



Project Fund Request: ECD Classroom Block Construction

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1. Management summary

St Ambrose Matibi Primary School approached the FFM on February 27th with a request for support in constructing another classroom block. The FFM had supported the school in constructing a 3-classroom block the previous year. A justification for yet another new block in this short space of time was therefore in order. The school revealed to the FFM Projects Coordinator that they had been issued with a ban on using old dormitories as ECD classrooms. The Mwenezi District Schools Inspector (DSI) had attended an ECD graduation ceremony in December 2016 and got an opportunity to tour the school.

One finding by the DSI was that the ECD kids were taking classes in old dormitories situated some 250 metres from the rest of the school. Upon checking the status of these dormitories-cum-classes, the DSI explained that the children were hardly safe using such decaying quarters, with big cracks not only on the floors but on the walls too. When schools opened the following term the school received a formal instruction prohibiting the use of the above dormitories as classrooms.

The request for support to build another classroom block needed facts about the costs too, apart from the justification. However, 2 years passed before the school could prepare a proper cost dossier. By end of 2019, a new architectural design was needed because the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education had published a new standard which prohibited 3-classroom blocks. In March 2020 the school submitted the few quotations they could collect from prospective contractors and the costs were just dreadfully exorbitant. One contractor had charged 75 thousand US Dollars for the construction of the standard 2-classroom block, compared to 26 thousand US Dollars used in 2016 to construct a 3-classroom block by an independent builder.

Beginning April of 2019 the Mission noted and began to experience worsening situations in relation to its sewage system. Clogged toilets increasingly became the order of the day, being signs of poor drainage of waste in the school, hospital and residences. The chief cause of blockages is inappropriately-sized pipes – the pipes were mounted at least 3 decades ago when the institution was still small. In this light, pipes are now bursting all the time due to age.



In June 2020, tenders were invited for the construction of the classroom block. More competitive prices were charged now as 15 companies gathered at the school site to receive the tender details. On 27 October 2020, shortlisted contractors took interviews for this job followed by background checks for the week that followed. Finally the interviewers settled on one Nonaly Company which charged Thirty-One Thousand Seven Hundred and Fifty US Dollars (31,750 USD) and pledged to start and finish the project in 75 working days without advance payment.

2 Total cost of the project

The whole project will be done for 31,750 USD.

3 Funding

The 31,750 USD are requested from FFM since the job involves a contract with strict terms.

4 Time plan for realisation of results

The construction activities will be divided into 4 phases, all of which will expectedly be through by Day 75 from commencement. The contractor pledges to spend roughly 3 weeks per each of the stages. In Stage A, the contractor will purchase all materials and gather at the Matibi Mission. The stage also includes mobilisation of equipments as well as site preparation. Stage B will be about constructing the substructure, the completion of which will be marked by a well done concrete slab. The superstructure will be constructed in Stage C and includes roofing. Then comes Stage D where all the stipulated finishes will be done, including electrification, plastering, flooring, ceiling, painting, plumbing and so on. A maximum of 15 weeks is required to complete the work.

5 Financing plan

The school will not be involved directly with the financial costs of this project. Normally schools gather sand, water and gravel using the parents but that is not possible given the Covid-19 restrictions. Moreover, involving parents in a highly strict contract may pose implementation challenges which may lead to the client breaching the terms. As a result the school requests that the FFM supports the project 100%.

6 Person(s) in charge

Apart from the FFM Projects Coordinator Adnos Chikomo coordinating the project affairs overall, there is Engineer Tanaka Matingwina from the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo who will be taking care of the technical aspects of the work. The Engineer was assigned the role of building inspector by Bishop Michael Bhasera who will be working through the Diocese's Education Secretary Walter Nyatsanza and the Financial Administrator Emmanuel Jongwe. The contractor will be directly responsible to the Engineer and the Projects Coordinator.



7 Detailed information about the project

7.1 Detailed project description

The proposed building is a standard classroom block sanctioned by the responsible government ministry. Recently the government ruled out the construction of bigger blocks of more than two classrooms on account of their relatively limited lastingness. The government now controls the sizes of classroom blocks and the new standard is 2 classrooms per block, each capable to shelter about 30 appropriately spaced learners. The school authority at Matibi tailored this standard structure to satisfy the specific requirements of preschool kids. So there are supplementary components to the standard block meant to carry the double purpose of this block as a place for lessons and play.

This project has its roots in the condemnation of old ECD classrooms by educational authorities in February 2017. ECD education is compulsory in all Zimbabwean primary schools but the infrastructure at St Ambrose Matibi was inadequate to offer ECD classes. Therefore the school administration had decided to house the ECD classes in some very old structure which used to be a dormitory before the school was destroyed in the Rhodesian bush war of the 1970s. Prior to the said disapproval, the school had been planning to slowly replace the old structures but the replacement became an urgent matter in 2017 following a routine inspection by district schools inspectorate.

By then the school had below 40 ECD kids attending school in two shacks. Currently there are about 30 children in ECD-A and 20 in ECD-B, meaning a notable climb in ECD population at the school. The rise in class population has not been matched with infrastructural development and yet the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is strict on standards. Unlike in the 1980s and 1990s when government used to support schools with development grants, the construction of new ECD classrooms is solely the responsibility of Matibi Mission and the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo which owns the mission. Yet, the Church has not been spared by the economic decay that has continued ever since the turn of the century. This economic crisis, plus the absence of public funds to augment institutional efforts, led Matibi Mission to request FFM support in this project. The FFM has been a faithful companion in the development of this school and the mission at large for decades now.

The little resources that the government of Zimbabwe secures from international institutions like UNICEF hardly reaches mission schools which are quasi-private in the eyes of government. This is contrary to the outlook on the ground where church-owned institutions sometimes serve even more widely and liberally than government ones. Ever since the ECD concept crept into the national curriculum around 2013, St Ambrose has witnessed steady growth of ECD classes due to a huge Catholic chunk in local population as well as being well known for good standards. Infrastructural lack is therefore threatening the institution's otherwise hopeful prospect.

This project is technically linked to the school's vision to offer exceptionally accessible, affordable and morally pertinent education. Inadequate classrooms stand in the way of the



school to attain this vision. It is the wish of the responsible authority to develop the school into a self-reliant boarding school in the next 15 years. This long-term agenda is necessarily in the basic infrastructure stage, part of which is construction of adequate classrooms to meet the ever growing educational demand.

7.2 Project goals

The foremost goal of this project is to make early childhood education available as widely and intensively as possible. The country boasts of over 80% reach of primary education in general but the newly introduced ECD subsector faces the threat of inadequate schools as well as inadequate infrastructure in the available schools to meet the subtlety of school-going babies. While access and availability issues are gradually easing out at St Ambrose, inadequate classrooms affect the most delicate age group namely the ECD classes, making it necessary to construct classrooms in their name.

Another goal linked to the above is to ensure developmental appropriateness of school infrastructure. In 2016 the FFM supported the construction of 3 general classrooms, and the ECD kids were allocated none of those classes. This is an understandable inequality given the structural organisation of the institution. This time around it is important to construct 2 classrooms for this overlooked group of learners - specially for them. The proposed classroom block is tailored to meet the particular needs of kids, with age appropriate facilities.

Furthermore, it is the intention of this project to meet the curriculum demands of the ECD education practically. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education claims that although over 60% of formal primary schools cover most curriculum areas in their ECD classes, the fact that nearly 40% miss some important objects is a worrying scenario. This project follows the notion that ECD is much more than just teaching a child numbers, colours and shapes. The proposed age-appropriate facility will increase the capability of the school to teach psychosocial activities such as toileting, feeding and dressing among other self-care concepts.

Also important is the need to safeguard uninterrupted educational provision to preschoolers. The project intends to avoid the situation whereby ECD classes are discontinued for preventable reasons. Rules and regulations are there to make schools safe and effective and the purpose of this project is to make St Ambrose as compliant as possible to avoid interruption of services due to non-conformance.

7.3 Project risks

The project involves a significantly huge fund and is therefore prone to financial risks. The commonest such risk in Zimbabwe presently is price instability. Rising prices can threaten the project with non-completion as it becomes too costly. However, a smart way to tackle mounting costs is making all required materials available at the project site before the construction commences. In this manner the project team will not have to worry about inflation affecting the work anymore.



Secondly, it is hard to secure contractors who are financially comfortable with post-completion payment in a project. Most available companies lack the means to pre-finance such a big project. Fortunately, the FFM came across a contractor who participated in some activities at the Matibi Nook who assured fund availability. The contractor actually intervened to save the Nook borehole project when another contractor had failed.

Another challenge is the prevailing abuse of foreign currency in the country, influenced by strong black market forces. The government intervened with a currency auction scheme but produced little effectiveness in terms of stabilising the exchange rates and preserving the value of forex. This poses a risk in that if a project takes long to complete and yet the contractor is paid after completion, the contractor will incur losses and probably seek to review the charges. To prevent such eventuality, parties to this project will agree on a strict timeframe where delays constitute a breach of the contract and may lead to contract termination with costs.

There is also a risk commonly associated with construction – that of substandard products. This may emanate from poor materials, poor equipment, poor management, inadequate skills and the like. The FFM involved an engineer from the Catholic Diocese of Masvingo in planning this project and will continue to involve him throughout the construction. Payment for the finished building will be made after a positive inspection report by the engineer. Also, the planners took their time to thoroughly vet the contractors based on past jobs among other criteria.

7.4 Negative impacts of not realising this project

Currently ECD-A and ECD-B classes take turns to ‘unlawfully’ use an old undersized classroom for lessons, against the instruction by district inspectors to abandon the old structures. This defiance of regulation must end with the construction of a proper classroom block. If the proposed project does not succeed then the school will continue to be in a tight spot as described.

Most of the time the ECD kids are out in the open even when they are supposed to be in classrooms. The available old structure is incapable to house both classes for lessons, let alone for resting. A negative response to this funding request will be an unfortunate scenario for children. Some learners are barely 4 years old and are physically unable to soldier the adverse weather elements in the harsh regional climate.

Linked to the continued use of banned structures, there are chances that the old classroom may collapse wholly or partially. The worst case scenario is for it to fall on the users – the kids and/or their caregivers. If the proposed new classrooms are not constructed, the school may be tempted to do repairs on the otherwise irreparable old rooms thereby endangering the learners, their teachers and the visitors.



8 Other organisations or governmental support

The only other source of support for this project is government through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Unfortunately the only help they can give is to pressure the school to stop using old buildings as classrooms. Regular school visits by the District Schools Inspectorate may indirectly impel the school to construct new classrooms.

9 Additional information

St Ambrose Matibi Primary School is in the process of transforming from a satellite school to become an independent one. The District Schools Inspectorate is currently assessing the school's application for this upgrading. The construction of the proposed ECD classroom block will guarantee the successfulness of the application.

10 Personal comments

It is really necessary to construct a classroom block particularly dedicated to ECD because if it is any general block, the school will likely prioritise older learners thereby prolonging the hardships facing preschoolers.

11 Decision FFM Switzerland

Project funding request status:

- New Assessment Ready for decision Cancelled
 Declined Approved Implementation

Decision made by:

- E-Mail circular Board Meeting Telephone conference

Decision date:

Signatures (two necessary)

Oliver Müller
President
Friends for Matibi

Michael Zuberbühler
Vice president
Friends for Matibi

Daniel Schmidt
Treasurer
Friends for Matibi