

ELA ORGANISATION MALAWI



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Registered as NGO: June 2012 (in Malawi), also registered with CONGOMA

Impact Areas: Mzuzu and Nkhata-Bay District

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ELA projects have been created as a response to the global campaign against decline levels of education; lessen chances of quality education to children with special needs, increasing levels of substance abuse amongst youths, HIV/AIDS, teen pregnancies and women's limited opportunities in managing businesses. Projects support the social welfare department, the Gender policy and the National youth Policy in achieving the objectives.

In particular, ELA organisations' projects:

- provide assistance to 50 children with special needs (learning disabilities) and try to diminish their challenges in mental and motoric development. Projects help them to cope with demands of school curriculum and helps children in gaining self-confidence in everyday life.
- provide assistance to 200 children aging from 1-15 years in rural area of Nkhata Bay (Mazembe village) with every day workshops of literacy, mathematics, English, sports and arts, which help them in passing grades in their primary school.
- contribute to the changing of the behaviour of troublesome youths through supporting their talents such as drama/theatre skills, singing, dancing, comedy and acrobatic skills. Through ELA's involvement they are hired to promote awareness campaigns, be the voice, role models for their peers as advocates of good behaviour.
- assist in prevention of school drop-out rates, substance abuse, teen pregnancies and crime amongst youths in Northern Malawi.

-assist village women in financial literacy courses and in starting their small scale businesses in order to take care of single headed families.

Projects are focusing on Advocacy and Prevention; Impact Mitigation, Capacity Building, Monitoring, Evaluation and Research. Consistent with these pillars, ELA organisation facilitates the modification or abandonment of risky sexual and cultural practices that accelerate the spread of HIV and AIDS and gender-based violence through being advocates; through ELA's projects public awareness is increased on human rights issues associated with gender equality among women, children, community leaders, people living with AIDS through information sharing; strengthened capacity of families, CBOs and communities in the provision of care and support to the affected and infected families through knowledge based training.

Decision

After 7 years of living and working in East Africa we came to realisation that our work experience, education and skills are much for valuable and put to use in that part of the world where education still is a big problem. Most of African countries already managed to introduce universal primary education therefore everybody should have access to basic education. In reality classrooms are overcrowded and are becoming more so due to downsizing teachers in public school. That is also consequence of global economical crisis. At present, ratio pupil to teacher in rural are schools is roughly 100-180 pupils to one teacher. Children have the possibility to attend classes but education they get is weak. That fact diminishes their chances to enter good secondary school and later find a descent job on job market.

Second vulnerable group are youths in rural and urban areas. Few successfully finish primary school and have financial abilities to sign into good secondary school as quality ones are really expensive this why they remain home and start with their illicit behaviour. They start drinking, taking drugs, smoking illegal drugs and practicing dangerous sexual behaviour which leads to teenage pregnancies and HIV/AIDS spread. They are in desperate need of changing their behaviour, finding ways of further education, in need spiritual guidance and safe choices for better future.

Third vulnerable group are women of rural areas. They are the ones very often responsible for survival of their families of 10 and more members. But at the same time they are disregarded in social life due to lack of information, gender equality, education and business opportunities.

ELA organisation's first project was establishing an educational centre in one of the poorest village at the lakeshore, in village Mazembe. The main role of the centre is a support to public school system. Our work has been collaboration of western knowledge/experience and local school curriculum. We joined our work with public schools and community. The main aim has been to add experience and knowledge and not to replace existing system, curriculum or schools work, but simply to contribute knowledge to improve education of children in rural areas who visit public schools.

Our first task has been to identify learning disabilities and offer voluntary additional study help to children that had learning difficulties such as difficulty concentrating, dyslexia, hyperactivity, lower cognitive abilities in similar disadvantages. Program has been running since early 2012 for pupils of public school SEKA and since 2013 for pupils of public school Mazembe (after ELA's educational centre has been built in the same village.) With our help children have been given better chances of overcoming their handicaps and were able to finish primary education and be able to continue to secondary level. We have been employing and offering professional assistance to primary school teachers who have been working with these children at ELA's centre (up to date 9 teachers in total have been part of our professional trainings). We have been working with 50 children with special needs on daily basis. Morning workshops start at 10am until 1 pm (at 9.30 children finish their std1 classes and 50 whom were proven to have special needs come to ELA's centre for additional workshops each day). Every afternoon from 2pm until 5 pm different workshops have been ran at ELA's centre for children aging 1-15 years old. They have been taught how to read, write, do mathematics, talk English, play sport and enjoy in art classes. Aim of the workshops has been to offer 200 village children safe place to spend their afternoons being productive and to improve literacy, English and mathematics skills which help them to pass classes and to finish primary education easily.

We have been observing immense issues of youths (alcoholism, drugs, prostitution, early marriages, teen pregnancies, spreading of HIV/AIDS amongst) in rural and urban areas because of excess of time, no option of further schooling due to lack of financial abilities to pay for their school fees. We decided to establish a youth club in Mazembe village which aim has been, to change behaviour of youths, support them in showcasing their talents and through organising performances/shows fundraising for their school fees. In January 2015 we established ELA Youth club in Mazembe village which has around 50 members. We established theatre/drama group through which youths showcased issues as dangers of HIV/AIDS spreading, importance of gender equality, importance of finishing education and important messages. We established singing, dancing groups, showcased poetry readings, comedians and started with football and netball club. Through few performances in nearby secondary schools and villages we gathered support (plus ELA org added funds) and 7 most needy scholars (youths having issues with substance abuse and prostitution) were sponsored and sent back to continue their schooling in secondary school. We also organised youths and visited elders who were in need of assistance and mended their homes, washed their clothes and did other house chores as well in order to instil in youths importance of helping less fortunate in ways that do not require money and bring satisfaction and behaviour change in the youths.

In December 2015 we opened second ELA Youth club in town Mzuzu (Northern Malawi). We noticed immense need for it too, as issues of youths have been similar to ones from the village and they desperately needed safe, honest organisation to help them towards behaviour changes, showcase of their talents (drama groups, singers, dancers, comedians,

poets, acrobats) through different performances. Beside performances we also cleaned town Mzuzu with our 140 youths and ran awareness campaign for clean city and importance of it to prevent diseases outbreaks.

In Mazembe village we also established ELA Women's group, whom we trained for several months in financial literacy courses and helped them in starting their small businesses to earn livelihood as in Mazembe village they are in majority alone responsible for survival of their families of 10 and more members.

The reports of ELA's programs

There are several groups of beneficiaries of our program and its activities:

1. Primary school children with special needs (50)
2. Children (200) who come to afternoon activities (Mathematics, reading, writing, English, art, sport) ages from 1 year to 15 years
3. Teachers learning about ELA's educational programs (up to date 9)
4. Parents of children with special needs (50)
5. Members of the community in Chifira and Mazembe village (+500)
6. Youths in ELA's youths clubs (+150)
7. Women in ELA Women club (50)
8. International Volunteers (+50)

Ad1 Children are of course the main reason we have started with ELA's projects. They are our ultimate beneficiary group:

- With additional help from volunteers and trained teachers, children with learning difficulties have more chances to develop their full potential, progress in education with their peers and successfully finish primary school (more than 80% of children who attend daily ELA's morning classes pass Std 1, before ELA program they were repeating Std 1 twice of 3 times consecutively)
- Equipped with knowledge on how to overcome their learning disabilities, they are having higher chances to be successful on final exams to continue education on secondary level.
- Through proven better results in school work and understanding their disabilities, their confidence has also risen. This is also one of more important factors in school achievements.

Ad2

Although not all children have similar learning difficulties as special needs children who attend ELA's morning classes, they are many children who proceeded to further classes but still experience difficulties in comprehensions of all the subjects. Due to ratio of more than 100 pupils to one teacher they do not learn subjects to the extent they should (They are calculating very poorly, reading even worse, English is their main challenge) At daily 3 hours

afternoon activities ELA's team of 2 local teachers and international volunteers teach children in small groups most difficult subjects (Mathematics, English, reading, writing and add arts and sports for relaxation) and use all provided materials (books, writing materials, toys). According to final reports in Mazembe pubic school 30% more children are passing classes since they have been participating at ELA's classes).

Ad3

ELA has been training and employing teachers at ELA's centre since 2013. We have been training them in area of special needs (learning disabilities) so they learn and try to understand what such children need of them, which approaches are the best when teaching, which areas are needed to be developed (grapho-motoric exercises, gross-motoric exercises, sensory development, Brain gym exercises). ELA's teachers are equipped with important knowledge which they can pass on their colleagues if they are having children with learning difficulties in class. They are equipped with knowledge which should be included into Malawian curriculum.

Ad4

Parents of children with special needs have been able to understand the difficulties their children are facing and what kind of help and support they need to give them. If not with school work, they can help them with emotional support and raising their self-esteem which is, as argued before, also important factor in progressing in school work.

ELA youth club has been working together with parents of youths so behaviour change can be inspired though ELA's activities and through parents guidance. We have been monitoring behaviour of youths through parents reporting to ELA's staff.

Ad5 In Chifira village, Nkhata Bay district, we have been helping SEKA School with 340 scholars with every day provision of food since January 2012 until July 2013. The need was shown as almost 50% of scholars did not attend lessons regularly, as they did not have necessary physical strength to walk to school from home and follow the lessons, as they did not eat breakfast in their homes due to poverty. Since introducing regular morning meal, children have been attending school lessons regularly, have been following lessons easily which has shown increasing of knowledge and better result in final tests.

From July 2013 up to date ELA has been daily feeding 50 children with special needs with balanced lunch, so they are provided with necessary strength to actively participate at ELA's classes from 10am to 1pm.

Ad6

Members of ELA's youth clubs have been benefitting through realizing importance of education (12 drop outs have been going back to primary school, financially able students returned back to secondary school), 7 youth members have been sponsored by ELA's youth club activities, 1 by international sponsor and 1 has been sponsored to go to University

(Beston college). Youths have been showcasing their talents (drama/theatre, singing, dancing, poetry, comedy, acrobatics, sports) and through education (gender equality, right to education, HIV/&AIDS trainings, prevention of sexual abuse, dangers of early marriages and teen pregnancies), spiritual guidance and inspirational and successful guests who shared their life stories changed their behaviour (stopped drinking, taking prohibited drugs, prostitution, become abstinent). They have been taught of their human rights and responsibilities through ELA's influence.

Ad7

Women's ELA club has benefitted through financial literacy courses and business accounting. They have been assisted in beginning of small scale business.

Ad8

Since ELA's centre has been built in July 2013 around 50 international volunteers have been assisting ELA's children and youth programs through sharing their experiences as special needs teachers, psychologists, doctors, primary and secondary school teachers, students for few months each year.

Planned activities for 2016-2017

Activities with teachers

- Workshops and lectures (July& August 2016): Most of activities for teachers will take place in ELA's educational centre in Mazembe village, Nkhata bay district. The lectures will be held by international volunteers – professionals of special needs and learning disabilities. We are planning to present different methods and techniques of teaching that would help children progress with school work. Newly learned methods, topics also depend on already existing knowledge of teachers participating.
- Introducing teaching materials – flash cards, learning games, exercises for different types of learning disabilities. One of biggest problem in district primary schools is also the fact that schools are very often badly equipped with teaching materials. Teaching materials are often more expensive than school can afford. We would like to introduce different approaches that have similar effect but are less costly.
- Supervisions for teachers –we will organize monthly supervisions for teachers. It is a chance for teachers to get together and discuss their experiences in class they have encountered with, problems they have had, seeking advices from fellow teachers or of supervisors. This activity will also take place in ELA's educational centre.
- With teachers help we are hoping to adapt more of the basic tools for identifying children with special needs and learning difficulties and bringing them closer to

Malawian culture. That way we can introduce simple tools which will help teachers establish, who children that really need additional help and support are.

Activities with children

- Continuing with every day 3-hour program for 50 children with special needs at ELA's centre. We will also be offering holiday classes to all children of the village with assistance of international volunteers (July and August 2016). They will include morning workshops of literacy, Mathematics, English, reading and writing (from 9am-12pm) and afternoon activities of sports, arts and creativity classes from 2pm to 5pm, during summer holidays. We are expecting more than 300 pupils being part of ELA's activities (speaking from experiences).

Activities with youths

- Continuing with 3 times per week meetings of Mzuzu Youth club, with 140 members where they will be training theatre/drama performances, singing, dancing and acrobatic acts. Once a week they also meet for spiritual guidance as members are Christians and Muslims thus ELA invites all to learn from each other and strengthen their faith and self-confidence. ELA's youth club will be spreading awareness and importance of education, gender equality, dangers of HIV/AIDS, advocacy against early marriages and teenage pregnancies, running awareness campaigns for male circumcision as it prevents spread of viruses, importance of being advocates of moral behaviour and aiming into being the strongest and most active youth club in Northern Malawi. They will continue being involved in community work through helping vulnerable people in Mzuzu areas.
- Important business men and women, actors, sportsmen, singers, dancers will be invited to come to ELA's youth club meetings and offering them words of advice, sharing stories of their struggles towards success so youths will recognize importance of dedications and hard work being leading pillar towards success.
- ELA's youth club will be ready to be hired by institutions like government/NGO's/companies in order to showcase through their performances the current issues which will be needed to be delivered to wider public audience. (Money which will be earned by these performances will be used to uplift youths activities funding their future performances on national and international level. Money will also partly be used to support further education of ELA's youth members.
- Showcasing performance of ELA's youth club at Mzuzu stadium for approx. 5000 viewers.

Built infrastructure: ELA's educational centre (140m2) in Mazembe village for children and Youth members of Mazembe Youth club

Needed infrastructure: ELA Youth centre in Mzuzu

Staff in Malawi:

- 1 Executive Director Jana Dular (also leading manager for children projects in Mazembe)
- 1 Deputy Director Mzondi Mkandawire (also leading manager for projects of ELA's Youth clubs)
- 2 Malawian teachers working at the ELA's centre
- 1 night watchman
- 1 cook (Feeding 50 children with special needs)

Past support of ELA's projects:

Ecologists without border of Slovenia (funded building of ELA's centre in Mazembe/Nhkata Bay district) project finished in 2013

Rotary International Matching Grant, project finished in 2014

LEO UK Business company donation in 2013

ELA's English website: www.elamalawi.org

(ELA Slovenian website: www.drustvoela.org)