

NENIWO/LAMIFUTHI EDUCATION TRUST

Disbursement Report 2008

Introduction

The disbursement process for 2008 was a process with a difference. It was different economic environment. The inflation rate is so high and going up so rapidly that in some shops their machines could not record accurate amounts (9 and 10 digit prices). We had fears about transport, about the school system .i.e. how it was faring under the current political and economic situation and we had fears of whether the money we were carrying was going to be enough for each child. But once we were there, we found ways of functioning which made it possible to pay the fees and see all the children before our vacation was over. Your invaluable support is appreciated as without it we would have had no reason to go back home in January 2008! On behalf of the children we thank you very much.

After 2006's experience when we tried to pay fees in December and the fees were not yet determined, we started off a little later – January 7th 2007 – hoping that by then the fees had been set by the Ministry of Education. But just like last year, the head masters did not know how much was expected for fees for this year. This year we even started later – January 15th but still there were no fees set even though the school term had started. So once more, we had to go by best guess mates based on last year's fees and the rate of increase of prices in everything needed for school. And just like last year we attempted to pay as much as we thought would absorb the “top ups” always requested soon after fees have been paid!

Statistics

Number of children: 42

As at January 1 2008 we had 41 children at different levels of education.

Level	No. Of Children	Comments
A level	2	
O level (Awaiting results)	3	
Form 1 to 3	17	
Primary (grade 1 to 7)	17	
Special school	1	
In College	1	
Not at school (Humility)	1	

One child: (Withdrawn) Grandmother received sponsorship from a church organization. As at May 5, 2008 we have more information in relation to the children who were waiting results.

- One child, who had rewritten his O levels, did well this time and is looking for a place for A level.
- One boy did reasonably well but decided to enter the job market. He is now working in a factory in Harare.
- One boy, his results are not known but he decided to join a group that crossed into South Africa. We hope he finds a job and looks after himself well there.
- One girl had started in a hair dressing academy. She appears to have also joined a group which went into South Africa. The field officer is following the issue up to establish the exact situation with this girl.

Children's well being

We continue to work closely with the community and other people who are looking after children including our partners Revival of Hope. Most of the children were looking healthy and well. Two were having problems.

One 11 year old girl was being sexually abused by a neighbor. The issue was discovered by the private teacher. The issue was reported to social services and the child has since been removed from the environment and the man is under police surveillance.

One child was having care problems because the mother was frequently out of the country trying to buy goods to come back and resale in order to raise money to feed the family of five. The child was reported to have been patronized by a gang of youths and this made it difficult for him to go to school. Neniwo/Lamifuthi looked had a discussion with the older sister and aunt and the teacher at school. They promised to do their best to check on the child. The field officer is keeping an eye on him and so far the child is going to school.

Sponsors

The objective of the Trust is to make sure that the children we started with get supported through their school before adding more children. Thus the money received from new sponsors was used to pay for children whose sponsors did not pay for this year.

Number of sponsors	New sponsors	No. Of children sponsored by each	Total no. of children
1	1	4	4
4		2	8
25		1	25
5	Did not respond to reminders		*5

*The Trust paid for these children

Contributions

We had sponsors who contributed money not only for their children but also some which they gave a mandate to be used for other useful purposes. Some of this money we used to pay for those children whose sponsors did not pay. As a result all children had their fees paid.

Sponsors not available this year

One sponsor informed the Trust that her responsibilities have increased and she is no longer able to continue supporting a child. We are very grateful to this sponsor for having put the child on the way out of poverty. The child was informed. It was heart warming that the child decided to write to her sponsor thanking her for the three years of support she had given! The Trust is equally grateful for the three years of dedication the Trust enjoyed from this sponsor.

The School fees

Because the economic situation continues to get worse each month, the fees were more than ten times what they were last year and even then were still not known by the time we were disbursing the funds. This meant that we had to be conservative with the buying of school wear because even though with eighty Euros we got a lot of Zimbabwean dollars, the fees were likely to use up all of them.

Examination fees

Last year we saved money in Zimbabwe dollars for examination fees for O and A level children. By the time the examination fees were announced, the inflation rate had gone so high that the amounts saved were valueless. This year the money was saved in Euros. Once the examination fees are announced, the money will be sent by Western Union to the Filed Officer and he pays for the fees. Three children are in this category. The children were informed.

Transport/Fuel

Before we left for Zimbabwe we bought fuel coupons through a UK based website so that by the time we got home we already had 180 litres of fuel worth of coupons. This was a tremendous help as we were able to hire a car for the disbursement process. We did not have to spend time in fuel queues and actually there were days when the average fuel stations did not even have fuel for people to queue for while the ones who were using the coupons had some. We only had to buy fuel directly when the special stations using coupons did not have any.

Support

Once more one of the trustees offered us his car to do the children who are furthest away. This was possible because we had fuel coupons. This offer saved us a lot of money.

Lessons learnt

It is getting progressively difficult to send children to school in Zimbabwe. The School fees are continually on the increase, every three months and very soon the school fees will become unaffordable. Although the school fees continue to increase, the school system does not benefit as all the money is mostly for recurrent expenditure and not for capital expenses. This kind of trend has inevitably affected the quality of the education being given. We noticed in some schools that so many teachers have left that the children's school results are getting progressively worse. This was particularly acute in those children in the first and second year of secondary school.

Solution

We tried to strengthen the temporary measure which was put in place last year when a private teacher was identified for those children where the results were VERY bad. This year subject teachers were identified to assist the secondary school children with crucial subjects like English and Mathematics. We hope this will have as positive a result as did the primary school arrangement.

The four children from last year

Last year we had four children receiving private tuition from a private teacher – the retired school teacher. We made time to speak to these children to hear how they are doing. The children are so happy that now they can read and write and are now enjoying school.

Once the other parents learnt that some children were receiving private lessons, they also started sending their children to the private teacher. By the time we got there she was having lessons with ten children! She says she enjoys it. The children are improving and we asked her to continue. Chances are this year she will have a full class!

Looking at the teachers records, it is impressive. She schemes and plans for each child individually. She knows all the children and the strengths and weaknesses of each and uses different strategies for each child. I do not think these children had ever had such personalized attention. We made copies of the one page of her records just for you all to see and we will put it on the website.

Last year I had expressed fears that the trust might not be able to show appreciation for this teacher. I am happy to report that the Trust was able to give her a gratuity using some of the administration money and money given by the sponsors of one of the children receiving private tuition.

Summary:

All receipts are available showing how the money was used. The majority of receipts are in Zimbabwean dollars. There was an issue of till machines not being able to produce the right amount because they did not have enough zeros. Some of the slight discrepancies are a result of a child using most of the money and a small amount is left over which is not able to buy anything. These small amounts which were given to the children cumulatively show as discrepancies on the sheets. Any amount less than 10 million Zimbabwean Dollars could not buy anything. Because of the large amounts of money involved during the disbursement process

- There was need to check clearly what is written on the receipt given after each purchase.
- We still need to advocate more for the schools to appreciate that organizations that are paying school fees for children need to pay as much as they are able. There is no need to be told to wait until fees are approved. Some schools could not allow us to pay the whole of January 2008 until February 2008. Whatever amounts are paid it seems there are always top-ups. (ie. Money that has to be paid by the parents for levies to prop the school finances against hyper inflation.)
- A way has to be found to try and bring down costs such as uniforms and stationary purchases. Maybe Sisekeli Imfundo/Tsigirai Dzidzo Group could stock these items early in the year and then they would then sell them to the children at much reduced costs.