





FFM



INTRODUCTION

This report aims to outline and share the story of the Matibi Nook Hub journey by showing the flow of events starting with a word from the community council followed by the early community engagements before the year 2019. The report then switches over to the constructional actions organised as Phases 1 to 4, where Phase 1 covers preconstruction assignments as well as the construction of the Nook's understructure/substructure. Phase 2 relates to the construction of the superstructure while Phases 3 and 4 concentrate on the fixtures. The report further exhibits a section covering the efforts made so far towards setting up the Nook, including the hiring of staff, training and early assignments. The last two sections will account for challenges, recommendations and a call to action.



WORD FROM MWENEZI RURAL DISCTRICT COUNCIL

We at Mwenezi Rural District Council are most delighted to host the just beginning Zimbabwe Nook Hub at Matibi. Our understanding from the implementers is that the Nook will be a self-learning centre modelled along the concept of alternative education to make up for the glaring applicability gaps in the conventional education system. The Friends For Matibi (FFM) approached us in 2019 with the Nook proposal and a request for physical space, for which we convened a series of productive meetings leading to the acceptance of the proposal and the granting of a half-hectare space to the FFM. We have so far engaged cooperatively with the FFM and their Indian partners named DEFY (Design Education For Yourself), working out numerous obstacles along the way with unity of purpose. For instance, we interceded in a couple of moments to encourage some volunteers who were getting fatigued because they had underestimated the immensity of the Nook construction work at the outset. This and a few other reported reasons (including the COVID-19 lockdowns) caused the Nook construction to take longer than initially projected.

We wish to extend our due appreciation to the FFM and its partners for taking us through this exciting new journey in the socio-economic development of our community. We have already sincerely pledged to participate in the remaining steps including the promisingly grand occasion of launching the Nook at Matibi with dignitaries from far and wide. As the Chief Executive of Mwenezi Rural District Council, I do not hesitate to confirm that the Matibi Nook project has earned deeply favourable reception among the authorities, right from the office of the Mwenezi District Development Coordinator to that of the Masvingo Minister of State for Provincial Affairs. We are most delighted that Matibi is poised to be the national hub of the budding Nook concept aimed at transforming education in the best interest of the local economy as proposed. They say a journey of a thousand miles begins with a step – and here we take pride in voyaging together with FFM towards our shared vision of generating home-grown solutions to our socio-economic challenges.

EARLY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENTS

The idea to construct a facility of this nature cropped up as early as 2016 when the villagers asked for support in setting up and equipping a youth-friendly corner for self-help projects. The youth-friendly corner was to be situated at Matibi Mission, but there were important questions to do with control of the facility since the proposed location was on Mission premises. The community kept demanding the facility and decided that it would better be located by the township in order to prevent entanglement with the church. The idea quickly mutated into that of an all-ager internet cafe for the whole community. The village heads were called to decide on this issue but a new kink emerged: the internet centre was needed but it had to be located centrally in the ward so that the entire community would access it without difficulty.

While community engagements were continuing a bit slowly regarding this issue, in February 2019, the FFM bumped into Project DEFY from India. DEFY was running a near-similar programme, that of Nooks, in a progressive number of countries in Asia and lately in Africa. It came as good news to FFM and the Matibi community who embraced the Nook idea in every respect. However, the issue of location became ever more important. At one point the villages settled that they would have the Nook located by the ward centre at Murawi Township but this site did not have electricity. The proposed site then quickly shifted to Msaverema Township where there was ready electricity. An intense debate ensued, with others disapproving Msaverema for distance related issues and others criticising Murawi for the said power issue. At last the community decided that the best site was Murawi, and requested that the place be electrified in due time.



STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

Apart from the buy-in meetings with villagers, the FFM took care to consult with key stakeholders in the process of advancing the Nook initiative. There were a few meetings with Murawi Business Forum, a community-based establishment of businesspersons operating at the ward centre. Some enterprisers thought the Nook was coming in as a commercial entity, which should be entered as a new member in the Forum register. Others saw a huge fund coming and were ready to jostle for the spoils as either suppliers or contractors. There were also others who were fervently interested to scrutinise the formalities and to complain that the Nook terms were more favourable than those of their own entities.

The meetings with this Forum cleared all these misapprehensions and left all the business players in the proper light regarding what the Nook was all about. Some of them even offered to donate to the cause – some donated storage for construction materials while some offered services at discounted costs. At the end of the day, the Murawi Business Forum picked that the Nook was coming to grow their township, and they understood this as a market windfall.

The FFM also engaged the disability sector. During most meetings, people living with disabilities were represented, often by their local leader Mr Tawanda Chuma. The meetings almost always made the disability representatives assess decisions from the disability vantage point. A number of considerations were made and adopted, including the need for wheelchair tracks, customised convenience rooms and safe spaces in general.

However, some of the customisations were taken up as reactive corrections after initially missing the mark. For example, the constructed latrines did not pass the disability observance assessment, and the disability team remarked that at least the water system toilets were conducive as an alternative.

There were also brief engagements with the youth sector. The FFM particularly called women and youth representatives to meetings where the Nook was deliberated. A representative from the Ministry of Women's Affairs is, fortunately, a member of the FFM board of trustees. With her facilitation, the Nook concept was embraced by the Mwenezi Development Training Centre (MDTC). The training centre welcomed the initiative as a catalyst of small enterprises development and had no reservations about sharing resources when the training began. The consultations were helpful to identify the Nook as a fresh concept not necessarily linked to conventional vocational training centres dotted around the country.

STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS CTD..

Mwenezi Rural District Council (MwRDC) was perhaps the greatest among the consulted. The establishment of the Nook has hitherto been a complex process but the Mwenezi Rural District Council MwRDC helped with information and advice. The Mwenezi Rural District Council CEO helped propagate the initiative among the several sectors of the Council, including the Social Services Sector. The Council also played a big role with its Technical Services Department which assigned two inspectors to supervise the construction of the Nook. These inspectors also facilitated other distinct inspections by the District Health Executive, the Environmental Management Agency and the National Water Authority. Chief among the challenges was the tall bureaucracy which involved moving back and forth several times before a part agenda would be finalised. Also, the Council sometimes made misleading overambitious promises of donations such as free tractor to ferry sand and quarry stones. The result was that the FFM would deal a zero budget where such donation was promised, only to realise soon that the service was either inexistent or required money.

Another key stakeholder who played a central role in the ongoing Nook establishment is the District Development Coordinator (DDC), formerly the District Administrator (DA). This is usually the most problematical gatekeeper in the administrative politics of the district as the office reports directly to the provincial big fishes. The DDC took remarkably less time clearing the FFM and its proposed Nook project probably because the FFM had undergone a similar procedure upon its registration as a Trust recently in 2018. While the Mwenezi Rural District Council MwRDC supported the Nook with executive roles as noted above, the DDC was most helpful in the political dimension, supporting the project in political platforms which many Civil Society Organisations normally find unapproachable. The FFM, however, straightforwardly pointed out that the project had no dovetailing with party politics.

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CONSTRUCTION OF NOOK HALL

Phase 1: From preconstruction to understructure

Preconstruction activities included meetings convened at various levels in the Matibi Ward as well as at Neshuro Growth Point. Some ward-level meetings were conducted at no cost, and these included the board meetings of the FFM Trust. Costed meetings started in May of 2019 and there were 8 of these between May and September 2019. These were crucial meetings covering the design of the proposed nook, quotations for the bill of quantities, decisions about hiring a contractor or engaging community volunteers, mobilising the volunteer builders, extraordinary meetings at the Rural District Council, inspection of architectural plan, health assessments of the site plan, as well as the memorable 2 September meeting for setting out. This range of meetings, combined with licensure and brickmaking consumed US\$1,400. Some US\$127 went towards the architectural design of the Nook hall. Quarry stones were procured at the cost of US\$6,030. The design was such that some 23,500 kilograms of cement would be used in Phase 1; and together with the equipment for this phase, the cost of procurement was US\$8,330. Overall, this phase used up to US\$15,887.



PHASE 2: ERECTING THE SUPERSTRUCTURE

Phase 2: Erecting the superstructure

The amount of US\$11,900 was spent on superstructure materials. These included roofing sheets, door frames, window frames, shatters, brick force and damp proofs, air vents, reinforcement bars, wires and superstructure cement. One challenge during this level was the omission or understating of some materials in the bill of quantities, which materials had to be bought late as a result, thereby distorting the budget in the process. For example, as much as 7,755 kilogrammes of cement for plastering was not included in the BoQ, causing a budget misrepresentation amounting to US\$1,473. Some US\$1,900 was also added when the inspectors noted a shortfall of 76 roofing sheets in the original BoQ. The US\$11,900 for this phase, added to the US\$15,887 of the previous phase, brings the cumulative cost of Phases 1 and 2 to US\$27,787.



PHASE 3: PRIORITY FIXTURES

The priority fixtures for the Nook hall included roofing, electrical tubing and wiring, doors and glasses, borehole water and outside toilets/latrines. At this point in the Nook construction, there was a decision to discontinue engaging the volunteers who were increasingly complaining and slow at the same time. Quotations were sought from private contractors and the charges were US\$9,194 for roofing, US\$1,473 for electrical tubing and wiring; US\$2,981 for doors and glasses; US\$9,610 for borehole; and US\$1,834 for latrines. The subtotal cost of these priority fixtures was \$25,092, bringing the cumulative cost of Phases 1 to 3 to US\$52,879.



PHASE 4: PENULTIMATE FIXTURES

This phase originally comprises other fixtures namely floor tiles, plumbing, solar power and internet. Then there came up the idea of partitioning the hall to expedite the setting up which has been long waiting. At the time of making this report, only the internet installation was still pending. The cost per assignment was **US\$7,773** for floor tiles; **US\$3,128** for plumbing, **US\$10,514** for solar installation as well as US\$580 for the internet.



FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Activity	Budget	Actual cost	Diffe rence
Understructure	15887	15887	0
Superstructure	11900	11900	0
Priority fixtures	25092	25092	0
Solar power	10406	10514	-108
Internet	7465	1828	5637
Plumbing	3128	3128	0
Flooring	7773	7773	0
Partitioning	2365	2365	0
Total	84016	78487	

For this financial year, we had to relook at the overall budget and make some changes. The internet budget had a surplus of \$5637 which was lowered due to moving from **broadband-based** internet to **VSAT** and the cost was significantly reduced. These funds were then diverted to the procurement of the Solar System which had a shortfall of \$108 because the available solar panels were **5.2KVA** from the quoted **5KVA.** The remaining funds were diverted to the procurement of tools & materials needed for the space to start running smoothly.

VISIT BY DEFY PARTNERS

Answer Nzuma the International Director at Project DEFY traveled from India for a 3 day visit to the Matibi Community where she met with the Chairman of FFM Trust and committee members at the sight of the Nook. At the sight, the committee and community members welcomed her and talked about plans on how the construction would take place and she got to explain the Nook concepts in detail and answered questions raised by the members. In her own words 'The community welcomed me with open arms and made me feel a part of it. The best was seeing how they were already excited about becoming a part of the Nook community even without seeing what or how a Nook operates. I believe this Nook will definitely impact the community because everyone is excited and is willing to put in the work to make this possible"



EFFORTS TOWARDS SETTING UP THE NOOK

Hiring the Nook team

During the hiring process, The prospective candidates underwent 4 stages which will be briefly explained. The first stage was them filling out a google form designed by Project DEFY. This form consisted of questions that gauged someone's perspective on alternative education, mentality/thought process and general willingness to learn.

After that, the prospective candidates then had their first interaction video call, where Project DEFY went a step further to explain perspective and thought process. The following interview (3rd) is usually the most exciting. The candidates were tasked to make a water filter using materials available in their surroundings. The Final interview was mainly on how to work with others (community and stakeholders etc), how to handle situations based on scenarios presented. The interviews were conducted in collaboration with FFM President Oliver Müller and Lukas Mettler.

TEAM PERSONAL STORIES

Gilbert Tafara Rupere - Matibi Nook

- Innovation Lead

Never had I thought that my creativity could get me somewhere. I remember when I was in school, I used to think that studying computer science was the best decision I ever made. But after graduation, all I had was confusion. Confusion on top of already existing confusion which comes between 18-25.



Of course, I had a degree, but I felt emptiness within me. I felt I learnt all this stuff, my parents paid all this money to acquire this degree yet somehow, I can't do much with it. I then came to the conclusion that for me to feel better, I have to learn something which I am interested in, on my own. So, for some months after graduating, I took some time to learn web designing. This wasn't easy as I had to spend the whole day helping my father at his workshop fixing cars. Fixing cars was something I hated with a passion because I felt it robbed me of my childhood. Since I turned twelve, I never had time to have a social life. All I did was help my father with his work so that we pay school fees for me and my siblings and also have money at home. Despite the hardships, finally learning something I wanted brought joy to my heart. I thought maybe now I can finally get a job since I have some skills. I was very wrong. I failed to even get called for an interview and this really took a toll on me.

TEAM PERSONAL STORIES - GILBERT CTD

Also, pressure was mounting at home because I had been sitting for some time. With that in mind, I jumped onto the next thing I was interested in, which was computer networks. It was then I realized that I enjoyed learning, provided I was doing it on my own terms.

One day when I was just browsing on the internet, I stumbled upon a job posting for the Matibi Nook. What got my attention was the fact that this had to do with the community, helping and empowering others. The reason why this was of interest to me was because I have always wanted to have an organization of my own, which gets children off the streets, rehabilitates them and also introduces them to the IT industry as it is one of my favourite things. With that in mind, I quickly filled out the interview form even though I highly doubted myself and to my surprise, I was called for an interview.

I couldn't believe that I had finally secured an interview. I spent some time researching FFM and Project DEFY. As someone who had no formal work experience, I was quite nervous. In my mind I thought they were going to ask me about what I studied, what I can do, demonstrate my skills etc, but to my surprise we had more of a conversation than an interview. This really calmed my nerves and we were given tasks as part of our interviews. I did my best to complete those tasks without stressing much. The most interesting interview was where we were asked to make a water filter. I spent some time watching videos and trying to understand what made a water filter work. Once again it felt like I was taking the same path I took while learning computer networks and web designing. I designed the filter on paper and then started looking for materials whenever I wasn't under a car fixing something.

During the process of making the filter I had many failures. Apart from failures, there was discouragement from those around me as they criticised my design. I blocked my ears and paid no mind. This was my shot and if I was going to fail, I was going to fail on my own terms. I made the design work as best as i could and also provided the idea behind while demonstrating and to my surprise I got a job. I got a job not because of academic qualifications or work experience, but because of my own creativity.

TEAM PERSONAL STORIES

Sheldon Sipho Siziba - Matibi Nook Manager

Having been involved in the community development sector for over 12 years in Matopo (Matebeleland North) working with vulnerable children and youths in conducting psychosocial support activities and in Victoria Falls and Hwange District (Matebeleland South) working with vulnerable children, youths, young mothers in conducting sustainable livelihoods projects, improving health and education and psychosocial support activities.

forms and weeks later got an invitation for the interview.



In July 2019 things took a turn in my life and I found myself back at home full time with no source of income to provide for my family as I had been laid off at work due to financial constraints which had hit the organisation. In the midst of all that was happening, I made a decision to cross the border to South Africa where I was promised a job that was not part of where my passion was. In the month of August 2019 as a family man, I was forced to leave my wife and our 2-year-old son so as to make sure I put food on the table, pay all the bills. My time in South Africa as a Stores Admin/ Stock Controller was not the best moments ever, as an immigrant with no legal status to be working in the country I was underpaid at times for months without receiving a salary because the employer knew there was no way I would report him. My life took a 360-degree turn on the 27th of March 2020 when South Africa went on a Covid-19 hard lockdown for 2 weeks and from there, more weeks were added. I remember in September 2020 receiving a call from my employer telling me that the company is closing but when things normalise they might call me. To cut the long story short, in November I saw a Facebook post for the Matibi Nook Hub Manager position and what really got my attention is the fact that the program would be implemented in the remote area in Mwenezi, Zimbabwe. They wanted someone who is interested in community development, although I was still going to be far from my family if I got the opportunity. Being back home and working with a community was what I was longing for. I filled in the interview

TEAM PERSONAL STORIES - SHELDON CTD

On my first interview, I woke up and did a final check-up on my laptop making sure the skype application was working and to my dismay just a few hours before the interview my laptop's hard drive crashed and on the other hand it was heavily raining so I couldn't go outside. I told myself to stop worrying that another opportunity will come through but then my sister called to check up on me to see if I was ready for the interview. To her surprise, I was thinking of cancelling as everything looked bleak at this moment. In no time someone called and asked me if I wanted to hire a laptop for the interview and I agreed. The one hour of the meeting was the hardest for me as they were asking general questions but I just went blank as I could not believe that I had managed to be part of the interview.

I remember Answer Nzuma smiling and telling me to relax as things were flowing. It gave me confidence that the interviewing panel was keen to listen to how I was responding to their questions. The first interview was done a week later. I received an interview task which was simple but in turn, the tasks seemed hard and now I understand why it seemed so hard. I was trying to impress the interview panel but forgetting that the main reason behind the task was to test my use of creativity and thinking capabilities, another week passed I received a task to complete and submitted not knowing that a week later I will again receive another invitation to the last stage of the interview process and to me somehow it was the best part of the whole interview stages I had passed through before as we had more of a discussion than being interviewed, the panellist made sure I have the best understanding how the Nook concept works and how it will impact my personal life and community that the project will be implemented in.

Wednesday, February 17 2020 at 2:22 pm (CAT) I received an email congratulating me that I had got the position of being Matibi Nook Hub Manager with such joy it took me 23hrs before I responded as I was still trying to come to terms that I will be finally going back to my home country and again start serving the marginalised communities as it is my passion.

POST-RECRUITMENT INDUCTION

Project DEFY ran an interactive, engaging training program that lasted 3 months. The training program, which was part virtual, part in-person helped us to learn about our roles and responsibilities, gain a deep understanding of the philosophy and practice of self-designed learning and acquire an overall deep understanding of the Nook model.

To achieve this, the training covered three main modules which are:

- Foundations, which helped to gain a deep understanding of the philosophy behind self-designed learning in the nook model as well as to get a first overview of the main tasks and role of the Nook Managers.
- Learning cycle in a Nook, which focused on what is at the heart of the Nook Model: the 45-day long induction program for the new learners, and the 3 months long goal cycles in which the learners pursue their plans.
- Ongoing functions of the Nook Fellow, which covers aspects such as safety and handling tools in the nook, finance, impact and reporting, communications, and other.

POST-RECRUITMENT INDUCTION

We co-facilitated with the Bulawayo team in all the activities which were taking place. These activities ranged from ice-breakers, discussions to team building activities. Moreover, the DEFY team came to Zimbabwe and this helped to cement the principles and 'new views' we were getting from the virtual training.

This whole experience came as an advantage to us having to meet the DEFY founder Abhijit Sinha and Muzamil who is the Nook Hopper. Hearing the story of the organisation and how it has sailed through all the hardship and still maintained the main agenda of changing one community at a time when the world is still trying to have an understanding of how the Nook concept will positively impact the backbone of the economy. As we will be setting up the Matibi Nook, it is going to be much smoother considering the experience we have gained and the DEFY Project team will join us to start our first cycle together.



ONGOING COMMUNITY INDUCTION

In the period under review the team on the ground has made several visits to the Matibi in regards to community engagements this has made the relevant stakeholder, local leadership to have a better understanding of the purpose of having a Nook Hub in their area. To date we have managed to meet with the local leadership first so that they grasp more the idea of the Nook Hub before we fully engage the community, this will have a positive impact when they share what they know to the community about what will be happening at the Hub as there were a lot of misconception regarding the huge structure which was being constructed in the midst of the village. The next step now is that the construction of the structure is at 95% complete and in a usable state. We are engaging the community at large by inviting them to the centre through the local leadership so that it will be easy to cover all the villages in the ward where the Nook Hub is situated, although the process will be hindered as the country is still going into Covid-19 lockdown which won't allow us to meet some of the community members as planned.



CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The glazing contract or used clear glass for French doors. The inspector then directed that the clear glass on these doors be replaced with obscure glass which is more durable. This recommendation was yet to be executed when this report was compiled. The contractor agreed to implement the corrections but later reported that he was attending to two of his family members who were battling for life because of COVID-19. The FFM was still holding on to the money pending the execution of this recommendation.

Initially, the hall did not have shower rooms. Shower rooms were originally designed for the staff house which may not be constructed in the convenient future. A recommendation was made to remove two toilet chambers and substitute showers in their place. However, this is a fresh assignment requiring a new top-up budget unrelated to the already completed general plumbing.

One major challenge has been the Covid-19 Lockdown restriction which has been imposed in the country this has really affected the progress of work on the ground hence the community has been assisting with all they can but there was no way to have a clear path way to finish the construction of the Nook Hub as planned and also opening doors to the community, this also affected the two Nook fellow who got employed in March 2021 to be at the Bulawayo Nook longer than anticipated

PLANS AHEAD - SET-UP PHASE

For the setup, launch, induction and training of the nook managers, a hopper from the DEFY team will travel to the nook for three months. Before the hopper travels, the nook managers will be engaged with the community outreach to let people know about the nook space and will invite the community members for the first cycle of 3 months. An enrollment process will be undertaken to check the time availability, and readiness of the learner to take advantage of the given opportunity. Approximately the nook will start with 60 - 80 learners in the month of October.

As the hopper will arrive the induction process at the nook will begin, which comprises of the following 4 phases:

• Early Projects: This is the first phase that is undertaken at the beginning of the induction with just half of the total enrolled learners. The duration of Early projects is 10 working days. The purpose of this phase is to help the hopper and the managers settle in the new community and familiarize themselves with the people around. To take the help of the enrolled learners to set up the nook, with some really different and attractive projects that will capture the attention of the next half of the learners when they arrive at the nook. This will also enable peer to peer learning after the first half of learners have understood the workings of the space and some basic tools used to complete the early projects.

PLANS AHEAD - SET-UP PHASE

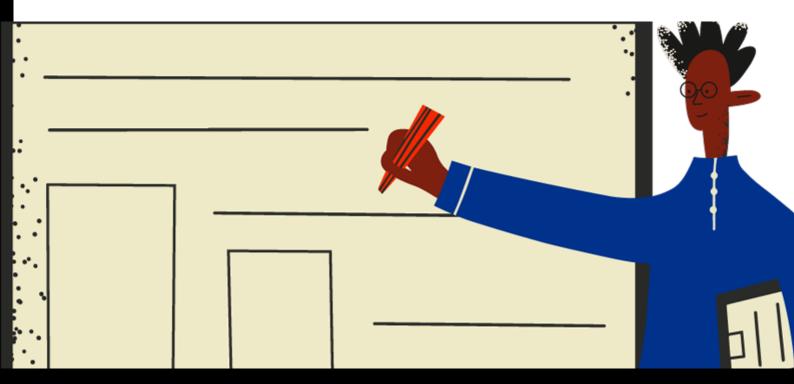
- Exploration: This phase enables the learners to explore different skill sets that they have never tried before. The duration of the exploration phase will be around three weeks, where the learners will try 7-8 different skill sets, which builds the confidence in them that they can achieve many things if they tried, and also helps them to aim bigger and not to shy away from using the skills sets acquired for their actual project.
- Goal Setting: This is one of the most crucial weeks of the induction phase where the learners themselves decide the project that they want to do in the next three months. The facilitators do enable introspection and provoke thought for a creative pursuit, while helping the learners to form teams among themselves to work on the projects.
- Design Week: Once the goal is set for all the teams, the design week helps the learners plan the next three months in a way that will account for the time required for learning the new skill sets required for the project and also the completion of the project undertaken by the team. The design week is built on the principle of design thinking which helps the learners to understand the consumers perspective and allows for multiple feedback loops, to enhance the quality of the projects.

After the induction, the 1st goal cycle will begin, with learners starting to execute their three month plans, where the nook manager will monitor with routine status updates and help and support the learners wherever required. The nook manager also enables the learners to help each other and create platforms for the learners to provide feedback to each other as well, during the cycle and at the end as well.

PLANS AHEAD - SET-UP PHASE

At the end of the three months, the nook will host an exhibition week, where all the projects created will be showcased to the family, friends of the learners, the community around, and to the guests invited from the relevant industries, to guide and support the learners by giving feedback, mentorship and to support the learners to take their projects ahead.

The exhibition week marks the end of the cycle, post which new learner enrollments are made depending on the capacity in the nook, and a new cycle is started all over again. The old learners will get a choice to either continue working on their projects and take them to the next level or can completely choose a new field of interest and work on a new project, with the same team or in a different one.



MEET THE TEAM







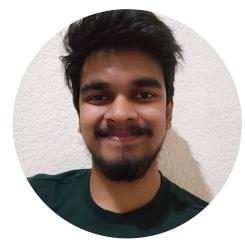
Adnos Chikomo

Answer Nzuma

Fungai Mettler



Gilbert Rupere



Muzamil Baig



Oliver Müller



Samuel Mabhena



Sheldon Siziba





WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

I am very impressed with the passion and the persistence of the whole team on the ground. The process of pooling all the community stakeholders, of erecting the building and recruiting and educating the new staff members was way more complicated than I thought at the beginning of this project - COVID-19 making it even more complex. And I am more than happy to see that we are nearing the opening of the nook step by step. I am looking forward to being on the ground and experience the energy that is created every day by our team. – Oliver Müller, president of FFM Switzerland and founding member of the FFM trust.

A word from the Councillor.

Both the community and myself as councillor for the ward are excited and look forward to learning new ideas as well as modern skills from your program. Be advised the community envisions a bright future and appropriate development. We all long for a start as soon as yesterday. – **Samuel Mabhena**

JOIN US IN THIS EDUCATION REVOLUTION THAT THE WORLD IS ABOUT TO SEE!

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