



News Release

16 February 2022

Handover of Project to Improve Schools in Epworth Township and Kwekwe District

The Ambassador of Japan, H.E. Mr Satoshi Tanaka, today officially handed over new school facilities, including two double classroom blocks, four ablution blocks and a solar-powered borehole, at Sibangani Secondary School in Kwekwe District. The Government of Japan has provided a total of approximately US\$2 million for the “Project to Improve the Secondary Educational Environment in Epworth Township and Kwekwe District”, implemented by PLAN International from February 2019 to February 2022. The new school facilities handed over today at Sibangani Secondary School form part of this project.

The secondary educational environment in Kwekwe District and Epworth Township is inadequate, with a shortage of schools and classrooms. As a result, many children have to walk long distances to school, classes are overcrowded, and other classes are held in dilapidated structures or outside under harsh weather conditions. Given these difficulties, a lot of children, especially girls, end up dropping out of school. In addition, it was found that many teachers often resort to inappropriate disciplinary measures including physical punishment to reprimand children. This results in lasting harm to some children and causes more to drop out of school.

This project has sought to help address these challenges, with Sibangani as well as Mugandani Secondary Schools in Kwekwe, having been identified as schools with the most dire need, benefitting from improved school infrastructure. In Epworth, due to the inadequate number of secondary schools for the large population, a complete new school named Adelaide Secondary School was constructed and opened in 2020. In addition, teachers at ten schools (five in Kwekwe District and five in Epworth Township) received training on positive nurturing to ensure the health and wellbeing of the children.

At today’s handover at Sibangani Secondary School, around 500 people attended including all 141 girls and 106 boys, children from the nearby primary schools, parents and community members. Also attending was the interim Country Director of PLAN International, Ms Atieno Onyonyi; the Zibagwe Rural District Council Chief Executive Officer, Mr Farayi Machaya; the local chief, Chief Malisa; and officials from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

Speaking at the occasion, Ambassador Tanaka appreciated PLAN International for completing the project on schedule. He emphasised the importance of adequate educational facilities and positive nurturing so that children, particularly girls, can bring out their unique talents and potential. Ms Onyonyi said that the improved learning environment would not only allow the children to gain the necessary skills for their lives and work, but also address child marriages and reduce teen pregnancies since girls will spend more time in school. Mr Machaya was grateful for the support from Japan and hoped that the improved educational environment would be emulated at other schools around the country.

It is hoped that this project has addressed in a small way the challenges facing secondary education in Kwekwe and Epworth, so that school enrolment will increase and more children, especially girls, will be able to benefit from their precious school years in a nurturing environment. Japan attaches great importance to education as a foundation for development, and will continue to support Zimbabwe in establishing an educational environment in which all children can benefit.

(See Photos Below)



Ambassador Tanaka's Speech



Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony



Students in their New Classroom



Students outside a New Classroom Block



The New Solar-Powered Borehole



Students Enjoying Water from the New Borehole



Boys Outside a New Ablution Block



Ambassador Tanaka and Students