



Project Fund Request: [Classroom Furniture – St Ambrose Primary]

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Reference to Matibi Program Strategy:

Management Summary

This project is meant to procure USD3'000 worth of classroom furniture for St Ambrose Matibi Primary School. This translates to at least 40 chairs and 40 desks based on a previous similar assignment at the same school. Previously the FFM supported the furnishing of classrooms for Grades 4 and 5 (in 2016); and since then there has been two additional sets of classes namely Grades 6 and 7.

Furniture is one of the traditional limitations of this school and many other schools in the locality. The capacity of schools in Matibi area to meet their basic needs is seriously limited due to extreme poverty in the community as well as the prevailing national economic woes. St Ambrose is steadily developing its infrastructural and technical requirements with the unwavering backing of FFM.

The economic environment is significantly affecting the projects including the one for furniture. Since prices and supplies are fluctuating, it was needful to seek fresh quotations rather than relying with figures of the previous furniture project.

Total estimated costs of the project

Total project cost in USD	
Investments	0
Tools & materials	2'920
Services	0
Travelling costs	0
Food and accommodation	0
Other costs	0
Total	2'920

Funding

The total costs of the project is planned to be funded as follows:	
Cash funding from Friends for Matibi Switzerland	2'336
Loan granted from Friends for Matibi Switzerland	0
Local funds	584
Government	0
Others:	0
Total	2'920

Time plan for realization

The suppliers who quoted this job all indicated that they manufacture the furniture on the basis of placed orders. This is different from other suppliers who have stock warehouses from which to take the ordered items. In this case, the project timeframe largely depends on the pace of the assigned manufacturer. On average the furnishers do 5 chairs or 5 desks per day. This translates to nearly 20 days for the 40 chairs and 40 desks required in this project. An allowance can be given to downtime and other factors which may impede the project progress, making it necessary to peg the project timeframe at 1 month. In this case, the project may be conducted over the month of October as follows:

School commitment:	Until end of September (involves agreeing with school on 20% commitment fee)
Depositing of funds:	Up to October 5 th (involves FFM and the school putting money in Trust Account)
Ordering:	As soon as the money is in Trust Account, latest October 10 th
Manufacturing:	Between October 10 th and 25 th
Delivery:	Between October 25 th and 28 th
Paying:	Between October 29 th and 31 st
Reporting:	By November 2 nd

Financing plan

This project, like other FFM projects, is guided by the principle of beneficiary commitment. This means initial resources declared by the benefiting community as evidence of demand-driven initiative. The school is expected to contribute USD584, which translates to 20% of the total cost. The remaining USD2'336 is requested from FFM. The total project costs USD2'920. The school will be the first to deposit the USD584 into FFM Trust Account as a contractual precondition for the subsequent donation.

The furnishers will manufacture the chairs and desks before they are paid. So, payment will only take place in full upon satisfactory delivery of the furniture to the school. The payment will be via online RTGS.

Person(s) in charge

As in all FFM projects, the project coordinator in this project is Adnos Chikomo. He will be working in close liaison with school authorities. So far, coordination has been taking place with the school head Mrs Nyengeterai Hwande and the priest-in charge Fr Maxwell Mabvuure. The school head gathered and supplied the quotations.

This setup whereby the school gathers the quotations is technically important since the school has a contribution to make, which contribution requires the authorities to be satisfied by the identified service providers. At one point when the school head was apparently too busy, the projects coordinator had to gather and bring quotations to the school, but these were later ignored and replaced with a fresh set gathered by the school.

Upon agreeing on the service providers, the subsequent work is jointly coordinated by the school and the FFM. Firstly the two bodies have to contribute to the project fund as agreed before engaging the supplier. Secondly, the FFM will only release the money from the Trust Account to pay the supplier once the school has issued a confirmatory statement certifying successful project completion. The money is also paid with the concurrence of the donators represented as signatories of the Trust Account.

The projects coordinator will be in constant touch with the school throughout the project period and will submit a report at project end.

Detailed information about the project

Detailed project description

As said above, this is not the first furniture project at St Ambrose to be funded by FFM. However, it is the first to be funded under the new requirement of 20% beneficiary commitment. The previous furniture project was worth USD3'000, and the FFM paid 100% of it. While the plan this time was to repeat a project of the same magnitude as the previous one, the current one is only USD80 less.

A critical phase in planning this project is having the school to agree on the commitment fee. Ever since the idea of beneficiary contribution was raised in 2016, the school has hardly ever committed itself in the expected manner. Excuses have been the order of each coming project, most of the excuses being genuinely related to the ailing economic outlook. However, the FFM is determined to support only those projects that are on school development plan already, no matter how small or how few. So, it is difficult to understand how the school fails to contribute 20% towards natural projects that it planned to do before the coming on board of FFM.

When the furniture project was listed as a priority in 2013, the school had benches and tables in mind.

However, this alternative was soon dismissed because of space considerations although it was going to be

cheaper. Benches and tables take more physical space in a classroom than chairs and desks. In addition, it is harder to arrange seating in a classroom with tables and benches, hence the decision to procure desks and chairs.

Quotations were gathered from a wide variety of potential suppliers including those in the rural neighborhood. However, the three top choices included only one rural supplier and two urban ones. It was going to be a good practice to procure locally as a way to empower the local economy but technical considerations were more important than other considerations. Moreover, the local sourcing idea was crushed by the fact that all the suppliers offered free transportation, making the distance factor unimportant.

Project goals

This project is primarily intended to deal with a furniture crisis at St Ambrose since there is an undersupply. The school has nearly 300 pupils and a deficit of 170 seats. The school is borrowing benches from church, an arrangement which is not that viable. Secondly, no classroom can conduct meaningful learning without proper and adequate seats. The seats should be sufficient and comfortable because learners sit 6-8 hours each school day for the 9 primary school years. So, this project will enable learners to learn in a conducive environment even if they have to sit long hours during and after lessons.

Chairs and desks were chosen ahead of traditional rows of tables and benches for want of comfortable seating. Comfortable seating leads to an increase in academic performance and a decrease in adverse class behavior. As will be needed from time to time, a class with chairs and desks is easier to rearrange than the one with tables and benches.

Moreover, chairs and desks are easier to move around with less noise and damage to the classroom floor and walls. Matibi is in a hot climate and sometimes the classes have to be conducted in the open air, requiring learners to move furniture. Damage to furniture itself is less in chairs and desks than the other alternative; so this project is also economical in the long term because. Also, chairs and desks can be used for a number of events other than class business, for example, children can use the chairs in church where there are benches for adults only.

The desks being procured in this project come with shelves for learners to keep their possessions. These include book satchels and lunch boxes, and this will make the classes tidier. Besides, the use of chairs and desks with shelves is greatly encouraged because it is in line with the new standards for classroom furniture.

Project risks

Mostly the purchasing of school furniture is faced with the risk of substandard quality. To prevent this, the projects coordinator agreed with the school authorities that there be quality checks at every level of this project. Already the school head toured the workshops of the potential suppliers to inspect their samples physically. The selected quotations were the ones that met the minimum standards including sizes, shapes and type of materials.

Sometimes furnishers supply furniture which is not appropriate for the learners' ages, and this project took care of the particular age groups being supplied with furniture. The project has also considered durability because there is a risk of choosing cheap stuff which hardly lasts. There has been a deliberate choosing of hardwood material ahead of chip wood as well as stainless steel ahead of other kinds of frames.

Also important in this project is the likelihood of the suppliers playing tricks. It is possible in the current economically volatile atmosphere for suppliers to abuse the project fund. Hence, the arrangement to require post-completion payment was decided upon because of this likelihood. Pre-job payment is quite risky at present, and this has been explained to the suppliers who otherwise preferred 50% down payment.

There is also a political risk involving the vetting of funding sources. The FFM established a Trust and opened a Trust Account for this and other reasons. Once government authorities suspect that a funded project is not following legal procedures, intervention may take place and this often has undesirable effects. However, with a Trust in full force and a Trust Account in use, such intervention is rare if not impossible.

Negative impacts of not realizing this project

Lack of furniture has often resulted in declining enrolment in many Zimbabwean schools because the education ministry is strict about classroom standards. Yet school-going is a precious experience and a constitutional right. If the proposed project is unsuccessful, it may mean condemnation of hundreds of potential learners. It also means that such hopeless enrollees will have to try the next school, forcing them to travel extraordinary distances to school if enrolled at all. Lack of furniture can therefore lead to floored education.

In case the school defies ministerial regulation and goes on to enroll beyond its seating capacity, as is the case presently, there are health hazards associated with lack of furniture. Spinal damage and other health issues are possible if a child is subjected to improper seating repeatedly. There are also children with disability who may not be complaining but who should be properly cared about, in line with national disability legislation. Proper learning cannot take place under such circumstances.

Other organizations or governmental support

What other organizations are working on this project? Is there governmental aid? Which organizations could we contact to organize more help?

Unfortunately educationalisation programs are lacking wide stakeholder involvement. The community is looking up to government support which is coming sporadically. Government has a Schools Improvement Grant which seems to prioritise government schools ahead of mission-owned schools such as St Ambrose. The last time the school received such a grant was in 2015, and such grant came as a surprise to the school. At the same time the mission is also financially challenged. Funnily, both government and mission are so bureaucratic that it is not easy for third parties such as donors to intervene and play any meaningful roles to aid the situation. Apparently both are suspicious of donor aid for reasons best known to themselves.

Additional information

C. ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

(a) Enrolment trends for the past three years including ECD since the school was opened in 2013.

Year	Male	Female	Total
2016	112	125	238
2015	122	120	242
2014	100	109	209
2013	98	99	197

Most of the learners stay with their grandparents while their biological parents live in places different from their children. Sometimes the children are taken by their parents or select to stay with their parents. This is a challenge which the school is facing resultantly causing a drop on enrolment. Towards the end of 2015 some hospital contract workers' contracts were terminated and this negatively affected the school enrolment as affected workers were parents who relocated with their primary children.

(b) DROP OUT TRENDS

Year	Male	Female	Total
2015	0	0	0
2014	1	0	1
2013	0	0	0

Extracted from school archive. Note that enrolment figures have been rising each year regardless of militating factors.

• Pupil bench/ desk ratios

GRADE	TABLES	CHAIRS	BENCHES
ECD – A	0	0	0
ECD – B	0	12	0
1	4	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	3	0	0
4	4	0	0
5	3	0	0
6	4	0	0
7	4	14	0
		28	0

The school does not have any benches but borrows from the church from Monday to Friday and returns over the weekend for the church service. Only Grade seven class has enough chairs as forty –one chairs were repaired by the School Improvement Grant. There is need to purchase more furniture as the furniture is inadequate for all Grades.

Note that these figures refer to the time before the FFM donated the first set of chairs and desks in 2016.

Personal comments

The furniture project is very important. Unfortunately many schools including St Ambrose seem to see the importance of other supplies first, before they can consider children’s comfort. It has to be noted that the issue of furniture is not a question of luxury. As hinted above, no proper learning can take place in a situation of poor or no furniture. The school may consider it a secondary issue but the welfare of the learners is at stake.

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 Zuberbuhler
Vice president
Friends for Matibi

Daniel Schmidt
Treasurer
Friends for Matibi