers Learners Link teachers	
4	Conduct Monitoring and Evaluation trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Availability of photos/video No. of M & E Reports produced No. of M & E trips undertaken 	Officers from HQ PEO's Office DEBS's Office PRCC DRCC Head teachers	





Welcoming in Livingstone

6. Networking meeting

We also organised for the Networking meeting with trained and local Change Agents from the Copperbelt, Central, Muchinga and Lusaka Provinces which was held at Zamcom Lodge in Lusaka and this was during the mentor's visit to Lusaka in the month of June 2015.

6.1 Visit to southern province

We also collaborated with the former Provincial Education Officer for Southern province Mr Stephen Chishiko who is also one of the trained change agents to have a workshop in Livingstone to strengthen the school councils in Southern Province. All these efforts mentioned above we have done in the spirit of learning and sharing different experiences and best practices aimed at supporting the agenda of CRC in our everyday interaction with the children.

7. Discussions/reflections

The two teams thus batch 20 and 21 have played an important role in ensuring that CRC activities are pushed further especially in Lusaka. This does not suggest that other change agents from other batches have not been the significant others in this area. We have received a lot of support from other change agents and Copperbelt change agents have been helpful and supportive in ensuring that we also move the CRC agenda in schools and the country at large. We are also cognizant of the fact that the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education rendered the needed support towards this project.

We also conducted a network meeting with change agents and head teachers from Lusaka, Copperbelt, Central and Northern Provinces and drew 33 participants. At this meeting we shared and learnt from each other on the successes and challenges in the area of CRC in the schools. Copperbelt change agents are undoubtedly pace setters in CRC and have strong, visible, felt and presence in the CRC activities. Our conclusion about this group is that there are indeed epitomes of CRC activities in the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, Batch 20 managed to strengthen school councils that were initiated by Save the Children Norway in Southern Province particularly in Livingstone District. We hasten to note that cooperation between and among change agents and head teachers association is the kind of strength that we need to promote CRC activities across the schools in Lusaka and the nation at large. We have also initiated the formation of the Lusaka District CRC committee to oversee the activities of CRC in schools and this was in collaboration with batch 21.

We have also embarked on the creation of a CRC website and also the production of child rights radio programmes that we are working on with Zambia's Human Rights Commission. We have also collaborated with Human Rights Commission in training of the link teachers from the selected schools in our project and have also included these schools in their programmes and plan of action. We plan to conduct exchange visits among the selected schools in our project to learn and share best practices in CRC.

7.1 Challenges

It has not been an easy task to implement CRC activities as indicated in our log-frame due to the following factors:

- Lack of financial resources to implement CRC activities.
- Lack of budget line to account for CRC activities.
- Negative attitude from some teachers and school administrators on CRC activities
- Time constraints in execution of the projected activities
- Taken for granted beliefs and values are still hampering the full realisation of CRC activities in schools
- Space of action for the children is still lacking in schools
- Paternalistic attitude among the adults in schools is prevalent
- Children are not given full benefits to realise and exercise their rights in schools

8. Way forward

- Need to upscale sensitization programmes aimed at promoting CRC activities in schools.
- Lobby for the creation of a unit or section in the Ministry of Education to deal with CRC issues.
- Lobby for financial support from the government, NGOs and Civil society organisations and also from bilateral and multilateral organisations.
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of CRC activities in schools.
- Formation of CRC networks and partnerships between and among the stakeholders dealing in child rights issues.
- Updating of the CRC website from time to time in order for the people to access information related to CRC.
- Holding of annual conferences where people plan and review activities of CRC.
- Strengthening school councils in order to enhance participation among the learners.
- Conducting of exchange visits to promote best practices of CRC in schools .
- Continue producing and broadcasting child rights programmes through national and community radio stations.
- Production of CRC brochures/newsletters for the purposes of information sharing and raising of awareness.

9. References

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