

‘School Fees-Programme 24 BBC Media Action

Researched, produced, edited and presented by Hou Akot Hou, in the Dinka language, for broadcast on local radio stations on ---2015.

Opening Billboard (with music bed):

CUE (studio recorded): Welcome to “Our school” bringing our community together. Looking at ways for education to benefit everyone. My name is Hou Akot Hou.

In today’s programme our talking point in this episode of ‘Our School’ is how can parents gain information about the fees they pay to school for their children’s education on what money is spent on and how can schools let parents have better options of paying the money to them instead of dismissing or suspending children.

A girl who was once faced with school fees challenge when in primary and got suspended tells us how she was affected.

BB clip 1

‘I found it not good to be out of the school for 7 days because all that was taught was not simple understand. I could read but never understood them (lessons).That is what I hated most for the 7 days I spent out’

A teacher from another school tells us what system they follow to ask for money from parents.

BB clip 2

'We advise parents to come with anything they get like 10 ssp and we will keep it and let you get back to search for other remainder and we will never attempt to chase your child'

All that and more will be coming to you in this "Our school programme in about 15 minutes ...so keep tuned!

(Billboard music ends naturally at 1:07 with music flourish

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CUE 1 (studio recording):

In today's programme we are talking about how parents and schools can work together to know better ways of paying school fees and also have an understanding about how money is used.

A girl whose learning was almost disrupted when in primary due to fees shortage will tell us how she was affected *and* her sister, the guardian will tell us how they struggled to get her back once she was suspended from school. *Also* a mother of kids in one of the schools in Aweil where a new soft approach of getting fees to them is being executed tells us how does that school help them get fees without their children suspended and a teacher from that school with a new system of demanding money tells us what the approach is.

But first let's hear from 17 year old girl whose education almost got interrupted due to lack of fees.

Field recording :((NatSound of chicken and utensils at home)): I am now at Maper and I will be talking with a school girl called Angelina, and she is with her sister, the guardian Mary Abuk who stays with her while in the school. I found Abuk at home washing utensils to make food for her kids and there are chicken in the house. How did school fees disturb you Angelina?

A1: When I was in primary what faced me most was the issue of school fees. It wasn't simple to get it, whenever exams approached, I could not make it to sit for them and teachers were looking for money seriously and when I came to report to my father about the fees demand my father would say 'go back to them and tell them that money will be paid when it's found', and when I go to the teachers and reported what my father said they would not agree and asked me to leave school and return when it is found.

Q2: What happened next?

A2: They told me to go home and wait till the parent paid the money and resume classes so I quit classes for 7 days and when I got it then I came back for lessons.

Q3: Having spent 7 days out of the class how did that result in?

A3: I found it not good to be out of the school for 7 days because all that was taught was not simple understand. I could read but never understood them (lessons). That is what I hated most for the 7 days I spent out.

Q4: How were the teachers demanding money from you?

A4: They just singled me out among the students and suspended me by saying 'there is no way for you to sit exams till you finish all the fees so you would continue.

Q5: In the course of singling you out from the class, how do you see that idea of singling you out with suspension altogether?

A5: It wasn't pleasant for me. And I was badly moved by such act. It looked like we are weak in our family and of course we've poverty in our home but the issue is that getting money is hard.

Q6: Did you share that with your sister because of being suspended?

A6: I reported it to my sister but there was no money at hand and she said she would look for it and when she got it, would then pay it.

Presenter: Now we are going to listen to Angelina's Sister, she is called Mary Abuk and she is with her kids and we will hear from her.

A8: It is not simple to get money in our community so my father said he would sell a cow so that she returned but teachers refused to let her in and insisted she better stay home till it is found. And staying out of school for long would make it hard for a learner to understand notes it is best for teachers to give chance to parents to get money. And money is being looked for in hard ways like selling cow or goat and that made my sister stayed home for a week.

Q9: As a one responsible for her education needs including your father. What challenges did you face in the search for her fees?

A9: It wasn't simple to get money and we were trying all options but hard and she was out of the school and teachers weren't patient to allow her stay.

Q10: Being dismissed from school, how do you feel about that as parents?

A10: It creates shyness. It seemed like we were refusing to pay the money to the teachers. It is good for teachers to ask parents when to bring money and allow the child continue with receiving notes.

Q11: Were there other ways you initiated apart from cow-selling to pay her fees to the school where she was suspended?

A11: We borrowed money from a neighbour and waited for a cow to be sold so that our sister went back to school. A week out was not good for her let alone how we felt for we are not gone to school.

Q12: What other ways do you like for teachers to follow in demanding money?

A12: The teachers need to wait for parents to get it and bring it to them. For you can't forget paying your child's fees and you know that money is being asked by teachers and we parents know that the money is what teachers use for their living and that is why the school is opened so I need them to be patient enough and ask for parents to pay slowly.

RECAP of Interview1

LINK1 (Studio recording): That was Mary Abuk, sister to 17 year old girl whose education almost got interrupted due to fees shortage narrating to us how she almost left school. Mary Abuk also said it wasn't their wish to see teachers singling out her sister but wanted them to have allowed her continue in school while they look after the money for her Grade Eighth.

Earlier Angelina said that she was worried that she wouldn't get money to resume and it wasn't easy for her to understand lessons she missed for a week till her dad sold away a cow for her fees.

"Remember, South Sudan education Act 2012, states that primary school shall be free and accessible for all"

Musical sting

But are there other schools which have good paying system unlike one where Angelina was forced out for a week due to fees delay from her parents?

We find out from one of the parents with a different perspective on a paying system at a school where her kids learn without disturbance.

Field Recording 2:((Sound of washing utensils)):I am now at Maper Center village. And in the home of Magdalena a mother of kids in a school that she favours due to good way of demanding fees. I found her washing utensils, cups, seats are outside. Hello Magdalena, how are you.Can you tell us how good is the school where your children are in a way of asking for fees?.

A1: Fine, the school that I have taken my kids to is called New Light and it is a good school. What they do is they write letters to us as parents and tell us this is the amount of money we are looking for from you and they don't ask the money all once but give us parents ample time to search for money.

Q2: Do teachers say this money they ask for is spent on what?

A2: They say the money is demanded because of repairing the facilities, paying teachers. Like Rakuba, they can buy poles, plastic sheeting, and timbers as rains are beginning to fall so they use some money on that. And the land where they operate is being paid for so that is the reason of demanding the money from us.

Q3: Do they tell you why charging the fees?

A3: As parents we feel sceptical why such amount is charged highly but when we talk and discuss the reasons then we get convinced.

Q4: What do they say if the parent is not able to pay the money at all?

A4: If you don't have money at all then they will ask you to go and look for it and keep bringing what you get.I have three daughters and 3 boys and I pay the money bit by bit till it finishes.

Q5: This strategy of asking money through giving you chance to search of it and also notifying you with the letters, do you see it helpful?

A5: I see is good because all we aspire for is the quality education to go to our children. And as such we have to pay what the teachers need.

Q6: What other steps do you want teachers/parents follow so that they help you in paying without struggles?

A6: We (parents) need to keep going to school and ask how much is left and you can ask them to discuss with you the amount left, the one you owe them and pay whatever you get.

RECAP of Interview2:

LINK2 (Studio recording): That was Magdalena Agol, a mother who said she is moved by the good steps being taken on by the teachers of her children's school who don't believe in suspending children. She also said she pays money bit by bit and also she added the teachers let them know what the money is used for.

IDENT with music sting:

You're listening to 'Our School'. Looking at how education can help your community

As we have heard the joy of the parent of a good school from Magdalena let's also hear from the teacher of the school.

Field Recording ((NatSound of school kids)): I am now in the office of the teacher at New Light. It is a commercial school and he is acting H/T and is called Ngor Angok Angok. He has some note-books in front of him, and he is in a grass-thatched tukul and we are going to talk

about reasons parents praise this school. Ustaz Ngor what system in place for demanding money from parents, the fees?

A1: We prepare letters and give them to the children to deliver to their parents/guardians to come.

Q2: What do you write in the letters to parents?

A2: We request the parent to come and pay the money (fees) for her daughter or son or discuss when to bring it.

Q3: Why do you demand the money?

A3: Our school is a private school. We use it for paying teachers; also we use the money for fixing/improving the infrastructure, buying the stationery, benches, putting up the grass-thatched classes and many other developmental activities in the school that is the reason for demanding such money.

Q4: Any other steps you have shared with the parents so they keep money for their children's education?

A4: We advise parents to come with anything they get like 10 ssp and we will keep and let you back to search for other remainder and we will never attempt to chase your child.

Q5: The chance you give them to go and look for money, why is such system important in getting fees from parents?

A5: This is their school and it doesn't matter if it is taking longer for a parent to come pay. We know it is hard to pay fees through sale of a cow. We encourage them not to take them away from school. And we will not chase them away. These children are the life-blood of development in the future. No matter how poor one is we will cooperate to teach them.

Q6: Any alternative for parents to keep money so they don't get handicapped due to fees shortage?

A6: Once you have taken your child to school, ensure that you've some options available so that she doesn't leave school due to lack of fees. Cultivate some crops like sorghum, groundnuts in a year with a lot of rain and put some surplus aside and sell them out for her fees. Never rely on what you get at work (salaries). Selling a cow or goat is another option but cultivate as well.

RECAP of Interview 4:

(Studio Recording): That was Ngor Angok Angok the teacher at New Light secondary school. He said their aim of allowing parents to pay bit by bit and avoid suspending children is because they know the learners come from the community where they also belong and suspending them won't help them get what they want (fees) but they do ensure parents understand that the money is demanded to help fix what is missing in the school like making Rakubas (grass-thatched classes).

Conclusion:

Dear listener before we go we wanted to bring to your attention that what we are talking about in this episode of 'Our School' is how can parents gain information about the fees they pay to school for their children's education on what money is spent on and how can schools let parents have better options of paying the money to them instead of dismissing or suspending.

We have heard from one of the girls, Angelina who said she was dismayed at the way some teachers in one of the schools treated her last year when in P8 as she was sent out from school for a week.

And her sister, Abuk said they weren't happy with the way her sister was treated for they weren't given chance to run after money for her sister though they managed at last to sell a cow for their sister's education.

On the other hand, a mother, Magdalena Agol at Maper-Center whose children learn at a school where teachers don't believe in suspending children. She said she pays money bit by bit and also she added the teachers let them know what the money is used for.

And lastly a teacher of that school with new system of payment, one that community members appreciate, Mr. Ngor Angok Angok said their aim is to not pressure the community by chasing the kids but allow children learn while they ask the parents to search and pay money. He urges parents to give education a priority by doing all they could by planting crops and sell surplus than relying on salaries.

INTERACTIVE MESSAGE with music bed:

"Remember this is your programme. We want to hear from you about your education and what your school is doing. So stay tuned, as your local radio station will shortly be taking your calls.

Outro

That is all for today .Thanks so much for listening I am Hou Akot Hou, until next time, bye

A girl's voice comes in here:

"Our School is produced by BBC Media Action for Girls Education South Sudan, with funding from the UK Department for International Development"