

Preparatory meeting for Student Minister Committee workshop
(Held at Concern Worldwide Rwanda Office) 10th August 2011

(Notes from SMCs preparatory meeting)

Meeting participants:

Kate Hannon;	A Partner In Education (APIE)
Britt Rasmussen;	EDUCAT
Buruga Claudine;	VVOB
Nkwaya Wellars;	Wellspring Foundation
Nyembo Stephane;	Wellspring Foundation
Rugaaju David;	Concern Worldwide
Nandudu Esther;	ADRA – Rwanda
Umwali Laetitia;	Never Again Rwanda
Bugingo Dieudonne;	Concern Worldwide

Summary

The meeting was a success in creating a shared understanding about the concept of Student Minister Committee (SMC) as well as enthusiasm for the SMC planned meetings among participants.

One organization committed to give support in calling 30 schools in Gasabo district an effort that is highly appreciated. The meeting left off with open hands to organizations willing to contribute differently towards communicating and mobilizing schools for the forthcoming SMC meeting/workshop.

Next steps

- Contacting the Ministry of Youth, Sport & Culture to inform the about our operations.
- Linking up with the MINEDUC to host the first meeting (to be sponsored by Concern Worldwide Rwanda).
- Involving the district education officer of Gasabo to strengthen collaboration and support
- Ensuring that the Rwandan National Youth Council is involved.
- Informing other NGOs in the education sector and asking them to contact schools that they work with.
- Meeting also recommended involving the regional Inspector of schools

Meeting Progress

David went through how and why the idea was conceived. It started as an RENCPC activity but when funds ran out; Concern Worldwide thought it appropriate to act on an idea with such potential and fitting with the strategy of most NGOs and other actors in the education sector.

Britt emphasized how essential youth empowerment is and when/how the first and possibly following meetings should take place. Britt mentioned that she was scheduled to leave for Denmark and needed NGOs to cooperate on the ground to make it work. She promised to assist with coordination from Denmark, unless she was offered a job to work in Rwanda therefore present within reach.

The participants each responded positively to the idea and gave useful insights into how to take this forward. Others also sought for different clarification in about how to take this idea forward and whether it would be kept as an activity of the RENCP or MINEDUC. Response in this regard pointed to the fact that it was a new concept that was seen appropriate given that many actors have agree that child/youth participation is key in arriving at quality education but not many organizations have implemented activities to make this happen.

The meeting also discussed about the set-up of the first SMC meeting; Britt spoke about including MINEDUC and the VVOB School Management Programme so that students would have a greater say in this. The meeting was informed that measures to include students was on the way but that it might be an idea limited to the inclusion of a head boy or girl as a representative in the current advisory council for the VVOB at each school.

Britt also mentioned that Emile from MINEDUC/VVOB had mentioned that schools had their own budget to support students if they were invited by MINEDUC. Thus making MINEDUC an essential partner would be the best way to make a sustainable set of meetings possible for the future. Otherwise sponsors would need to be found each time a meeting is to happen. Also MINEDUC was suggested as a good place to host the first meeting as this would give the concept stronger momentum and therefore speedy acceptability. Subsequent meetings would then be hosted at different schools on a rotational basis.

Britt invited those interested in contributing towards the eventual happening of the SMC meeting including mobilization and organization activities; particularly with contacting/calling up a few schools and e-mailing them pre-written information and invitations. David also came up with another example where Concern Worldwide would like to participate by inviting a few students from the District Children's Forum (from another district other than Gasabo).

Esther noted that ADRA has experience and had worked with a number of schools in the country through the Child Friendly schools Programme with UNICEF; however, they are not yet operating in Gasabo district which could be difficult if they were to make contact there.

Kate from APIE explained that she found the idea intriguing but that they were just focused on one school and might like to branch out later on. Claudine would help with contacts to relevant people in MINEDUC. Stephane had discussed the issue of involvement with Jeffery in Wellspring and they did not prepare to assist but supported the idea. Laetitia from Never Again Rwanda (NAR) noted that they have experience as they have school clubs. In their experience weekends are good to gather students. NAR has contacts to 5 schools in Gasabo district and could be helpful in contacting these.

As additional comments the meeting agreed that the name SMCs would not be appropriate as it is commonly used to mean School Management Committee.

Also it was brought up that the top leadership of government puts youth empowerment among top priority activities and the Ministry of Youth, Sport & Culture should be involved as much as possible.