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Parents fined for not sending kids to school

BY FRANK NAMANGALE

A SCHOOL committee in Phalombe has started imposing a fine on parents who fail to send their children to school.

Group Village Headman Nambazo told a team of journalists on a tour of Malawi education Support Activity (Mesa) who visited the school on Monday.

Nambazo said the idea came from parents after noting that there was an increase in the number of dropouts.

"The punishment was suggested by parents themselves. We impose a K100 fine on parents who fail to send their children to school.

"We have also taken a tough line on bar owners who employ young girls as maids. We have the authority to close such places in light of the Aids pandemic," Nambazo said.

Nambazo also said to curb the HIV/Aids pandemic the subjects were being encouraged to disclose causes of death of their relations.

"This is being done. Even when a person has died of Aids, we openly say it at the funeral," he said.

The group village headman commended teachers at Nambazo that they were able to source local teaching aids to improve the lowering education standards.

The headmaster of Nambazo Primary School, Gervazius Gawanika, said that since the launch of the project last year, there had been improvement in education standards and change in behaviour of pupils.

"Many pupils dropped out to go fishing as we are near Lake Chilwa. But after sensitisation by Mesa we came up with ways to keep the pupils in school," Gawanikani said.

He said they also established Aids clubs as it was the objective of Mesa to fight the pandemic.

The media crew participated in a workshop at Chimbiri Primary School on Tuesday where community leaders complained that teachers

were always drunk.

The participants also said high fees in secondary schools, delay in paying teachers' salaries and continuous change of books and syllabus were among the things lowering education standards.

But the workshop facilitator, Ricky Matiki, a Primary Education Advisor for Mulomba Zone, said there was a big improvement in paying teachers in good time.

Matiki said on change of syllabus, teachers and parents were also getting involved.

Mesa is a three-year project funded by Usaid and implemented by Creative Centre for Community Mobilisation (Creccom), Malawi Institute of Education, Save the Children Fund US and American Institute for Research in Phalombe, Machinga, Kasungu and Karonga.

Communications Manager for Creccom George Jobe said Mesa might be extended to other districts.