

THE MACKENZIE SCHOOL INSPECTION PROJECT

Description of school facilities, books, school supplies and computers available to the students at the school.

The school has two blocks. One is divided into two sections - a kitchen and a store room. The other block contains the old class rooms and an office for the teacher in charge. The new class room is attached to this old block. It has a class and a room allocated as a library. This has tables, benches and shelves with few books. The class room too has desks and a black board. Both the new class room and the library haven't had any ceiling board put yet (reported to have run out of funds) [means the ceiling is open to the rafters – there IS a roof over it].

The school has very few books which barely reach 20 in number. And looking at the number of students they can't share these books fairly. As for other materials and facilities available for the students such as computers, I was told (never had a chance to see them) that the school has 12 laptop computers and one desk top computer. These are kept at Mr. Nicholas Chisha's home. This I was told is due to the fact that they haven't yet secured a proper place in school for them and another factor being that they did not have power until late last year. I was told by two of the teachers that the school does conduct a computer literacy training program with older students at Mr. Nicholas's home.

The school has four teachers -two male and two female, with one teacher per grade. These teachers work as full time volunteers at the school.

Mr. Nicholas Chisha

When I asked Mr. Nicholas Chisha how many times he had visited the school in the last month before they went on a school break and how many times in the last three months, he told me that he is found at the place (school) almost every day. He told me that his main duties at school are inspecting that all is running well, noting down what is needed and sorting out some things which need immediate attention, like the transfer of kids to government schools.

On the part of the problems faced during the final construction, he said labour was not a problem as most community members come in to help with the work at the site and they also offered their own tools to be used during the construction. The problem with the purchasing of materials such as cement whose price kept fluctuating. [This has been a big problem all over Africa for the past few years, due both to problems of global price fluctuation and supply chain/transportation problems.] The resolve was to negotiate with the suppliers of the same materials to sale at a discount.

No repairs or maintenance has been made on the class yet as no damages have been reported yet. The classes are all closed when not in use by the children. Mr. Nicholas Chisha said that the school is safe as long as there is someone to watch it. So for this reason they have a school care taker who is there all the time (he also guards the school at night).

On the government's decision process to allow the 5Th grade to be introduced to the school, he said an application has already been made to the government and he is just waiting for their response (approval). Mr. Chisha said that their aim as Mackenzie community school is to have classes up to the 7th grade. He said this also requires government approval.

Teacher's response to the questions asked.

How many times did Mr. Nicholas Chisha visit the school in the last month? And how many times in the

past months? The teacher I asked this question never said exactly how many times he had visited the school. But she said that he was only at the school when there is something which needs his attention, like the taking of children to the government schools and when there're visitors at the school. Apart from that he is also responsible for the computer training program which has been introduced to older students in the community which he conducts at his place.

When describing the quality of the materials of the school house and the materials and resources available to them, the teachers said that on materials used such as sand, the community was involved in the collection of these as there is a stream near the school. While for the other materials like roofing sheets and cements had to be bought from someplace else and this was done by Mr. Nicholas Chisha.

As for materials available to the teachers, they said they are given some financial help by IRFF. The other teaching materials are so few (like books and other teaching aids). On improvements they would like to see for classroom and facilities, the teachers expressed concern on the matter of teaching materials available to the children. They said they would like to see more books and other teaching aid materials for children. And also they said they would like to upgrade their teaching methods (learning new teaching methodologies).

On the improvements which they think are needed to be made on the school. The teachers said if the school could accommodate upper grades the community would be greatly be helped as some of the children after they reach 4th grade will have to be taken to government schools. Another thing they said they would like to see for the school is a fence which will also serve as a security measure. [This is actually quite important – buildings are fairly easy to break into, even when locked. We've had people push small children up and through high, barred windows in order to steal things out of our classrooms in Uganda. A sturdy fence, though more expensive, is a better way to protect the school.] The teachers also said if they are well motivated by offering them enough financial help will enable them to deliver better services to the children as they will not need to abandon their teaching job in search of means to feed and support their family.

The typical use of the classroom on daily basis was told by the teacher in charge who said that the class accommodates 2 grades. That is the 3rd and 4th grades. One of the grades would use the class first in the morning (from 8:00am to 10:30am) and the other grade uses the class afterwards (10:30am to 12:00am). This routine is also used for the other old class as well.

What the teachers have experienced the IRFF organisation.

Teachers said the IRFF really shows to have a heart of helping children with their education. The organisation goes to an extent of continued support of the children even after they leave the community school to government schools. This goes on till to child graduates from high school. The organisation they said does provide the teachers with some financial aid, though they (teachers) say that it is really not enough to cater for most of their household needs.

The children

The kids really do like their new classroom and almost every one of them runs into it during their break. The kids said the new classroom has given them much more space, as they no longer have to be put two grades in one classroom facing opposite sides of the room with two different teachers on each end. The children said they don't come from very far places as the school is right in the community and that serves them time to travel from homes. These kids said they are given two meals, breakfast and lunch. [This is really good – I would encourage them to keep doing this, giving both breakfast and lunch. Many

of the kids will not have eaten anything before coming to school in the morning, and many won't eat anything after leaving the school until 9 or 10 at night (if at all).]

The daily activities done on an average day are normally classes are done in the morning and usually other activities are done in the afternoon including sports. The school has some basketballs, soccer balls and net balls. In the case of the school learning syllabus, they use the Zambian Ministry of Education syllabus. The school does report all its education progress to a nearby government school.

That is as far as I could go on this visit, but I'll get more photos as soon as I get a better camera. I was using a cell phone to take the ones I have sent. I was warmly welcomed and I was told to feel free to visit the school any time I wanted. And I told them to call me anytime they needed updates. I really don't mind doing the work for you guys.