

DAILY TEACHERS' ATTENDANCE													
NO	NAME	REG. NO	SEX	WK 1	WK 2	WK 3	WK 4	WK 5	WK 6	WK 7	WK 8	WK 9	WK 10
1	Chirama	CTC	T2/33335/02	M									
2	Kambwira	B	T2/39324/93	F									
3	Milanzie	N	T2/31724/91	M									
4	Spison	S	T2/01526/01	M									
5	Mpenda	N	T2/00010/07	F									
6	Mwachande	F	T2/54233/99	M									
7	Kalulu	E	T2/60657/00	F									
8	Mulimba	W	T2/60452/00	M									
9	Lombe	M		F									
10	Mwapatira	A	T2/005026/10	F									
11	Bwelete	M		F									
12	Stone	R		F									
13	Kathumba	M		F									
14	Mapweremwe	A		F									
15	Makwinya	L	T2/1	F									
16	Kumbanyiwa	M		F									
17	Kamanga	S		F									
18	Smart	J		F									
19	Josasi	V		F									
20	Kopinda	E		F									
21	Awali	A		F									
22	Nyirenda	K		F									
23	Eason	D		F									
24	Kagerama	N		F									
25	Shaba	A	T2/005193/00	F									
26	Lhomu	L		F									
27	Iwaya	E		F									
28	Nyankwawa	M		F									
29	Chilunga	S		F									
30	Lobanga	C		F									
31	Mavange	W		M									
32	Stewart	F		M									
33	Chikwanga	P		M									
34	Nhangadire	E		F									
35	Kapalamula	S		M									
36	Imothy	G		M									
37	Ganga	J		F									
38	Mukani	M	T2/000105/09	F									
39	Chipwana	F		M									
40	Nthubula	K		M									
41	Lino	S	T2/00100/11	M									
42	Maliqambe	C	T2/011485/10	M									
43	Makwinya	M		F									
44	Mpenda	P	T2/000406/07	F									
45	Mheriwa	M	T2/66121/02	M									
FOR TERM THREE 2015- 2016													

**Malawi GPSA Teacher
Absenteeism Monitoring Project**

**TRIP REPORT:
FINDINGS, LEARNINGS AND
RECOMMENDATIONS**

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April 2016

Background and Purpose

Over three days the CARE team – myself and Hayley Capp (UK), Gilbert Muyumbu (Kenya) and Anderson Kumpolota (Malawi) – made visits to five schools to speak with teachers, Head Teachers and School Management Committees (SMCs) about progress made with the teacher absentee system.



Meeting with the SMC at one of the target schools

Funded by the World Bank's Global Partnership for Social Accountability (GPSA), these five schools were among a group identified by CARE project staff as having a particular problem with teacher absenteeism. The text messaging-based platform was implemented to help record when teachers did not report for school, and the reason why. Each SMC is responsible for monitoring attendance daily, via the Head Teacher and visual checks, and for updating the system through the sending of a series of structured text messages.

The specific objectives of the wider GPSA project (of which teacher absenteeism is a part) are to:

1. Increase in the level of efficiency, transparency and accountability in the procurement processes of the education sector by 2016.
2. Decrease in teacher absenteeism rates in targeted schools in Malawi by 2016.

The purpose of my visit, as per earlier discussions, were to:

1. Check if the messaging platform is fit for purpose.
2. Ideas on how to effectively manage the emerging data and how it is made sense of for sharing with different stakeholders.
3. How to make the quantitative data emerging from the platform speak to the qualitative feedback through CSC that is provided by communities; reducing the disparities between the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the data.

Most of my focus ended up on (1) and (2). We didn't have the time or opportunity on this trip to do much work around the Community Score Card.

Process for Determining and Recording Teacher Absenteeism

A series of set questions directed my conversations with each of the School Management Committees to help determine how they went about using the system, and the steps they took before, during and after filing an SMS report (this allowed for better comparison of answers). While there were subtle differences in some of the approaches, the steps they took were strikingly similar. This is likely reflected in the earlier training they received.

Devices

In each case, two basic mobile phones were provided by the project and these were each held by a single SMC member (they all identified challenges in passing round and sharing phones, based primarily on where they lived). As a result, in each case two SMC members used their own phones to file reports. The donated project phones used pre-pay SIM cards, and the short code number (3031) where reports were texted is zero-rated, meaning own-phone use did not incur any charges.

Rota

In every case, SMCs had a rota determining who was due in to carry out the monitoring each day of the week. In most cases, people came in alone but in one case two people shared the load.

Check-in time

Teachers are expected to be at school by 7:30am. When they arrive they sign an attendance register held in the Head Teachers office. In all but one case, the SMC member arrived at the school between 8:30am and 9am to begin their checks. In one case (School 2), the monitor arrived closer to 6am in order to check teacher punctuality. Teachers who know they will be absent will in most cases call the Head Teacher or have a note delivered, with their reason. This happens on average about 80% of the time across all the schools we visited.

Check and verification

A short while after the teachers were all due in, the SMC member visits the Head Teacher and inspects the attendance register. In most cases they will also do a visual check around the school. If any teachers have not signed in, they will ask the Head Teacher if they have heard from the teacher, and if so the reasons for their absence. In 80% of cases the Head Teacher has this information. Depending on the reason given, most SMCs carry out an element of verification (either by calling or visiting the teacher, or by asking around the community or checking with students). In almost all cases the reason for absence given by the teacher will check out and be valid, although we did receive some contradictory information on this. For example, teachers did say that they needed to hold out-of-school jobs to make ends meet, and clearly they would not be using this as their excuse. So, if this is happening, it is a surprise that the SMC are happy after they have verified the reason. Some further investigation may be required.

Reporting absence

Once the SMC member on duty knows which teachers are absent, and the reason for each, they now send the information to the system via text message. This is sent over two messages, the first starting with the teacher number (registered in the system) and what they are reporting (most often, 'absent'). The second message requests a more detailed reason for the absence.



Ongoing monitoring

In the case of all SMCs, once the report(s) have been filed the member will stay at the school until late morning to ensure that teachers remain teaching, and do not leave early. Some also sit in on class to monitor quality of the teaching.

Web dashboard

The whole system – messages, registered teachers, responses, reports and absence categories among them – are managed from an online portal provided by Souktel. Given the sensitivity of the data only CARE staff currently have access, and it should probably remain this way (or, at least, additional access should be carefully considered before being granted).

Most of the customization can be carried out through the Dashboard, although some recommendations are made later in this report which would likely require some additional programming or coding work by Souktel themselves.

Absents

Teacher: Teacher Code: School: School Number: School Type:

Parent: Parent Mobile: Reason: Zone: Date:

[Search](#) [Download as CSV](#)

Teacher	Teacher Code	Zone	District	School	School Number	School Type	Parent	Parent Mobile	Reason	Additional Info	Reporters	Date
ALINAFE MULASE	T0271	Mphande	Mwanza	Chimwembe	10013	rural			personal	no	2	2015-07-21
ELINESS SAILESI	T0275	Mphande	Mwanza	Dzeye	10014	rural			personal	no	1	2015-07-21
JENIPHER BONGA	T0266	Mphande	Mwanza	Chimwembe	10013	rural			Other		1	2015-07-21
KONDWANI MWALANDE	T0272	Mphande	Mwanza	Chimwembe	10013	rural			Unknown		1	2015-07-21
SOLIJALA GADAMA	T0273	Mphande	Mwanza	Dzeye	10014	rural			illness	ayi	1	2015-07-21
JANET CHITSIME	T0274	Mphande	Mwanza	Dzeye	10014	rural			illness	No	1	2015-07-21
KACHINGWE DZINYODO	T0265	Mphande	Mwanza	Chimwembe	10013	rural			illness	Kuyesa	5	2015-08-20
CHRISSEY MIKONDO	T0276	Mphande	Mwanza	Dzeye	10014	rural			Unknown	TEST	4	2015-08-23
Chasowa Mary	T1715	Chitakale	Mulanje	Njedza	10001	rural			personal	test from victor	1	2015-10-06
Biliadi Tessila	T1711	Chitakale	Mulanje	Njedza	10001	rural			illness	no	1	2015-10-06
Biliadi Tessila	T1711	Chitakale	Mulanje	Njedza	10001	rural			Unknown	No	1	2015-10-08
Catherine Chalimba	T0038	Boma	Kasungu	Kasungu LEA	10031	urban	precious shaba	265999569172	Unknown	MWANA WADWALA	3	2015-10-14
		Chitakale	Mulanje	Njedza	10001	rural	Isabel shema	265998933307	personal	2	1	2015-10-19
Banda Willy S M	T1749	Chitakale	Mulanje	Providence Girls	10088	rural			illness	Any	1	2015-10-22



Absent SMS

Absent Keyword

Absence Reason Question

1 -

2 -

3 -

4 -

5 -

6 -

7 -

8 -

Additional information about absence

[Save](#)

Top: Table detailing absentee reports in date order

Middle: Attendance performance bar graph

Bottom: Configuring responses and setting up categories of absence

Overall conclusion

Overall, the system so far appears to be effective in reducing teacher absenteeism, although it became apparent during our visits that it was focusing on a single symptom of a far wider range of issues. Many of these are complex, and it may be worth considering whether there may be some way of collecting more targeted data on those, in addition to hard absenteeism numbers. What, for example, could the teachers report on which might give a better indication of the scale and range of challenges they face each day? What information would be useful to the Ministry of Education, or the Head Teacher?

Recommendations

1. There appeared to be some confusion among the SMCs and the teachers about how the system operated and what data was collected, and where it went. Some additional training at the schools would be recommended to help clear this up, particularly given some of the misunderstanding was fueling unnecessary mistrust among the SMC and the teachers.
2. When these training refresh sessions take place staff should collect information on the additional categories of absence that each SMC requires from the system. They can then be added by the system administrator.
3. Weekly or monthly updates should be provided to the SMCs (total messages sent, some kind of analysis, and charts) so they can see the type of data their work generates, and how it contributes towards the project. Perhaps this could be printed and sent to SMCs, or emailed via schools.
4. Additional information about teachers could be recorded (based on the education Code of Conduct – I took a photo if you need one. It's in my trip photos shared folder). However, only one SMC suggested doing this (in this case it was to record teacher punctuality). Given there is already a degree of mistrust with the system and process, I would be hesitant at this stage to introduce any additional data collection which focuses on the teachers, but to simply expand the categories needed for the current data (as per (1) above).
5. Filing a single absenteeism report involves the sending of two text messages, and the receiving of two in return. If the initiative is to continue into the future, costs will almost certainly be a consideration and four messages per filing may be an obvious place to make savings. One recommendation would be to combine the first two messages into one, so the SMC member sends in one text with the required information – for example:

<Teacher ID> _ <Cause of absence> _ <Verified Y/N> _ <Any additional information>

The system could respond with a confirmation message which could also contain a running total of submitted reports, or some other information. This feedback would close the loop on a daily basis with the SMC. One thing to

consider is that changing the way reports are filed might require a little additional training and guidance for the SMC members.

6. It is not always entirely clear whether or not a reason for absence has been fully and independently verified, so adding the ability for the SMC member to say whether it has or not might be helpful when the data is analysed.
7. Part of my remit was to determine whether or not the system could be used in other areas, for example to help with the textbook monitoring. We were unable to speak to any SMCs who had been through the whole monitoring process, and this might not be surprising considering books are delivered once a year at best. Any kind of assessment of how this is going – and how the SMS system might help – is unlikely to be possible for another couple of years.
8. Regarding ways the system could be used to collect different types data, the way it is set up means there is no reason why it could not be adapted to meet any additional reporting needs. However, a more detailed needs-assessment might need to take place to determine what that could, and should, be.
9. On that note, I would highly recommend working with the teachers to determine whether or not there are opportunities for them to directly input data into the system which captures their own challenges. In addition to giving them more involvement and ownership in the activity, the data they provide might usefully offset the data reporting on their absence and give it richer context.
10. Finally, there appears to be a considerable opportunity to provide additional technical support and advice to the CARE Malawi staff on matters of technology use and innovation in their work. There was a good general understanding of the workings of the teacher absenteeism system, but little in-house capacity to carry out a technical review.