

Construction Project for Library, Teachers Office at Window-Level



US Charge dAffaires Ms Lisa Vickers (right) shakes hands with CRIDOC Director George Kayange during signing ceremony

31 March 2011, Lilongwe:

The Child Rights Information and Documentation Centre (CRIDOC), has been constructing a Library and teachers office at Chimvite Primary School with financial support from the USAID under the Ambassador's Self-Help Project. Under this project, the USAID complements community projects where community subjects/members have already shown commitment to help themselves. The Location of the Chimvete Primary School is at Mpingu, Traditional Authority Milili, in Lilongwe Rural South West.

The CRIDOC's project started in January, this year, and now the project is already at window-level, thanks to the commitment of the community members who have voluntarily worked so harder to ensure that the project is completed in time.

"I am impressed at the speed we are making progress. This only shows how excited and enthusiastic everybody in this community is at the moment this project," says Mr. Mailosi Lamitoni, Chairperson of the school Management Committee (SMC).

CRIDOC has been collaborating with the chiefs, the Member of Parliament for the area, and the Chimvite Primary School Management Committee.

Before the project, the school did not have enough infrastructures, including a library and even a building to host teachers and the Head Teacher. The situation rendered it difficult for the school to receive donations of books and other educational materials as there is currently no secure place to keep such materials unless CRIDOC, the community, and the school authorities

(e.g. school development committee) themselves did something to correct the situation. The situation had, therefore, compromised the quality of education.

The good news is that the school authorities and surrounding community with the help of the Chimvite Community Based Organization (CBO) were mobilized by CRIDOC not only to mould bricks, but also erect an unfinished structure/building for teachers' office in the hopes that well-wishers outside the community might one day assist financially with the purchase of building materials to finish the structure. And lo and behold, the USAID, through the American Embassy, appreciated what the CRIDOC and community had done hence they contributed funds towards the purchase of iron sheets and timber for roofing, cement for flooring, window panes, and door frames, paint and lime.

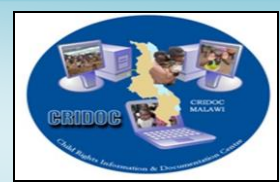
When the project is completed, it is envisaged that it will result in the improvement of quality education as pupils will now begin accessing educational materials through the Library.

"Unlike their counterparts in town, our pupils in this village do not have access to basic learning materials, including textbooks. Your future (CRIDOC's) plan to even include additional materials in the Library such as Braille, children's novels, games and the like will really drastically improve education standards here," says Mr. Alex Lijanga, the School's Head teacher.

Why did CRIDOC Intervene?

CRIDOC was motivated to mobilize the community and other stakeholders to construct teachers' office that will also host a library room at the Chimvite Primary School because the organization wanted to fulfil one of its mandates which is to create access to information on child/youth development, rights, or related issues through documentation.

Chimvite Primary School is one of the schools in the rural areas of Lilongwe District that is currently in a dilapidated state, thereby drastically compromising the quality of education. The school does not have some of the basics such as proper offices for both teachers and the Head Teacher.



This is the grass-thatched hut that was recently used as a makeshift office for teachers at Chimvite School

When CRIDOC staff visited the school on 21 November 2009 as part of their routine advocacy work, it had a makeshift office for the Head Teacher with grass thatched roof and walls also made of grass and tree planks and without any doors. Basically, what the situation means is that no single educational materials were kept in this makeshift office as there was no security.

Besides lack of offices for both the Head teacher and school teachers, the school also did not have a library where pupils could go to study or borrow books and other reading materials to use in their homes. Even if the school had reading material, the mere fact that the school did not have a proper place to store such materials poses a big challenge in terms of pupils' ability to access quality education. For example, as an organization established to create access to information on issues affecting children, including education, CRIDOC had been failing to donate some of its materials from its library – accessed through the National Library Service of Malawi – to the Chimvite Primary School, as there was no guarantee for security.

The main interest of CRIDOC in the project is to ensure that pupils exercise their right to access information and education materials. The project will enable the organization to provide such information/educational materials; to facilitate school reading and debate clubs; among other things.

Need for more external support!

Although the USAID provided us with funds to purchase construction of building materials through the contract that was signed on 2nd December 2010, there



The progress of the construction work has been quite impressive due to active community involvement

was however no allocation for the book shelves, text books, solar panel and computers. This means that even after the project is completed, CRIDOC and the community authorities will continue to fundraise for the purchase of these items for the library.

News Briefs

27 March 2011, Dedza:

CRIDOC, in collaboration with Youth & Child Rights Shield, mobilised communities from all corners of Dedza District through open day activities to raise awareness on the new law, the Child Care, Protection and Justice Act (2010). The activities were held at the Dedza Stadium. The target audience included the following: parents, teachers, chiefs, children and policy makers themselves. The activity was implemented with support from NGO Coalition on Child Rights (NGOCCR).

8-10 March 2011, Dedza:

CRIDOC, which currently chairs the Lilongwe District Education Network (LIDEN), participated in a survey in four Zones of Lilongwe Rural to track expenditure in schools. This was part of the nationwide Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (CSCQBE) Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) for the financial year 2010/11, to track the flow of public funds and other resources in primary schools..