

The Disbursement Process

Now that we are heading for another fee payment process, it is important for our new sponsors to understand how the money is used.



Leaving Holland!

First, on arrival to Zimbabwe, 10 children and their care givers are given a date to go and meet at their schools so that we pay the fees. The headmasters are informed in advance so that we get the bursars in the office. Early that morning we go to the bank to go and convert the moneys for those children only. Money is converted just before use to make the best of the rapidly changing exchange rates. The money is packed into individual envelopes with the name of the child and the sponsor on the envelope. This usually takes about three hours. The three NENIWO/LAMIFUTHI officers drive to the school where the children are assembled. The field officer checks that all the children are there and that each of them has an accompanying care giver. When our turn comes to pay, the filed officer, Anele, pays for each child individually. She pays off any debts from the previous year first and then everything required for the current year. The care giver and the child are present during the process to ensure that the child is confident the fees were paid.



Waiting to pay!

It is surprising what a difference that makes to the child, to actually witness a “large” sum of money being paid by someone for him or her! It is an experience which you can only understand after witnessing it.



Paying the fees

Once the fees are paid, if there is any money left over, the children and their parents are taken into the city to buy books and uniforms. How many books and uniform items are bought depends entirely on the amount of money left in that child's envelope. In some situations, there is no money left after the fees have been paid. Then that child does not go shopping. This is usually the case with children in secondary school (high school) where there are demands on the money on different other aspects which are not directly "fees" such as money for practical subjects, for computers, for trips etc.

In town, an effort is made to use the money as judiciously as possible so that it can stretch. We therefore do not buy the first pair of shorts we see. We look for the most affordable one. This involves walking and looking and discussion. The children get tired but they learn a lot in the process about how to use money carefully.



Group tired after shopping

After the shopping, we make copies of all receipts to send to the sponsors. Children go home to show everyone else their wares. The joy is inexplicable. It has to be seen to be understood.

If some items are not bought, the process is continued the following day until all the money is used up for school items only. It takes 2 to 3 days to be completely clear with a group.

There are three groups. The process is repeated with each group. In the end the whole process for all the children in the main catchment area takes 12-16 working days since the schools will not take fees over the weekend.



We have 5 children 570 km away from our base. It takes a day to drive there. Another day to pay the fees and another day for the shopping and finally a day to drive back home. All in all the disbursement process occupies all the 20 days holiday in Zimbabwe.

It is hard work but it also the type of work which makes us go to bed tired but with a smile on our faces. We thank all our sponsors who make this possible. We look forward to bringing positive reports back in January 2007.