

## **Community Leader's Role in Enhancing Community Participation in Advancing Education**



Emmanuel Yohana Sima is a councilor for Msisi ward in Singida district council. He also serves as a guardian for a small Community Based Organization called MEDO (Mtinko Education Development Organization) which promotes education through use of local resources. As a leader, some of his key roles are to ensure citizens have access to social services including education and participate in development initiatives. The Councilor emphasized this fact saying:

*One of my roles is to encourage citizens to contribute to school constructions in kind. They do that carrying water, sand, other materials and as well contributing money for hiring masons. This was made possible through awareness raising which helped change community attitude towards schools as government's to theirs. Communities now contribute to development initiative.*

MEDO conducted trainings for School Committees, Village Leaders as well as Ward Executive Officers to improve provision of education in their areas through local level solutions. Some of the challenges addressed were low performance, poor housing for teachers, poor school environment and insufficient classrooms. Other challenges included low community motivation to education, availability of lunch and water.

Through community sensitization meetings organised by TEN/MET in collaboration with MEDO, citizens got clear understanding of the roles of the different stakeholders in education. They knew the role of government, role of community members, ownership and the need for collaboration for development at individual, family, community and national level.

*MEDO connected us to TEN/MET and we started 30 primary schools trial project for schools which performed poorly. We had joint meetings with different stakeholders including: school committees, teachers, village chairpersons, and others from different departments. All the 30 school committee sat with TEN/MET and analysed the challenges facing our schools from progressing. We discovered many shortcomings such as insufficient teacher houses, classrooms, toilets, water problem, lack of lunch at school and absenteeism. We then charged ourselves with the duty of educating parents, guardians and students. We learnt that majority did not have plans for their schools, hence we made sure that each school had school plan in place. This simplified our work when we were supervising schools. As a result of our efforts, Nkwae Primary School moved the fourth position from the last in the district.*

One of the issues addressed was disability and girl child access to education in the era. The councilor through public meetings advocated for the rights of children with disabilities and girls to access education. Some common disabilities in the area were deaf, mentally disabled, physically disabled and blind to join schools. School committee encourages communities to bring children with disability who were hidden to school.

The impact made by TEN/MET through MEDO also had affected individuals through the improvement leadership and confidence concerning development approaches to enhance quality of education through participatory approaches.

*As a Councilor, this training has helped me a lot and last year I had an opportunity to be a Social services chairperson of Singida district council where I had the opportunity to promote improvement in the education sector. Some of the areas Department of Social Service works in are: health, water and social development. We successfully got sponsorship from Korean organization which agreed to drill water for all our 16 schools. To date 11 wells have already been drilled. We keep on pushing the District Council to finish up teacher houses, classrooms and toilets in order improve school infrastructures.*

Ensuring friendly environment for girls has been one of the important principles of ensuring equity in educational sector. It is obligatory for Councillors as mobilizers of different development issues to attend all School Management Committee meetings. Mr. Emmanuel having transformed by the training mobilized school committees in his ward to have gender sensitive toilets for girls to avoid wasting time going home teaching is in progress.

Mr. Emmanuel also emphasizes the importance of embracing technology for acquiring and sharing knowledge. Communities members own smart phones and access information via their phones. Some have already created email addresses and communicate smoothly with others.

Mr. Emmanuel concluded by emphasizing on more community awareness and learning opportunities for an empowered and self-reliant society. *"They say, it is good to give net and not a fish"*. We do not want a sponsor to come and build us a classroom, we want to be empowered so that we can do it ourselves. The Councilor also expressed a need for clearly defining free education and role of parents/guardians.