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I met a young man at Mwantaya village in the morning around 10:00 hours he was of about 23.

I asked him to brief me his educational back ground why he dropped out why is schooling important or not important any thing related to education.

He said that he liked schooling but he lost both parents while he was young about 10 years when he was in Standard 3 he said that all members of his family are not educated they all dropped before reaching in standard 8, and he said that they have been looked after [by] their grand parents.

I asked him that is schooling important to him even of [though] he dropped?

He said that he doesn't differentiate in the village hence his brother is in Republic of South Africa he built a nice house of corrugated iron sheets, he has assets like HIFIs, DVDs, Video, Television, bicycles so with the people who are working there like heath workers, teachers he can not compare with them his brother is rich.

I asked him to compare with him?

He said that though his main source of income is weaving mats he gets at least not K8000.00 by the end of the month he said he doesn't have any qualification and those working do not get up to that amount by the end of the month and he said that he has a radio and a bicycle so its more or less the same with those working at Mphula.

And he concluded to say that employment is just an opportunity to work, people in Malawi working in remote / rural areas get lower salaries and nobody can admire that.

May be those who stay in town settings but in rural areas they do not admire them.

He said his models are political leaders and cabinet ministers who drive mercedenz [Mercedes benz] expensive vehicles as they come in the rural areas during campaign public meeting people do appreciate and admire that it is a high paying career, they are rich.

So he said that he doesn't care that he is not educated he doesn't have any qualification.

Then I met one of the young girls of about 19 years old and she had 2 children, I asked her when did she drop from school she said that she dropped out when she was 15 years old.

She said she was in Standard 6 when she dropped out hence one of the boys in the village forced her to get married to him, she said she had an early marriage is what made her to drop early but she continued to say that she dropped out but she doesn't care that she dropped hence most of the girls in the area have no qualifications and there is nobody who is working most of the girls go for early marriages.

I asked her what are the other reasons why people drop from school?

She said that majority is early marriage, some drop because of unwanted pregnancies.

Some because of loss of parents orphanage.

She said that most of the girls drop due to pregnancies but they are not married they end up getting married to people who have already other wives polygamous.

She said that but currently some girls are still studying up to secondary level but they are prostituting they go for sugar dad.

Then I asked her why she dropped does she have parents?

She said her mother died when she was 10 and she was putting up at her aunts residence within the area and she said that her aunt so the boy who forced her to get married to her but she encouraged her to do so but the girl said this after having said that her aunt encouraged her to get married because she now had a chance of stopping assisting her so that the one who was going to marry her was supposed to assist her.

She said parents and relatives in the villages like young people dropping from schools because they say a lot of people are educated but they are not employed so this disappoint a lot of people of continuing with school they end up getting early marriages, early pregnancies, some go for fishing at Shire river, some go for vending at Vingula Trading Centre.

And she said that most of the girls who drop out from school currently are doing handcraft production e.g. mat weaving, basket weaving and other cash activity.

Then after she said all this I left and went to Mwantaya village.

I met a certain teacher for [from] Chukuni full primary school Mr. Makina he teaches at this school since 2005 and he said he was qualified in 2002, currently he is a PT4 primary school teacher, he said he has a 1999 MSCE Certificate.

He said that he completed school as a school leaver in 1999 and got employed because of the free primary school education which was introduced by the former president Dr. Bakili Muluzi in 1994 and got implemented in 1994.

He said that he is brought up from a Lomwe tribe who migrated from Mulanje District and settled in Balaka District and he said he is brought up from a family of 6 children and unfortunate enough he is the only male in the family and he said that he is the only man who reached up to a secondary school completion the rest of the women he said that they all dropped before reaching standard 8.

I asked him why he think thy dropped before reaching up to standard 8?

He said that he thinks of four genuine reasons why his sisters failed to complete school and he said he ranked the reason to numbers starting with the most.

1. He said that it is lack of parental care the parents were seeing boys falling in-love with the girls but they had no say what they were saying is that Aaa! They are educated as long as they know how to write and read.
2. sadly is that laziness of the girls and lack of seriousness the girls were to serious with school.
3. The other reason is poverty of the family since these children were going to school since the reign of Dr. Kamuzu Banda Time when school was not free people had to pay school fees so for a poor rural Malawian who had St. children to raise funds for fees it was a problematic by then it was better for business people and civil servants but for a rural masses it was a very big problem which was blocking children to attend school.
4. And lastly he said that bad sexual behaviour and early sex hence these girls he said started having sex while they were young I asked him of what age?

He said that they started while they ere about 13 years old and he continued to say that by the age of 14 and is they already started giving birth instead of going now to secondary school it's the age when they got married.

I asked him the challenges he is facing as a teacher since he joined the profession in 2000 to 2005 until now 2006?

He said that he has about 6 main reasons he faces as problems of teaching at the school and he said that:-

1. There is too much workload since there is insufficient number of teachers there are more than 1500 teachers but there are only 8 teachers so he said that the teacher ratio is not good.
2. He said that there is insufficient learning materials.
3. Poor performance of pupils I probed for clarification?
4. He said that there is too much absenteeism especially during initiation ceremonies they delay up to a week or 2 weeks before they start schooling so this lead to poor performance they found that people have already learnt a lot hence they have delayed to start school.
5. He also said distance to school is long he walks for almost 10 kilometres to reach to school due to lack of teachers houses there are only 2 houses for teachers so this is one of the greatest problem he faces hence he said he travels for a long distance.
6. He said that another problem is that lack of promotion to change from one grade to the other grade it takes up to 10 up to 15 years before one changes a grade, i.e from PT4 to change to PT3 people are taking up to 15 years so this is a problem.
7. Lastly he said that you see a head teacher of a school is a PT4 yet there is a PT3 or PT2 at the school this makes the other teachers not to work hard at school.

They see a Junior is heading a school yet there is a senior within this ends up affecting the performance of pupils hence those seniors do not work hard in class hence there is lack of motivation they just say those who have privilege school teach because when one is heading a school there are in-service trainings which those heads go to teach development centres where they get allowances so this is paining a lot of teachers through out the District.

I asked what are the good things he faces at the school sicne he started teaching at the school.

He said that there are experienced teachers all of them now are qualified which is a good thing.

There is a good condition of school buildings constructed nicely some 8 years ago.

There are availability sanitary facilities water and toilets.

There is involvement of community / parents during school developments.

Finally he said there is an increased opportunity for the children to go to primary school currently due to free primary school education so the enrollment is high that's why there is lack of teachers.

I then asked him about the performance of the school like selection of pupils going to secondary school and why pupils are dropping?

He said that at least pupils are getting selected to secondary school but majority are boys as compared to girls and he had to say that the drop-outs have got their own reasons and he started why girls drop-out?

He said that due to early marriages they get married after 5 or 6 years of attending school this is to say that they drop out during standard 5 or 6 they get married.

Initiation ceremonies this is affecting girls too much as they graduate from these ceremonies they regard themselves that they are grown up they rush for sex ending up getting or having un-wanted pregnancies so soon after they come from these ceremonies some of the girls drop due to early sex before they reach standard 8.

He said that during starvation / hunger period like 2006 first term a lot of pupils dropped out of school in Balaka because of hunger periods.

He finally started that boys rush for money i.e. some drop and go to South Africa for employment because a lot of young men of the area go in the Republic of South Africa so they bring cell phones, expensive clothes all these attracts the boys to go for those who do not afford to go to South Africa they go to Lake Malawi, Lake Malombe and the Shire river for fishing they start selling fish and get money for their needs ending up dropping from school.

Then I thanked the male teacher for having chatted with me and for providing the information to me.

I left and went back to Vingula late in the afternoon.

28-07-2006

it was on Friday when we went to Mitochi village then after normal interviews I met a young lady of about 22 years old and married, she was selling bananas by the trading centre near one of the groceries.

I stood by the market and I asked what she was after she told me that she is a business lady who sells food items in the area.

I requested her to tell me her school background.

She was open and free she told me that she was born in 1984 and she has 3 children.

She said that her parents are farmers and they are both alive she is a Yao by tribe and she comes from a family of 6 children her being a 3<sup>rd</sup> born and her parents are quite worth money was not a problem and is not a problem there are 2 boys and 4 girls but she said that or the 3 girls were married and they all dropped before reaching standard 8 and its only 1 girl who is in form 2 she is 16 years old and the other 2 boys one completed MSCE and the other one last born son is in standard 8.

She said that she dropped the respondent I was talking to said that she was attracted by one of the boys also a drop-out who went to the Republic of South Africa and came back 1999 she met him in Vingula then the boys proposed the girl the girl accepted and they made all the marriage arrangements until they got married the very same year in 1999.

She said she does not care about school hence they are very few girls who completed school from the area its only those who come from town may be they retired from work then they are in the village are those who complete school she said that, that's girl a few go to secondary school and most of the girls drop in form 2 or 3.

I asked her why some pupils leave school?

She said that some pupils leave school because of the following:- she disclosed that:

- a. Lack of money to pay for school expenses is also one of the contributing factor to encourage pupils to drop out from school.
- b. Most of the children in the Yao ethnic. Yao tribe lack of interest also makes the children to drop from school.
- c. Money problem also most of the children wants to earn money so they end up dropping out from school then, they start vending, fishing, doing production work e.g. weaving of baskets, mats to earn money.
- d. Some of the pupils also needed to work parents she said mostly women mistreat girls they give them household work daily to work so these end up by dropping out from school and this is common in Balaka in the rural areas.
- e. She said that she has a lot of options why pupils leave school?

She said pregnancy and early marriages is also a contributing factor which is leading to drop-outs of many girls of Balaka.

She said also that death in the family if parents or parent die this is affecting many children may be after the death the children may be so to school for a year or 2 then you see them dropping or getting married due to lack of parental care both parents passed away so they lack assistance and end result is leaving the school.

Some go for prostitution, some get early marriages, some go for businesses and some they drop from school and start caring for their fellow orphans looking after themselves.

She said that this loss of parents as orphans this is increasing a lot of pupils to drop from school due to lack of financial support.

Then I finally asked her admirations since there are educated women like teachers / health personnel at the area does she admire them.

She responded to say that she does not care her husband is one of the worthiest man who works abroad in South Africa and she has no problem she is active in her financial status but for those who are poor and are not educated they admire but she said to her side she doesn't admire anybody in the area only for those ladies who work in Town like Balaka Boma she admires the ladies but not at Luka Area she said she is doing fine currently, she dresses nicely, she has a phone she said she does not admire anybody.

THE END