



Providing access  
to secondary  
education in  
Zimbabwe



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Epworth, Zimbabwe

Plan International report for JOAC  
Final report

## Project summary

In the peri-urban settlement of Epworth in Zimbabwe, facilities and infrastructure, such as schools, are limited and severely strained by the increasing population. There are just seven primary schools in Epworth and three poorly equipped secondary schools. This compares poorly to other similarly sized settlements, which would normally have at least 50 primary schools and around 35 secondary schools.

Due to the lack of schooling capacity, less than 50% of children completing primary school in Epworth are able to enrol in secondary school. At the beginning of 2013, enrolment for the first year of secondary school was just 776 children - meaning the other 1,053 had to look for places outside of Epworth, enrol at illegal schools or worse, drop out of school.

Child marriages or simply teen pregnancies and lack of fees remain major contributors to drop outs. In fact, girls are particularly vulnerable to abuses such as early marriages, pregnancies and prostitution. Teenage pregnancies and HIV/AIDS are prevalent in Epworth and a major driver of poverty and school drop outs. A further obstacle is the lack of adequate water facilities: children spend unnecessary time fetching water or not attending lessons due to illness.

**I'm delighted to report that the Commission's activities have been successfully delivered in full and we have completed the construction and opening of Mabvazuva Secondary School. The school is already directly benefitting 141 children within the first few months of opening – an incredible achievement. The number of children enrolling and attending the school will continue to increase in the coming months and years, and we are confident that our initial beneficiary target of 600 children will be achieved within the next 12 months.**

Thanks to your support, children in Epworth who previously had no opportunity to attend secondary school are now learning in a safe and engaging school environment, accessing a quality education. **The impact of the project on these children's lives in the long-term will be huge.** Children will now have the opportunity to complete a secondary education – before this project this was not even a possibility – and reach their full potential. Educated children are much more likely to make a decent living when older, reinvest back into their communities and have children who also attend and complete school. **With the support of the Commission we have contributed to breaking the cycle of poverty and creating a cycle of education and opportunity – thank you so much!**



Thanks to the Commission, thousands of children will benefit from this new secondary school for generations to come

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## Project aims

This project aimed to **increase access to and successful completion of secondary school education for 310 girls and 290 boys in Epworth, Zimbabwe**. We also aimed to reach community members with awareness raising campaigns on the importance of girls' education.

## Project impact

Thanks to the Commission's support, the following activities have been completed:

- 6 classrooms have been built - three blocks each holding two child-friendly classrooms are now being used by children.
- 2 toilet blocks have been constructed - one for boys and one for girls.
- 1 administrative block for teachers has been built.
- A water point has been built providing a clean and reliable source of water to children and teachers.
- The new classrooms have been equipped with approximately 300 desks and chairs.
- A School Development Committee (SDC) has been established and trained on school governance and how to further develop the school.
- 6 awareness raising campaigns have been carried out on the importance of girls' education.

Thanks to the Commission's support of this much needed project, 141 children are now going to school and enjoying a quality secondary education. In the coming months and years, the number of pupils enrolled will increase and serve up to 600 pupils from nearby communities.

The **noticeable impacts** of the project are that the construction of the school has reduced the number of local boys and girls who would have otherwise dropped out of school altogether.



Children attending a lesson in the new school

The provision safe drinking water at the school has also contributed to the improvement of hygiene and sanitation among boys and girls, and enhanced the learning and teaching environment at the school. In fact, since the opening of the school **there has been no absenteeism reported to date**.

As a result of the training provided to the SDC, school governance and management has improved. There is more transparency in decision making and children are given the space and encouragement they need to participate in issues that concern them, such as choosing which sports will be played and encouraged at school – a seemingly small decision to make, but one that encourages children to discuss, thoughtfully debate, and implement an action plan. This has considerably enhanced the learning environment and relationship between the teachers, students and parents.

## Project activities

The Commission's project has now come to a successful close and all activities were completed.

### Constructing 6 classrooms and a school office

We are proud to report that the classroom construction was completed in January 2016 along with a school office for teachers, with some co-funding provided by the Epworth Local Board of education. Their co-investment is an excellent outcome and demonstrates their commitment to supporting the school long-term, which is so important now that the project has come to a close.

In total, three classroom blocks were constructed and equipped with 300 desks and chairs. Each classroom block contains two child-friendly classrooms with a capacity to accommodate 600 pupils in total.

It is important to note that in Zimbabwe, the academic year starts in January and given that the school opening was delayed until February, hundreds of pupils who intended to enrol at the new school unfortunately were forced to enrol at alternative schools to ensure they could start the school year. Despite that, we successfully enrolled 141 students (67 boys and 74 girls), and we are confident that a minimum of 600 pupils will enrol in the next academic year.

### Ensuring safe sanitation

In total, two sex-separated toilet blocks were constructed, with the work was supervised by public health officials. Each toilet block has four toilets installed (i.e. eight flush toilets in total for students) and two toilets for teachers (i.e. four in total).

We have also installed a new water point at the school, providing clean and safe water for students and teachers. Prior to installing a pump and a tank, we hired a drilling expert to carry out a site analysis and verify that there was enough water on the site for the school. Once the expert confirmed this, the Department of Public Health conducted a water quality test to ensure the water was safe for drinking.

**Thanks to the Commission's support, the currently enrolled 141 pupils of Mabvazuva secondary school and 5 teachers now have access to clean water and safe sanitation.**

This has great positive knock-on effects; children – and particularly girls – will no longer have to miss school and travel great distances to collect dirty water for consuming. Not only will attendance improve but we also expect to see a reduction in the illness rates amongst girls and boys enrolled at the school, and improved health in the long-term.



Girls using the new safe and hygienic school toilets

## Teacher training

The local School Board continued to show their commitment for the project and school, by managing the recruitment of five qualified teachers and training them on classroom administration and engaging teaching practices. This was in addition to the teacher training provided by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

## Creating a School Development Committee and Child Protection Committee

A School Development Committee (SDC) and Child Protection Committee made up of parents, teachers and young people were established and trained by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education on good school governance and child protection issues, ensuring school is a safe place for students, especially girls, to study.

## Awareness raising campaigns on the importance of girls' education

A total of six awareness raising campaigns were organised to increase knowledge and engagement of child rights and the importance of education. Through the campaigns, parents and children - particularly girls - were encouraged to discuss the value of education. In particular, these campaigns aimed to reduce rates of early child marriage which is a common practice in Epworth – something we will continue to monitor in the area in the future.

It is important to note that more than 400 parents came to the school with their children at the beginning of the academic year in January with the intention of enrolling them. This is an incredible achievement and shows how impactful the awareness campaigns were, as they triggered a behaviour change among parents on the importance of quality education for their children.

## Community participation and sustainability

Securing the active and committed involvement of the local community has been a key strategy in ensuring the success of this project. It will also play a vital role in ensuring the sustainability of the project long into the future.

More importantly, the handover of the school to the responsible Ministry means that the school will be monitored in accordance with the educational system of Zimbabwe and the local School Board, who as a local institution, will also continue to develop and maintain the school structure.

Key to this project's success – now and in the long-term – is the **active and enthusiastic involvement of children** that we have witnessed from start to finish. We know that children are powerful agents of change in spreading positive and important messages at home and beyond and the engagement and enthusiasm we have seen to date provides an excellent foundation to continue to build on for years to come.



Mabvazuva school's pupils and members of the SDC

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## Monitoring and evaluation

This project has been supervised and monitored by Plan Zimbabwe, the beneficiaries themselves and the relevant local, district and national government offices.

Project staff have been meeting quarterly together with the School Development Committee (SCD) to review progress and discuss any issues. Challenges identified through these reflection meetings have helped shape the progress of activities. For instance, when the School Board was informed that the public services commission will only be able to deploy teachers after the school is fully registered, they reacted quickly and hired temporary teachers to ensure there was no further delay in the school opening and interim learning could be started while the government was finalising the deployment of the permanent teachers.

## Project expenditure

We are delighted to report that the project has been completed in full and within budget. Please note there is an overall small underspend of £84. Plan Zimbabwe have proposed retaining this amount and contributing it to a similar secondary education project in Epworth currently being delivered that focused on increasing access to school through constructing school structures and supporting teachers and students with training. I hope this is acceptable to the Commissioners.

Project activities	Budget (£)	Expenditure (£)
<b>Construction activities</b>		
Construction of six classrooms	57,296	55,140
Construction of administration block	6,300	6,743
Construction of sex-separated latrines	5,040	4,491
Borehole drilling	3,780	4,535
Plan programme officer supporting and overseeing construction work	1,418	1,640
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>73,834</b>	<b>72,549</b>
<b>Provision of furniture and learning materials</b>		
Provision of desks – a maximum of one desk and chair for 50 pupils in each of the 3 classrooms	5,292	6,059
Provision of learning materials	1,260	1,263
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>6,552</b>	<b>7,322</b>
<b>Training and supporting awareness raising activities</b>		
Campaigns to raise awareness of girls education	629	252
Establishing child protection committees and support in schools	315	521
Training of school development committee	945	987
Project planning, inception and review meetings	2,882	2,066
Technical support and capacity building	2,227	2,449
Consultations with teachers, key stakeholders and communities	4,410	4,041
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>9,111</b>	<b>10,316</b>
<b>Plan Zimbabwe project staff costs, monitoring and evaluation</b>		
Programme management, monitoring and evaluation costs	7,906	9,429
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£99,700</b>	<b>£99,616</b>

## Case study: a new school means new opportunities

The peri-urban settlement of Epworth was in dire need of a new school with sanitation facilities for pupils and staff. **“The nightmare of enduring long queues to use the only toilet at break time is behind us as we now have a new school with clean water and latrines for boys and girls”, says Barbara\*** one of the pupils of Mabvazuva Secondary School. **“We, the children, no longer need to carry a bottle of dirty water with us while going to school.”**

Epworth was selected for the construction of a new school to address access and completion challenges faced by girls and boys in Epworth when transitioning to secondary level. Unfortunately, attendance, retention and completion rates in the area were very poor. The new school has directly addressed these challenges and has provided children with the opportunities they need to complete secondary education and look to a brighter future. **“Learning became an enjoyable experience. I had never imagined that one day I will have my own chair and desk at school”,** says **Rosemary** who used to study in a makeshift, unsafe school, but is now a pupil at Mabvazuva Secondary School.

Rosemary is hopeful for the future. **“The quality of education is better than in my former school as we are now being taught by qualified teachers in classrooms,”** she says. **“This project has revived my interest in school and I am confident that my academic performance will improve. I am also sure that the friends I left at the informal school are going to enrol at Mabvazuva Secondary School next year as I have already told them how great it is to study here.”**

**“Plan has played its part by improving the schooling environment, it’s now our turn to carry on with development initiatives for our school,”** says the **School Development Committee Chairperson.**



*on behalf of the children in Epworth, we thank you for your support!*