

When a spark becomes a fire by Lion Patience Mahlalela, Reading Action Project Coordinator Zones C&D, Malawi.



In what started as a modest reading spark has since become a source of much activity for one school in Lilongwe. Reading Action Project (RAP) was one of the projects showcased in a reading competition during the International President Wayne Madden's, visit to Malawi in February 2013. It involved 4 government primary schools in Lilongwe. To set the ball rolling for RAP and the competition Ntunthama, Capital City, Lilongwe and Bwaila Lions Clubs each adopted Chinsapho, Kauma, Mtsiliza and Njewa primary schools, respectively. What followed was collaboration between the clubs and National Library Services in Lilongwe. They gave support to the schools as they prepared pupils in grades 4 and 5 to participate in the competition. To cut a long story short, the competition went brilliantly with all participating pupils and schools taking home prizes in the form of trophies, schools bags, exercise books and boxes of blackboard chalk.

Since this was the first time for Lions clubs in Lilongwe to engage with schools in such a project, to encourage schools to continue with reading activities after the competition the schools were subscribed for a 1 year membership at the National library. In addition, each school received a donation of books from the National Library to start up a school library.

To my amazement one of the schools has tuned this spark into a fire. Under the leadership of its Head teacher, Mr Aaron Kulembeka, Kauma primary school has not only successfully established a library it has introduced a school assembly book reading activity which takes place every Monday and Friday mornings. Supervised by a teacher, Kauma also opens its library doors to pupils every afternoon. As if to prove how fired up the school now is about reading, in a World Book Day



competition that was hosted by the National Library Services on 23 March, Kauma won 1st prize in the English language category; 2nd prize in the Chichewa (local) language category and took home the overall best performing school trophy. After such achievement the Head teacher excitedly called me and said *'You must come and visit our school. We have so much to show you. And we have just won trophies for ...!'*

Rap fact sheet in Lilongwe

Number of participating schools: 4 primary schools

Total school enrolment: 18,158 pupils

Number of teachers: 173

School Libraries established: 1 (Kauma primary school)

Lions Clubs involved: Bwaila, Capital City, Lilongwe and Ntunthama

Established Partnerships: National Library Services; USAID Malawi; ITS Computer Services.

Pipeline partnerships: help2read, South Africa.

Donations: Bon Voyage travel agents

Activities done: reading competition in February 2013

Planned activities: reading miles competition in July 2013