

APRIL 11 2023

with 

The BULLETIN

More Local. More Inclusive. More Interactive

SAN CHILDREN IN MATABELELAND STRUGGLE TO STAY IN SCHOOL

BY Lizwe Sebata

Page

4



This reporting series was supported by the Pulitzer Centre

The BULLETIN

More Local. More Inclusive. More Interactive

11 APRIL 2023



“ Our school offers nursery, primary, secondary, and tertiary education for disabled children, with plans to expand to other vulnerable groups. (7)

Plaxedes Yeyani Ndlovu, a former Catholic nun

”



“ My son only attended secondary level for one term. He dropped out due to the long distance as he had to endure a more than 20 kilometre journey every single day to Mabheka. (27)

Siphethokuhle Zulu, a resident of Dwala village in Gwanda

”



Inside:

Page 2

- COVER STORY: San Children In Matabeleland Struggle To Stay In School - Page 4
- Inclusive School Opens Doors for Disabled Learners In Matabeleland North - Page 7
- Education Crisis In Matabeleland Widens Gap Between Public and Private Schools - Page 10
- Community Unites To Overcome Remote Schools Obstacles - Page 14
- Poor Infrastructure Disrupts Education In Mat North - Page 17
- Matabeleland Learners 'Shut Out' Of Academic Science and Technology Careers - Page 20
- THE DRIFT: - Page 23
- Project-based Learning A Burden To Underserved Pupils In Matabeleland - Page 24
- Remote Schools Hamper Learning in Matabeleland - Page 27
- Satellite Schools: An epitome of Matabeleland's Comatose Education System - Page 30
- FROM THE WEB: Page 33
- SPECIAL REPORT: Without ICT Infrastructure, In Binga E-learning Is Just A Pipe Dream - Page 34



BECOME A MEMBER

Our well-rounded reporting is hyperlocal, inclusive, and human-centred and helps our audiences from the greater region of Matabeleland expand understanding of their deep-rooted challenges so that they are able to navigate them. You can be part of our mission-driven journalism by joining our nascent membership program. To join our membership, you must first become a subscriber by sending 'join' to +263718636459 via WhatsApp.

REPORT WITH US

IS SOMETHING HAPPENING WE SHOULD
KNOW ABOUT? OUR READERS GIVE US
SOME OF OUR BEST STORY IDEAS.

SHARE YOUR TIPS

 +263718636459

 editor@thecitizenbulletin.com

 @The_CBNews

 The Citizen Bulletin

11 APRIL 2023

San Children In Matabeleland Struggle To Stay In School

In Matabeleland, the San community continues to face significant barriers to learning. Without proper funding and support, the future of these children is uncertain, and the cycle of poverty is likely to continue.

by Lizwe Sebata | @The_CBNews

San children in Tsholotsho, Matabeleland North, face a bleak future as they struggle to stay in school amid financial constraints. With tuition fees, books, uniforms, and food out of reach, many are forced to drop out, putting their education and future opportunities in jeopardy.

The San people were forcibly displaced from their ancestral land in the colonial period to make way for the Wankie Game Reserve, now known as the Hwange National Park. In 1926, they settled in Tsholotsho, where they continue to face challenges accessing basic services like education.

The San community is primarily concentrated in Tsholotsho, with most of them settled in Sanqinyana, Gariya, and Dlamini villages. The population of the San is estimated to be over 2,500, with the majority residing in Tsholotsho and Bulilima, both districts located in Matabeleland North and South provinces respectively.

The San people have relied on hunting and gathering as a means of survival for thousands of

years. Their diet has traditionally consisted of game meat and fruits, and their language, Tjwao/Khoisan, is recognized as one of the official languages in the country.

The traditional way of life for the San people has often led to their marginalisation and denial of fundamental human rights, such as access to education.

From 2010 to 2021, the Tsoro-o-Tso San Development Trust, a civic organisation dedicated to improving the well-being of the San community, implemented a fee assistance program. This initiative significantly increased the enrolment of San children in schools, with approximately 300 children benefiting from the program as of 2021.

The programme ended, however, leading to a significant drop in children attending school.

Malaki Tshuma, a father of three, has expressed concern over the rising number of San children dropping out of school due to their parents' inability to afford school fees and other basic necessities.

“Our children in Tsholotsho are dropping out of school because of the end of a programme where well-wishers paid tuition fees,” says Tshuma, a villager in Tsholotsho’s Gariya area.

“

I was lucky that one of my children got assistance

through that programme last year and managed to write his Ordinary Level examinations. However, he cannot proceed to Advanced Level, and neither can my other children proceed with their studies.

Malaki Tshuma, a villager

”

Tshuma is not alone as several beneficiaries have been forced to drop out of school due to the ongoing challenges faced by the San community in Tsholotsho.

Davy Ndlovu, director of the Tsoro-o-Tso San Development Trust, is optimistic that the installation of Goledema-Christopher Dube as the San Chief will provide an opportunity to advocate for the education rights of San children to relevant government agencies and Parliament.

After the introduction of the fees assistance programme in 2010, scores of children were able to enrol in schools, Ndlovu says.

“We had children who completed Form four and some went as far as Form 6.”

He adds: “Currently, we do not have even one child in Form Four because we no longer have support from well-wishers. There has been a significant drop of children going to school.”

Ndlovu says that the fees assistance programme brought about significant improvements to the lives of San people.

“Our programme worked; some are now Zimbabwe Prisons and Correctional Services (ZPCS) officers and others are at the Zimbabwe

National Parks.

“This shows that development can be there, but because of lack of resources this is retrogressive,” Ndlovu says.

Chief Goledema has confirmed an increase in high school dropouts within his area of jurisdiction.

“There are many children who are failing to go to school due to poverty and lack of reliable sources of income,” Goledema says.

The San community has a limited presence in formal employment, as many of them often rely on menial jobs for survival.

According to Taungana Ndoro, spokesperson for the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the San community, who are considered underprivileged, should have access to the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) to support their education.

“BEAM is a programme that provides school fees, examination fees, levies and building assistance,” Ndoro says.

“It targets the vulnerable children who are unable to pay school fees or those who fail to go to school as a result of non-availability of money.”

The BEAM was introduced by the Zimbabwean government in 2001, and is coordinated by the Department of Social Services in the Ministry of Labour and Social Services. However, the program does

not provide assistance for necessities such as uniforms, food, transport, books, and stationery, leaving underprivileged communities like the San struggling to access education.

Furthermore, enrolments both at junior and senior secondary are very low. Most San parents fail to meet school needs like stationery and uniforms and this results in them being bullied by other school children and teachers. San children leave school as a result of hostile environments which they are not used to at home

A study titled “[The San in Zimbabwe: Livelihoods, Land and Human Rights](#)” shows that San children’s education access in Zimbabwe is very low, both among children and adults.

“Long distances travelled to school and financial problems are the leading factors to high drop outs of San children,” the report published by the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa in 2016 asserts.

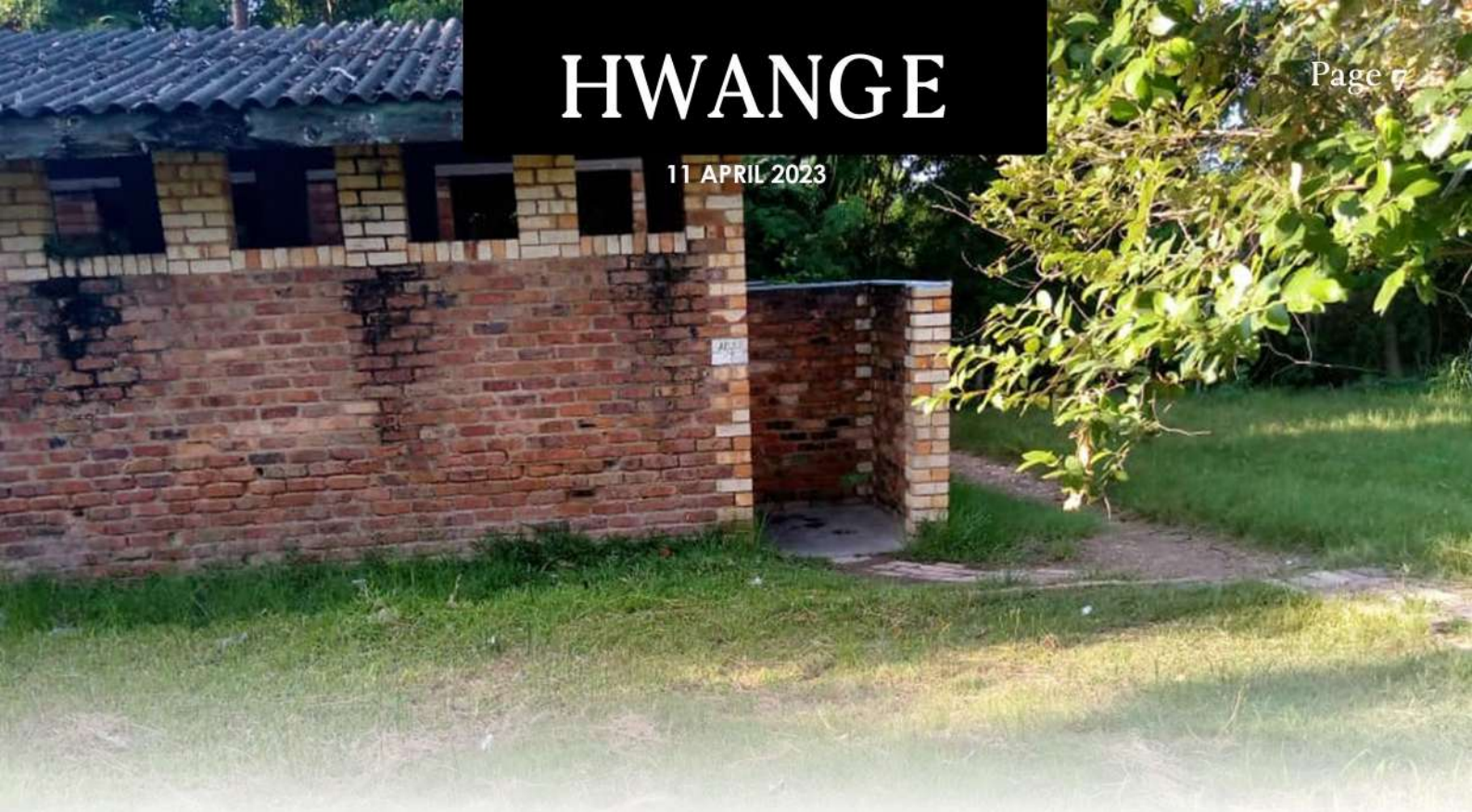
The San community’s struggles reflect the broader challenges faced by people in Matabeleland in accessing quality education.

According to a Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency report, Matabeleland has the second-lowest literacy rate in the country at 83.7%, compared to the national literacy rate of 94.3%, and the highest number of out-of-school children.

Poverty, lack of infrastructure, and historical marginalisation by the national government are among the main factors affecting access to education in Matabeleland. ■



11 APRIL 2023



Inclusive School Opens Doors for Disabled Learners In Matabeleland North

The Girls Way of Life Charitable Trust has established an inclusive school in Matabeleland North to provide education for disabled children who face significant barriers to accessing education due to inadequate infrastructure and resources.

by Calvin Manika | [@The_CBNews](#)

Every morning, a parent in Hwange, Matabeleland North faces a difficult decision: whether to send her nine-year-old son with a disability to school, or to keep him at home where she knows he will be safe.

Disabled students in Hwange, Matabeleland North, face significant barriers to accessing education, as local schools lack the necessary infrastructure and resources to meet their special needs.

As part of its ten-story reporting series titled “[State of Education in Matabeleland](#),” *The Citizen Bulletin* has uncovered various challenges that plague communities in Matabeleland, including [poor infrastructure](#), [remote schools](#), and a shortage of teachers.

A 2017 UNICEF report highlights that children with disabilities in Zimbabwe have difficulty accessing education, with only 48% of them attending primary school compared to 77% of children without disabilities. The report identifies a lack of resources, trained teachers, and accessible infrastructure as key factors hindering the effective support of the learning needs of children with disabilities in Zimbabwean schools.

Tracy Ncube, the mother of a child with special needs, says that the lack of support for disabled students in Matabeleland North schools has caused her son psychological trauma and hindered his ability to learn.

“It’s unfortunate that our kids have to experience all of this. I worry about him when I leave him at school,” Ncube says.

“The biggest challenge is that where he learns, there are no ramps or disability friendly facilities. He will be at the mercy of other children.”

Zimbabwe’s current administration says its 2030 agenda for sustainable development is aimed at, among other things, ensuring that previously marginalised and vulnerable groups such as the disabled are included in the development process.

Despite the government’s stated commitment to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in Zimbabwe, communities like Hwange have yet to see tangible progress in launching projects that address these issues.

Plaxedes Yeyani Ndlovu, a former Catholic nun, recognized the need for better education opportunities for disabled students in Hwange District and established a school in 2022 to address this problem. Using her own savings, Ndlovu covers the rent for a house in the City of Victoria Falls that serves as the school’s current location.

Ndlovu established the Girls Way of Life Charitable Trust to promote educational equity in the Hwange region, and the Trust now operates the school she founded.

“

Our school offers nursery, primary, secondary, and tertiary education for disabled children, with plans to expand to other vulnerable groups.

Plaxedes Yeyani Ndlovu, a former Catholic nun

”

According to Ndlovu, the school has created a supportive and inclusive learning environment for pupils with special needs since its launch a year ago. To accommodate a larger student body and staff, Ndlovu plans to construct a fully-fledged school on a larger plot of land, capable of accommodating up to 600 people.

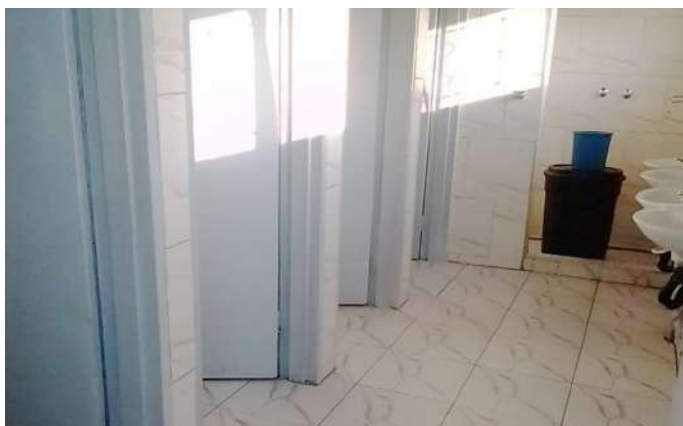
However, Ndlovu is cautious about disclosing further details, including the project’s cost, as she fears potential external interference with her plans.

Ndlovu established the school after observing that existing public facilities lacked adequate accommodations for disabled students, including ramps and other accessibility features.

Despite the success of her initiative thus far, Ndlovu has not received any support from the central government, which has failed in its public service role to promote educational equity.

Experts in child rights have identified inadequate human, financial, and physical

resources, as well as a lack of infrastructure, as the primary obstacles to inclusive education for disabled students in Matabeleland North, resulting in a shortage of appropriate special needs facilities and programs.



Toilets at Coalfields Primary school are not user friendly for children living with disability. Image by Calvin Manika, March 2023

“It is regrettable that the government does not treat this matter seriously enough,” says child rights advocate Primrose Muzamba.

“

As a nation, we must have at least one primary and secondary special education school in every district for children with disabilities.

Primrose Muzamba, child rights advocate

”

According to Sharon Jacob, a human rights advocate for children with disabilities, Zimbabwe faces significant barriers to achieving inclusive education.

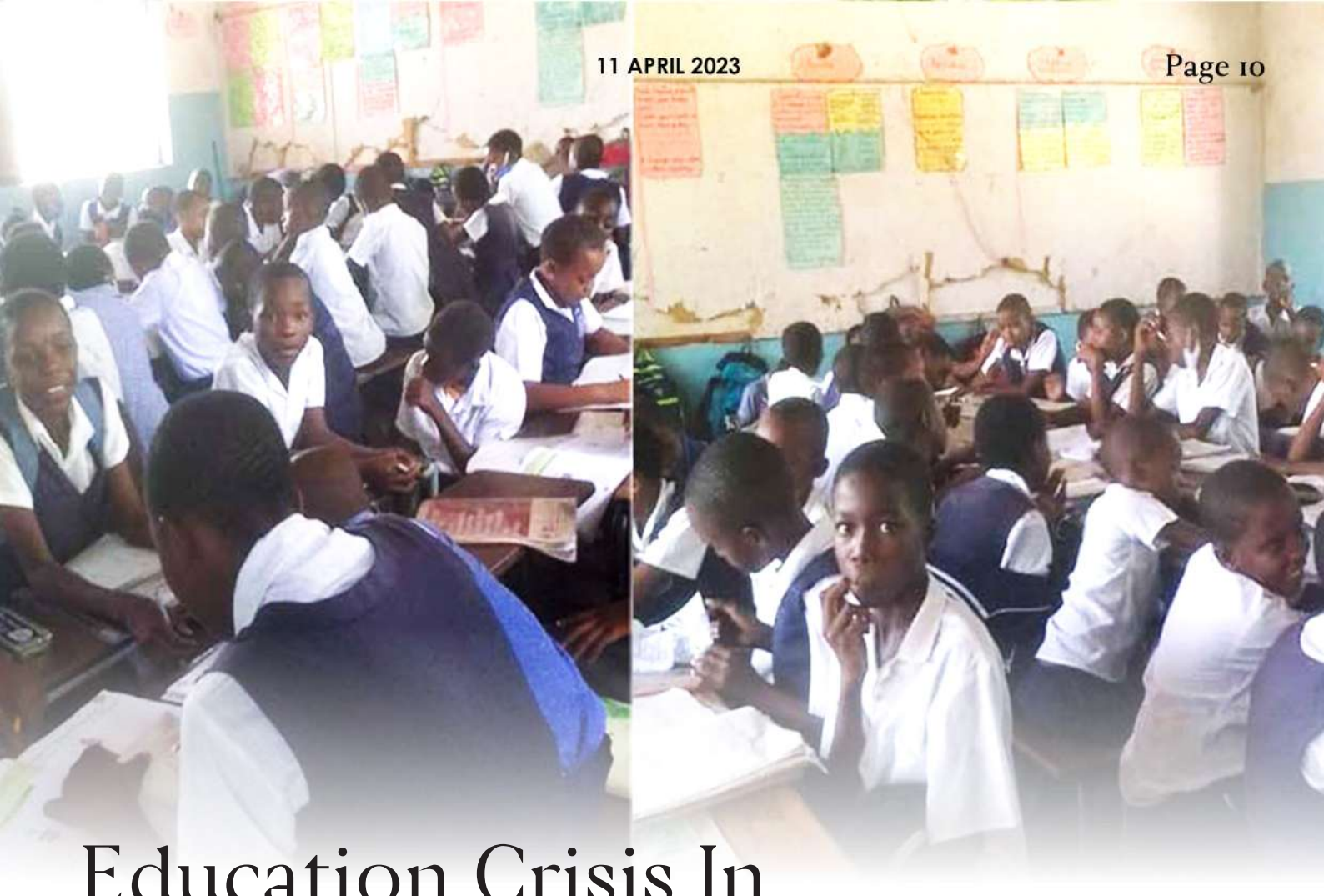
“Particular challenges that are faced by children with disabilities in accessing inclusive education are socio-economic, inadequate learning centres, inadequate transport services, general family poverty, the HIV and AIDS burden and the stigma associated with disability,” Jacob, who is also the Chairperson of the Federation of Disabled Persons of Zimbabwe in Matabeleland North, says.

While there are a few schools in Zimbabwe that cater to children with disabilities, including King George VI school in Bulawayo, Danhiko Centre, and Emerald Schools for the Deaf in Harare, the Girls Path of Life Charity Trust academic institution is the first school in Matabeleland North specifically designed to provide education for children with disabilities.

Parents in the Hwange area now have the option for their children to attend a special needs school.

“Our children have faced various challenges in local schools, from discrimination to poor infrastructure. But now they have found a home and their academic performance is improving,” says Melody Ndlovu, a resident in Chinotimba, Victoria Falls.

Despite facing challenges due to a shortage of resources, Ndlovu remains determined to expand the school project beyond its current scope. She is currently funding operations at the school single-handedly, but is leveraging her early success and lessons learned to drive further growth. ■



Education Crisis In Matabeleland Widens Gap Between Public and Private Schools

In Hwange, a small coal mining town in Matabeleland North, children growing in the same community are exposed to different educational circumstances—one with endless opportunities and the other with none.

by Calvin Manika | @The_CBNews

Tawanda*, a grade 6 pupil at a local school in Lusumbani township popularly known as Number 5 in Hwange, Matabeleland North says his dream is to be a pilot.

The example of successful people from seemingly uninspiring backgrounds is a major obstacle for

him to overcome.

The lack of textbooks and inadequate Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure at his school prevents him and other students from reaching their full potential.

The Citizen Bulletin recently reported about inadequacies of ICT in most public schools across Matabeleland North, a challenge which impedes learning and contributes to poor pass rates.

Tawanda's school is no different from the

public schools in the surrounding suburbs of number 1 (Lwendulu), number 3 (Makwika), and number 5 (Lusumbani).

About 10 km away from these public schools, there is Coalfields primary, a well-resourced private school in the northern suburbs of Hwange offering world-class academic and recreational facilities.

The school is located beneath the Hwange Colliery concession near the edge of Number 1 low-density suburb where Hwange's most affluent community members reside.

These include Hwange Colliery Company executives, private company managers and directors as well as business people among the well off in society in the coal mining town.

Sibongile Phiri, a resident from Lusumbani, says she would like to enroll her kids at high-end schools like Coalfields and Thomas Colter but she cannot afford the exorbitant tuition fees at the two schools.

Tuition at Lusumbani is US\$50 compared to US\$1000 at Coalfields per term.

"The fees are discriminatory and segregate us here in public schools, especially at Coalfields," Phiri says.

According to 2023 public [salary data](#), an average Zimbabwean earns between \$180 and \$230 per month.

Lusumbani Primary School is located within an open-cast mine, and children find it difficult to concentrate due to noise from continuous blasting and earth moving machines.

At the school, most learners are children of low-level mine workers who are mostly manual laborers.

Educationists say the infrastructure divide condemns learners from poor backgrounds to a perpetual cycle of poverty with little room to maneuver and attain their dreams.

A former teacher Tinotenda Mbeure says Hwange Colliery Company and the Ministry of Education are failing to provide learners in Hwange with equitable access to resources and opportunities.

"Even so, the problem of equity is not only one of equal opportunity," Mbeure says.

"The situation in Lusumbani and other Matabeleland North schools with limited resources is extremely unjust."

He adds: "The potential of children is limited because some won't be able to enrol in quality secondary schools."

In an ideal situation, experts say, the central government and coal mining companies in Hwange, including Hwange Colliery Company, should establish Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) to improve the infrastructure development and resources provision in all schools, private as well as public schools.

According to the [World Bank](#), private providers are playing an increasingly important role in education. Private participation in education has increased dramatically over the last two decades across the world, serving all types of communities —from high-income to low income families.

"Although governments remain the main financiers of education (at least of primary and secondary education), in many countries private agents deliver a sizable share of education. Other governments' contract with a private organisation to manage and operate a public school, as is the case with concession schools," the

report says.

The report adds that, the continuum of the extent to which countries are using PPPs ranges from those in which education is provided only by the public sector to those in which it is largely publicly funded and privately provided.

The majority of children in Matabeleland North attend underfunded public schools, and stakeholders believe that poor education has a long-term impact on the region's progress.

Residents of Hwange say the Hwange Colliery Company is not doing enough to maintain the schools it built, and that even though they are now controlled by the government, the company has enough resources to dedicate to infrastructure and manpower retention.

Hwange Colliery Company spokesperson, Beauty Mutombe, says it is not true that the company has not been investing in the development of local schools around the mining town.

"We actively participate in the construction and refurbishment of several primary and secondary schools around Hwange," says Mutombe.

"Donations are made in cash and kind to support a number of activities in schools. By investing in education we are investing in the future generation."

Nevertheless, residents contend that the apparent failure in public education is as a result of the ineptitude of the central government which is responsible for ensuring that no child or young person is deprived of education.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa's administration says it has done more for public education since it took over power through disputed elections in 2018.

However, an [education budget brief](#) prepared by UNICEF Zimbabwe shows that, at 2.5 percent of Gross Domestic Product, the country's education sector spending is below the 4-6% Education for All Target.

In late 2022, the country's Treasury announced that it had allocated ZWL\$631.3 billion (US\$698 340 707) or 14% of the total budget for 2023 to public education.

However, residents say public schools in Matabeleland North hardly get any penny from public funding to improve the quality of education owing to the country's centralized system of government and other existential factors.

According to educationist Christopher Madzinga, lack of funding and a teacher brain drain have hurt public schools in Matabeleland North.

He says this has prompted many parents to enroll their children in private schools, but due to the nation's economic woes, they frequently cannot afford hefty tuition fees.

"The amenities and infrastructure are often better than those in the public sector, but most people cannot afford them given the current economic situation," says Madzinga.

"In a society where corruption is pervasive, the public has lost faith in the architecture of governmental institutions, including education."

"Private education is preferable because it is not hurt by challenges such as teacher strikes, insufficient funding, and public sector bureaucracy and corruption." ■



 www.thecitizenbulletin.com



THE BULLETIN E-NEWSPAPER IS A PRODUCT OF THE CITIZEN BULLETIN, AND IS PRODUCED BI-WEEKLY. IT CONTAINS HYPERLOCAL STORIES FROM SOME OF THE MOST MARGINALIZED AREAS OF MATABELELAND.

GET YOUR COPY DELIVERED TO YOUR PHONE FORTNIGHTLY BY JOINING OUR WHATSAPP AND EMAIL BROADCAST LISTS.



HOW TO SUBSCRIBE:

WhatsApp: Save +263 718 636 459 on your phone and send us the word **'SUBSCRIBE'**

Email: Send an email to editor@thecitizenbulletin.com with **'SUBSCRIBE'** in the subject line.

BECOME OUR SUBSCRIBER

Our hard-hitting hyperlocal reporting and analysis reaches one in every three people across the greater region of Matabeleland. That means our content reaches approximately 60,000 readers biweekly. That's a handful but we need more people like you to be part of our community of readers. To receive our quality stories, WhatsApp the word "JOIN" to +263 71 863 6459.



11 APRIL 2023



Community Unites To Overcome Remote Schools Obstacles

In Matabeleland, remote schools have brought with them a host of challenges. However, the local community has banded together to develop innovative solutions that have yielded impressive results. By working collectively, they have found ways to overcome barriers such as long distances, exorbitant boarding costs, and lacklustre academic performance.

by Calvin Manika | [@The_CBNews](#)

Jane Moyo* 16 walks approximately 22 km to her nearest secondary school in Lupane, Matabeleland North.

“We are used to the distance and walking. It is just that most of our time is spent on the road travelling to and from school. At home I need to do homework and help my grandmother,” says Moyo.

Moyo is among learners in the district who have to walk long distances to and from school.

Local secondary schools are located in remote areas and learners have to travel long distances to reach them.

Lupane district has two public high schools with boarding facilities and these accommodate a few learners. The rest have to walk long distances to attend day schools.

“The time spent walking should be spent studying,” says Bongani Masuku, a parent.

Francis Ngwenya, a local councillor says every ward should have a school.

Although there is no public data showing the distribution of schools per ward in Zimbabwe, data from the annual Ministry of Primary and Secondary Schools (MoPse) shows that Matabeleland has fewer public schools than other regions in Zimbabwe.

In an effort to provide a better educational environment, parents appealed to local business people in various shopping centres to provide affordable boarding houses for learners.

At Lupane business centre which is near the popular Mabhikwa High School and St Luke's business centre near Zwangendaba High School, most learners have found relief from this arrangement.

A similar model has been used in Binga and Tsholotsho.

"Around here, we have Mabhikwa High school, it is one of the highest-performing schools in Matabeleland North, unfortunately most of our locals do not afford school boarding facilities," says Evans Mashonganyika, a Lupane-based businessman.

"When parents approached us, we realised that we have some rooms behind our shops which we can accommodate children at a low fee which is affordable."

Evans Mashonganyika, businessman in Lupane

The collaboration between parents and the business community is more than a business opportunity; it is an example of community parenting. Most shops near reputed schools had empty rooms. Parents pay monthly to renovate rooms to make them hospitable.

In some instances, business people drive

children to school when it rains or rush them to the clinic. In return, parents bring goats as a token of appreciation.

Matabeleland North's poor public education infrastructure has led to low-cost boarding and child renters. *The Citizen Bulletin* has previously reported about the issue, in stories which are part of this series.

Depending on the location and amenities, boarding facilities in shopping centres might cost \$20 and \$30 per month. Parents claim that the rent is inexpensive compared to conventional boarding schools.

They applaud the business people for putting in the extra mile to protect their children in makeshift boarding facilities.

"It is not easy to entrust someone with our children. However, the owners in most cases assume a parental role and monitor their activities while at their place of residence. It makes our lives easier," says Masuku.

Research shows that girls have a higher risk of sexual abuse among children who travel long distances. Most rural girls struggle to complete Form 4 after falling pregnant while some learners engage in drug and illegal substance abuse.

"It is very unfortunate that as owners of improvised boarding facilities unlike school boarding facilities, we can do literally nothing in that space," says Mashonganyika.

"We do our best here at home but when one is on her way to school we will not be around. Most of these girls feel more independent now. The energy they once used for walking is now converted into sexual activities. We are losing them," says Mashonganyika.

Previously, many girls fell victim to home-based boarding facilities after becoming pregnant. Parents whose children fell pregnant

say lack of supervision was to blame.

They admitted that creating boarding facilities out of school bounds is a learning process and they are improving each day.

Girls are protected by giving them a preference for safe rooms, ideally ones near their landlords. To gather information on their foster children's inappropriate behaviour, parents and business owners have developed a variety of surveillance techniques.

Mashonganyika says the mitigation measures are effective.

"We spy on our young girls on their way to school to prevent them from falling victim to sexual activities," says Mashonganyika.

"In addition, we know the distance after knocking them off and calculate the time they will be here. If there is anything, we always ask. The secret is to assume parental responsibility rather than treating it as a business."

According to UNICEF Zimbabwe 2023 - 'Back to school for All' message, government education spending was below the agreed global target of 20%.

Pro-development activists say reaching the 20% target is needed to ensure access to quality education for all children including those from marginalised communities.

Those behind the initiative say load shedding is another challenge faced by learners housed in those boarding facilities.

"During night studies, load shedding is the greatest drawback for these children. Some of us with large solar systems provide them with light but others are unable to. They use candles."

Siphelile Ndlovu, a shop owner

"We want to ensure that studying is better than what they were used to in their rural homes."

In November 2020 during his visit to St Paul High School in Lupane, then Vice President Kembo Mohadi said the government was working on eradicating "bush" boarding facilities which expose girls to dangers.

Bush boarding facilities comprise shacks that accommodate pupils living far away from schools without boarding facilities. In these makeshift compounds, there are no basic facilities such as toilets and bathrooms.

Business people spearheading the initiative argue that their facilities are different from bush boarding as they offer children decent accommodation and help them attain their academic goals, a service the central government fails to deliver.

They say they make sure day scholars in their residence study with their counterparts at boarding schools.

"Despite the small money, we are doing this to help our community and make education more appealing to children," says Ndlovu.

"We also learn from other communities like Nkayi and Tsholotsho which are doing the same. As they prepare for exams, we need to help them attend night study sessions with those residing in school boarding facilities."

Magonganyika says they have learned a lot from the initiative despite its shortcomings.

"We have learnt that we can use local resources to uplift our community and make education accessible even to those at the bottom of the ladder," he says.

"Our collaboration teaches us that access to education starts by finding each other as people in the same community. It must not be a wealth competition." ■



Poor Infrastructure Disrupts Education In Mat North

Experienced teachers continue to shun public schools in Matabeleland North, citing inadequate or poor infrastructure, leaving learners at the mercy of temporary or graduate trainees. Stakeholders say this is to blame for the poor pass rates.

by Calvin Manika | [@The_CBNews](#)

Dumisani Ncube (52) says he arrived in Lupane, Matabeleland North 15 years ago with high hopes of making a mark as a teacher.

Ncube says one of his plans was to build a homestead as well as undertake a goat rearing project.

Fifteen years later, Ncube is a disappointed man.

“

While banks, health centers, and supermarkets were far away when we first started, we were optimistic that perhaps after a few years, these amenities would be

available.

Dumisani Ncube

”

“However, years later, nothing has changed and the schools remain inaccessible because of poor roads.”

Ncube says schools in the province are manned by graduate trainees as experienced educators quit or migrate to other provinces where there is better infrastructure.

“That is having an impact on pupils' pass rates because most of them are inexperienced,” Ncube adds.

In Matabeleland North, most roads are in poor condition due to government neglect. Residents say the roads were last serviced during Ian Smith's regime, 42 years after the country gained independence.

Most schools operate with fewer than five teachers due to the exodus of teachers triggered by poor amenities in the province. Authorities say teachers are now reluctant to fill positions in the province.

One of the reasons educators shun schools in this province is the lack of facilities such as housing and transportation. In most cases, teachers have to walk distances of more than 20 km to reach the main road.

Research shows that poor infrastructure affects pass rates in Matabeleland North. A study titled [Perceptions of Teachers on Causes of Poor Performance of Pupils at Ordinary Level Public Examinations in Zimbabwean Rural Secondary Schools: A Case Study of Nkayi District](#) reveals that pupils' high failure rate is attributed to lack of materials and equipment

for teaching, inadequate supervision and teacher incompetence among others.



Poor roads and walking long distances of more than 20 km forces experienced teachers to shun public schools in Matabeleland North. Image by Calvin Manika, March 2023

“The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education should embark on a massive infrastructural development. Teachers should be adequately motivated so as to boost their morale and parents should be encouraged to support the learning of their children,” notes the study published in 2014.

In Zimbabwe, pass rates are not aggregated by province since the government administration is centralized. Matabeleland North, however, lags behind the other nine provinces in terms of transition rates between lower and upper secondary, indicating poor education quality.

Apart from poor infrastructure in schools, lack of social amenities such as clinics, banks and hospitals is also a turnoff, teachers say.

Bridget Khumalo says pupils in Matabeleland North fail because there are no experienced teachers in local schools.

“I blame the government for not caring about the welfare of teachers,” says Khumalo, a villager from Mabonobono, Lupane.

“Our kids are failing because we don't have enough experienced teachers.”

Educationist Itai Maone says learners in

Matabeleland North are the biggest losers resulting from the low teacher retention rates in the province.

Maone says it is disheartening that schools in the province still suffer from poor infrastructure four decades after independence.

“

These infrastructure issues in schools have a negative impact on academic achievement as well as the rights of students and staff to safety and health. They also violate the right to education.

Itai Maone, Educationist

”

According to the 2021 [Educational Management Information System](#) report, Matabeleland North has 1051 Early Childhood Development (ECD) teachers, 4521 primary school teachers, and 2613 secondary school teachers. Government officials and other stakeholders agree that the shortage persists.

The Matabeleland North Provincial Education Office could not be reached for comment.

However, in 2022, a senior official in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education admitted there was a dire shortage of teachers in the country's remote schools. As a result of the unfavorable environment, Matabeleland North was mentioned as one of the two provinces that has a hard time retaining teachers. The province, authorities say, has an

estimated shortage of 15 000 teachers.

2015-2019 Average Transition Rates In Percentages

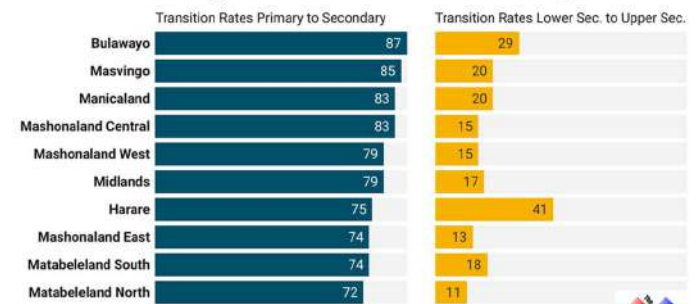


Chart: The Citizen Bulletin • Source: Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

Matabeleland North is lagging behind other provinces in terms of transition rates.

Felix Mhona, Zimbabwe's Minister of Transport and Infrastructural Development, did not respond to enquiries about poor infrastructure in Matabeleland North sent to him on March 16.

Tinos Matshiya, a local governance researcher, says inadequate infrastructure is a significant barrier to community growth and economic advancement.

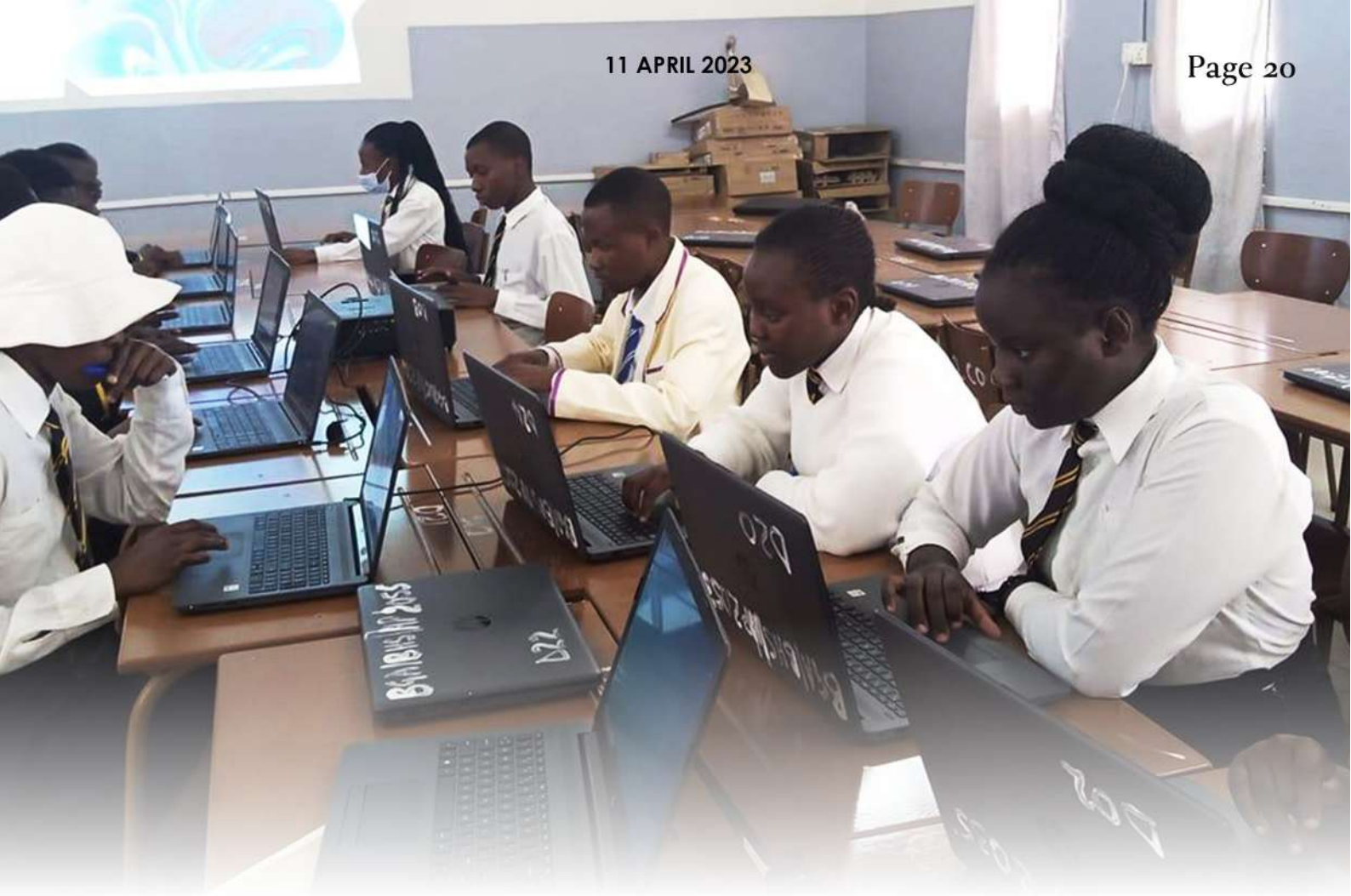
“There has been a clear trend for ten years in particular,” he states.

A senior teacher, Jairos Ngwenya, says this is the reason why he transferred to an urban school where he could be closer to his family.

Alex Sibanda, a resident of Gwayi, claims the government intentionally impedes development in the region to ensure experienced teachers avoid it.

“We're not suggesting inexperienced teachers are terrible; in my opinion, learning gives everyone experience,” Sibanda says.

“However, sometimes you end up thinking that it is a deliberate policy by the government to sideline our children.” ■



Matabeleland Learners ‘Shut Out’ Of Academic Science and Technology Careers

Students in Matabeleland North are struggling to access the Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program, as the government suspended it in 2018 and focused on funding university students. This has dire consequences on their academic science and technology careers.

by Lizwe Sebata | @The_CBNews

Matabeleland North learners have been denied access to the Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program, and this has detrimentally affected their academic and professional prospects.

The government suspended the STEM program in 2018 and channeled funds towards university

students. However, little has been done to ensure public schools in Matabeleland have laboratories to support STEM.

Most schools in the region have no laboratories, and qualified and adequate teachers for STEM subjects are scarce. As a result, learners, parents and schools are little enthusiastic about STEM subjects.

Introduced in 2016 by exiled Higher Education and Tertiary Minister Jonathan Moyo, STEM was created to promote science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines. Beneficiaries had their fees paid by the government.

Former Ntabazinduna Chief, Nhlanhlayamangwe Ndiweni, is concerned that learners from Matabeleland North will never be able to explore their full potentials in science and technology professions because of the lack of a viable government-funded STEM program in the region.

Ndiweni believes that the program would have allowed many schools in Matabeleland to have science laboratories and other supporting infrastructure, including labor to support STEM.

“What we have is a number of gifted children who did not benefit from STEM,” Ndiweni says.

“A classic example is an academically gifted young man in Ntabazinduna who wishes to be a doctor but now herds cattle back home.”

An investigation by *The Citizen Bulletin* revealed that little has been done since the suspension of the STEM program to ensure that public schools in Matabeleland have laboratories to support STEM.

Some of the schools without laboratories are Gonye Secondary School in Nkayi, Thokozani Secondary School in Insiza North, and Sikhwili Khohli Moyo Secondary School in Gwanda. In addition, Nhlabababalozi Primary School, Madlelenyoni Primary School, Mfanyana Primary School, and Dibha Primary School, all in Matabeleland North.

According to a 2017 report by the State Press, only seven schools in Matabeleland North have science laboratories. The worst affected is Binga, where no single laboratory meets the minimum

requirements. Matabeleland North has a total of 825 schools.

Davie Nyathi, a Math teacher says Lupane secondary schools STEM uptake is disappointing because few students enrol in science subjects.

“For example, only Fatima High has physics at A level in the Lupane district. Schools have no capacity, specialist science teachers, no science facilities,” Nyathi says.

“Given the inadequacy of staffing levels and science equipment, it is no wonder that learners are reluctant to take STEM. Learners, parents, and schools are reluctant.”

Davie Nyathi, Math teacher

Nkosilathi Ncube, a villager at Dlawva village in Nkayi, adds: “Sikhobokhobo Secondary operates with only two male teachers. How can you expect Nkayi learners to reach the STEM target?”

Ncube says in those secondary schools that offer science subjects, most learners fail because they are taught by diploma-trained teachers, while in other provinces, they are taught by degreed teachers.

Vumani Ndlovu, the Rural Community Empowerment Trust (Rucet) Matabeleland North Coordinator, says that the majority of schools in the province have no laboratories or qualified and adequate teachers for STEM subjects.

“STEM teachers are in high demand within and outside the country. Therefore, given the infrastructural decay, lack of access to roads, poor transport and communication networks, and social amenities such as water and health facilities, many schools in Matabeleland North are less likely to attract

STEM teachers,” Ndlovu says.

Ndlovu says the government must have a deliberate policy to support STEM through the construction of laboratories in Matabeleland schools.

“Construction of laboratories, improvement of communication networks, and access to internet services is needed to improve both the uptake and performance of students in these subjects,” he says.

“Utilizing Lupane State University (LSU) through twinning them with secondary schools in Matabeleland North could be effective.”

Ndlovu says most rural pupils from Matabeleland have no appreciation of the utility and strategic value of those subjects in career development and prospects for job opportunities.

“As such, career guidance to promote STEM among the learners is needed,” he says.

A recent story by *The Citizen Bulletin*, which is part of this reporting series, shines a light on teacher retention challenges in Matabeleland North caused by [poor infrastructure](#).

Thembelani Dube, a Matabeleland development campaigner, says there is an urgent need to develop infrastructure to support STEM in the region.

“Development of learning and teaching infrastructure, electrification and adequate human resourcing of schools in the region will help increase the number of learners absorbed into STEM,” Dube says.

Matabeleland South Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe, Coordinator Urgent Moyo says some public schools hire their own science and mathematics teachers to fill the skills gap.

“Most schools fail to offer a full

package of sciences owing to a shortage of staff. Even those schools offering STEM end up hiring teachers most top secondary schools cannot afford.”

Urgent Moyo, Mat. South PTUZ Coordinator

“The way forward should be the provision of teaching personnel, facilities and other relevant material. The government should also offer attractive incentives to teachers, motivating learners to take the sciences through educational workshops and career guidance.”

Effie Ncube, a social analyst, says STEM was never going to succeed owing to corruption.

“Undeserving students who were not good enough benefitted from the scholarship because of corruption. However, the programme was worth it and was supposed to be sustained while dealing with corruption embedded in it,” Ncube says.

“Any program designed to promote STEM in Matabeleland should ensure that adequate laboratory facilities are available in addition to encouraging students to pursue STEM.”

The Primary and Secondary Education Ministry spokesperson Taungana Ngoro says the government is aware of STEM infrastructure inadequacies across the country.

“So we are little by little putting up infrastructure using our budget and also together with our development partners.”

“The government is aware of issues of STEM infrastructure in all our schools throughout the nation and not necessarily only in Matabeleland region, we also have similar situations in Mashonaland regions as well as Masvingo and Manicaland and Midlands,” Ngoro added. ■

11 APRIL 2023

Health care Workers Condemn Plan to Criminalize Foreign Recruiters

Health care workers in Zimbabwe have condemned the government's plan to criminalize their recruitment to work in other countries as part of efforts to reduce a medical brain drain. Zimbabwe's vice president and health minister, Constantino Chiwenga, said the country will introduce a law to make it illegal for foreign nations to hire their health care workers. - [Nehanda Radio](#) ■

Health Experts Fret Over Cholera Resurgence

Health experts have expressed concern over the resurgence in cholera cases, which they blame on poor sanitation and a lack of long-term planning for water supplies in urban areas.

Community Working Group on Health (CWGH) executive director Itai Rusike said cholera will continue to wreak havoc until there is a long-term plan on water sanitation and hygiene intervention. - [NewsDay](#) ■

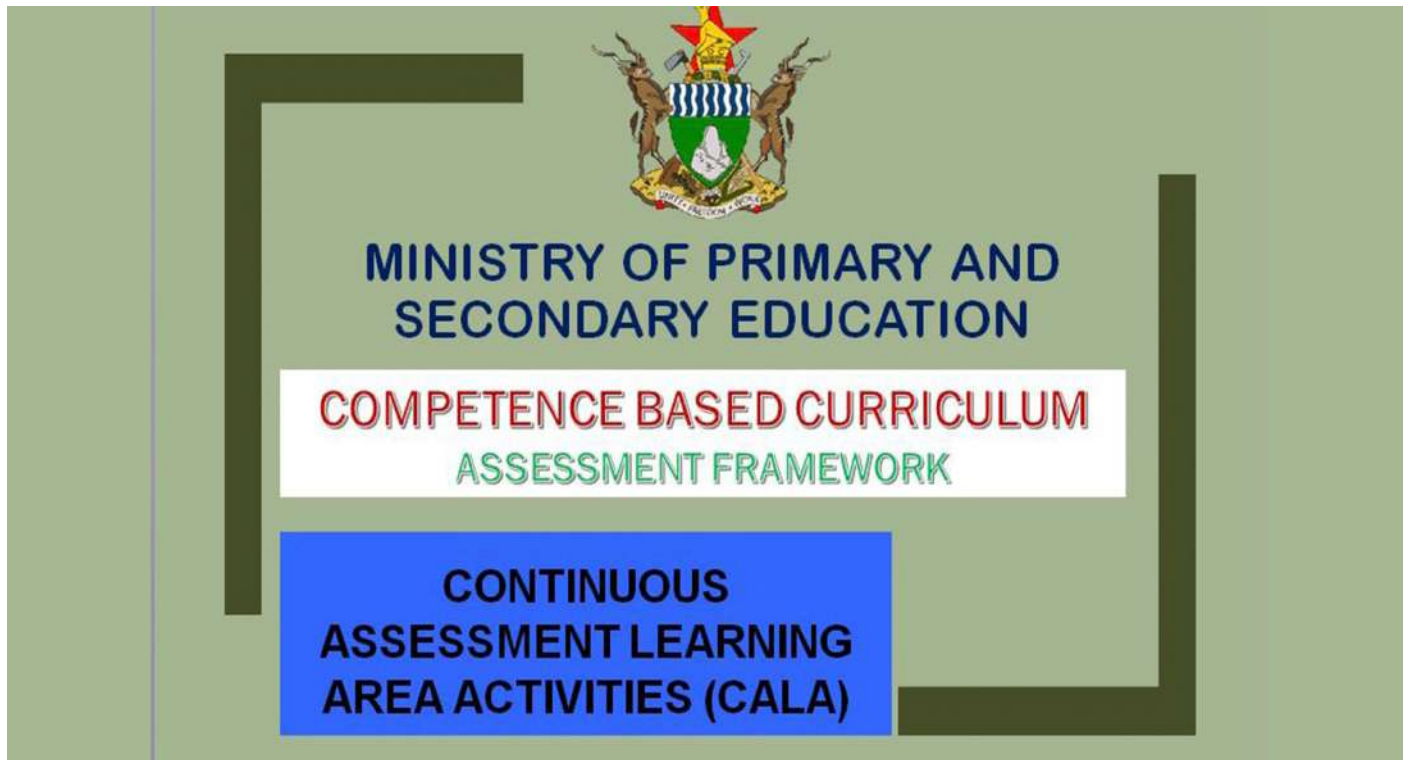
Bulawayo Endorses Policy to Punish Litterbugs

The local authority recently endorsed an anti-littering policy, which comes into effect immediately and which will see a strict enforcement of anti-littering by laws among other interventions. The policy come at a time the Bulawayo City Council (BCC) has been struggling to contain litter in the Central Business District (CBD), a situation that resulted in the suspension of the director of health services, Dr Edwin Sibanda. - [The Sunday News](#) ■

Zimbabwe's Dilemma as RBZ also fingered in Gold Mafia Scandal

Government faces fresh dilemma on how to handle the gold smuggling and money laundering scandal exposed in a corruption busting Al Jazeera documentary after the central bank has also been fingered in the embarrassing crimes. - [ZimLive](#) ■

GWANDA



Project-based Learning A Burden To Underserved Pupils In Matabeleland

In Matabeleland, pupils are finding it hard to cope with Zimbabwe's new project-based learning curriculum. Existing socio-economic factors are worsening the situation.

by Melody Mpande | @The_CBNews

Brighton Tshuma (16), a pupil at Shale High School in Umzingwane, Matabeleland South, is failing to balance between reading for exams, attending lessons and doing his Continuous Assessment Learning Activities (CALA).

"Balancing these three at the same time is very difficult to the extent that I have to miss lessons to do the projects. There's no way I can pass."

Brighton Tshuma, 16-year-old pupil

He says CALA is an unnecessary work overload.

CALA is a continuous student assessment

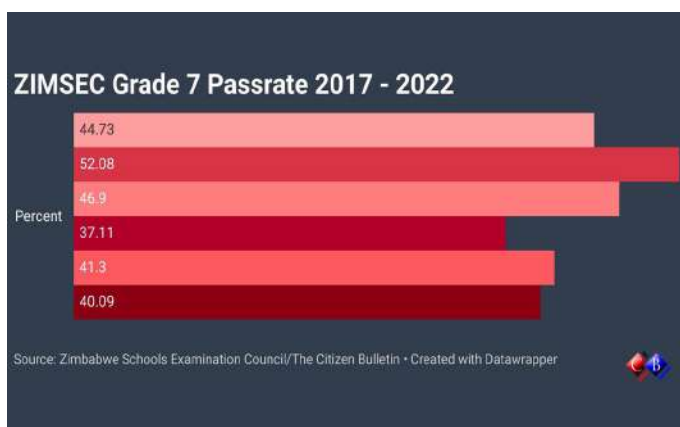
system that was introduced in 2015 by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE).

It requires learners to perform, demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and proficiency in specific subjects. Under CALA, candidates who excel obtain a total of 30 marks before sitting for public examinations.

A [report](#) titled “Effectiveness of Continuous Assessment Learning Activities By Secondary Schools in Nyanga District, Zimbabwe”, published in 2021, shows that in most schools, both teachers and pupils have stopped teaching and learning respectively to focus on CALA.

“The cumulative effect of CALA in rural schools is that teachers have stopped teaching while learners have stopped learning in schools in order to focus on the defective CALA projects”, the report says.

Leon Maphosa(16), a Form Four pupil at Simbumbumbu High School deep in Magumpo village, Gwanda North, says poor internet connectivity and exorbitant data costs poses new challenges for him.



Data compiled by The Citizen Bulletin shows that Ndoro’s claims are half true.

Maphosa needs the internet to conduct research for his CALA school work, but there is none at his school.

“With just a few textbooks in my possession

for research, I always submit below standard work and fail,” says Maphosa.

Without internet access due to poor network connectivity, Maphosa and other learners at Simbumbumbu are finding it difficult to implement CALA.

“With no internet connectivity, and limited access to Information Communication Technology (ICT) gadgets for CALA research, pupils are disadvantaged and falling behind academically,” says Thobekani Nxumalo*, an SDC committee member of Simbumbumbu High School who preferred to use a pseudonym for fear of reprisals.

As we [reported recently](#), in Matabeleland, poor signal or ICT infrastructure deficit makes e-learning difficult for most underserved pupils.

Nxumalo says that while learning experiences in rural and urban areas are certainly not the same, CALA has piled more woes on rural learners.

“Unlike in urban areas, our learners in Simbumbumbu have no physical library or internet connection to access online libraries, hence they perform badly in their final exams,” says Nxumalo*.

Educationist and President of Zimbabwe National Educators’ Union (ZINEU), Malvin Dube, says the introduction of CALA has widened the gap between rural and urban learners.

In areas such as Magumpo village, there is poor network coverage making any effort to undertake CALA a pipedream.

“There are areas where one has to climb a mountain to get cellular connection. Pupils

from those areas are not excluded from CALA,” Dube says.

Taungana Ndoro, spokesperson for the Education Ministry insists that CALA has promoted quality of education even in rural areas.

“Rural learners respond very well. The positives have shown themselves in the way the Grade 7 and O’Level results surpassed the previous years,” Ndoro says.

According to Ndoro, the effectiveness of CALA is proven by the 2.62 percent pass rate increase in the 2022 Ordinary Level results compared to the previous year.

However public data compiled by *The Citizen Bulletin* shows that pass rates have always been fluctuating way before the introduction of CALA.

Children and parents alike find CALA daunting.

Sibangilizwe Ndlovu, 43, a parent of a grade 7 pupil at Jahunda Primary School in Gwanda says CALA is financially demanding.

A snap survey carried out by The Citizen Bulletin in Gwanda shows that it costs ZAR2 (less than \$0.50) to photocopy or print one picture for a CALA project.

Some projects require more than ten pictures.

“...there’s printing and photocopying which demands money that I don’t have. The CALA programme is for the rich,” says Ndlovu.

Another parent of a Grade Seven Pupil at Samlodi Primary School, Nesisa Maphosa, 36, says she is now forced to do CALA assignments for her daughter.

“She copies and pastes. CALA is of no use to her. She submits my work with just her name

on it,” says Maphosa.

Apart from connectivity challenges in remote schools, Maphosa says there is no electricity at Samlodi Primary School.

However, Jahunda Primary School Development Committee Chairperson Akimu Mpofu says poverty is no excuse to condemn CALA.

“We have gone digital,” Mpofu says.

“We are living in the 21st century where most things are done electronically. Parents should stop the negativity and support their children.”

The CALA initiative would have been more effective had parents been properly informed about it before its launch, says Victor Madzinga, a retired lecturer at Zimbabwe Open University.

“That on its own doesn’t reflect the performance and progress of the child but instead it reflects the progress of parents,” says Madzinga.

When the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, rural schools did not have access to the internet for distance learning, says the president of Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe, Obert Masaraure.

And CALA made it worse, he adds.

“COVID-19 presented an unprecedented challenge to the CALA system, exposing the lack of forward planning and disrupted the learning process, leaving students unprepared even for the ZIMSEC examinations,” a [2021 UNICEF report](#) says. ■



Remote Schools Hamper Learning in Matabeleland

For students in Matabeleland, attending school is a struggle. With fewer schools per ward, many must walk long distances just to reach the nearest one.

by Lynnina Ngwenya | @The_CBNews

Siphethokuhle Zulu, a resident of Dwala village in Gwanda, is a concerned parent who fears that her son's dreams may be shattered.

Located in Ward 23, a resettlement area, Mabheka is the only secondary school available to six villages within a 30-kilometer radius.

"My son dropped out of school when he was thirteen years old," Zulu says.

"He only attended secondary level for one term. He dropped out due to the long distance as he had to endure a

more than 20 kilometre journey every single day to Mabheka."

Siphethokuhle Zulu, Dwala villager

According to Ward 23 Councilor Mthokozisi Tshuma, a single secondary school is insufficient to serve the needs of the entire ward.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) 2021 [report](#), Matabeleland South is one of several provinces where a significant proportion of learners fail to complete their studies due to various factors, including poverty.

“Most of the out-of-school children reside in rural areas, varying from 72 per cent in upper secondary to 89 per cent in lower secondary. More than two thirds of the children who do not complete an education level reside in rural areas,” the report says.

Sikanyisiwe Nkomo, the Ward 23 Councillor for Insiza Rural District, says children in the ward are at risk of sexual abuse and other criminal acts when they have to travel long distances through rural areas to reach school.

“In the advent of Mabhambadzi (robbers who carry dangerous weapons), we fear that children will be raped or even killed. Many of them end up dropping out of school,” Nkomo says.

Nkomo notes that students from Debshan, Moffat, Fula, Thornville, and Fountain Farms must travel at least 10 to 12 kilometers to reach the nearest school, Shangani Secondary, located in Ward 22.

“We need a secondary school in our ward,” Nkomo adds.

According to Matabeleland South legislator Siphso Mokone, the central government has neglected the province.

“The situation has gone like this for quite some time now yet the province is very rich in natural resources like gold and lithium among others.”

Siphso Mokone, Matabeleland South legislator

Mokone says fully implementing devolution may be the solution to address the neglect.

“That’s the reason why we are much concerned about the concept of devolution,” Makone says.

The provision for devolution is included in Chapter 12 of the 2013 Constitution, which

outlines the establishment of provincial councils in each of the country’s provinces in Section 268 of the charter.

Despite the government’s approval of the principles of the Provincial Councils and Administration (Amendment) Bill, there is no enabling act to operationalize devolution to date.

“I don’t think the situation will improve anytime soon because the government keeps on giving empty promises on the issue of additional schools. In fact, the ones that are there now are even dilapidated.”

While some parents rent accommodations near their children’s schools to reduce the walking distance, not everyone can afford it, particularly the majority who are peasant farmers.

According to Ward 22 Councilor Edith Gumbo, commuting to school is financially burdensome for poor villagers.

“Hiking to Shangani Secondary costs US\$1 a single trip, meaning one may need at least US\$50 per month,” Gumbo says.

The Citizen Bulletin has [reported](#) about how communities in Lupane, Matabeleland North, united to overcome challenges related to remote schools.

According to Mokone, good results and good infrastructure are interwoven.

The Citizen Bulletin analyzed public data and found that for the past two years, the overall provincial pass rate for Ordinary level examinations in Matabeleland South has not exceeded 50%, which parents find concerning.

Matabeleland South recorded a pass rate of 28.16% in Ordinary level examinations in 2021, which slightly increased to 28.40% in 2022.

The districts with the lowest results were Bulilima, Gwanda, Insiza, Matobo, and Umzingwane.

According to Matabeleland South Provincial Education Director (PED) Beatrice Manjere, there is a pressing need for more schools in the province.

“There is a need for more nearby schools,” Manjere says.

“There is a need for local leaders to pass resolutions through council meetings to achieve that.”

Manjere says she once met pupils from Mabheka Secondary School still walking along the Beitbridge-Gwanda road to their homes at around 7 pm.

Pretty Nleya*, a pupil at Bezu Secondary in Bulilima says she and her peers walk 13 km from Mbila village to their school in Bezu.

“We leave home at 04:30 am and come back at 8 pm to 9 pm,” Nleya says.

Taungana Ndoro, the Director of Advocacy and Communication in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, says the shortage of schools in Matabeleland South is part of a national crisis.

He says the ministry is working on gathering resources for infrastructure, and has already started construction in some places, with the goal of targeting the whole country.

“The ministry is implementing a blended learning strategy to address the issue of long-distance travel for children,” he adds. ■



MORE LOCAL. MORE INCLUSIVE. MORE INTERACTIVE

VISION

To be the go to source of hard-hitting hyperlocal news reporting and analysis in Matabeleland.

MISSION

To produce hard-hitting journalism that informs and convenes communities of Matabeleland into empowered agents of good governance and social progress.

FOCUS AREA

- Local Government
- Public Health
- Education
- Social & Economic Justice



www.thecitizenbulletin.com



@thecitizenbulletin



@The_CBNews



+263 718 636 459



Satellite Schools: An epitome of Matabeleland's Comatose Education System

Satellite schools established in the aftermath of the country's chaotic land reform program — and later — are in dire straits.

by Melody Mpande | @The_CBNews

Creepy, resembling an abandoned village homestead, it is perhaps the most tumbledown building.

This old and dilapidated block depicts a former cattle ranching farmhouse with precariously cracked walls, blown off zinc sheets, broken doors and window panes, and dusty floors.

Still, it serves as a primary school for the people of Dwala, a marginalized community in Gwanda, Matabeleland South.

“The infrastructure is bad, this is not an ideal learning environment,” says an 11-year-old Grade 5 Dwala Primary School pupil who cannot be named for ethical reasons.

“It’s raining these days and the roof leaks. We all squash in one corner to avoid water dripping from the falling cylinder in other parts of the classroom,” adds the pupil who spoke to *The Citizen Bulletin* with parental consent.

The Citizen Bulletin visited the school and

made a glaring discovery: There is nothing resembling a school on this set except some cluttered classroom chairs.

Learners from different grades attend lessons in the same farmhouse, except kindergarten pupils who attend theirs under trees.

The lounge accommodates grades 5, 6 and 7, with each grade occupying its own corner.

Grades 3 and 4 share a kitchen, grades 1 and 2 share a garage, while the remaining rooms - four bedrooms - serve as accommodation for eight teachers.

This is not an isolated case as thousands of learners attend ill-equipped satellite schools across Matabeleland. The schools were established during the chaotic [land reform program](#) of 2000, and later to address a rising shortage of schools across the country.

According to a [2021 report](#) by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Zimbabwe has at least 1900 registered satellite schools. The greater region of Matabeleland which comprises Matabeleland North, Bulawayo and Matabeleland South has a total of 349 satellite schools.

Matabeleland North has a total of 223 satellite schools, while Matabeleland South and Bulawayo have a total of 110 and 16 satellite schools respectively, [official government data](#) analyzed by *The Citizen Bulletin* shows.

Dwala primary has an estimated enrollment of 300 students and reels from an abject shortage of almost everything except pupils, says Ward 23 Councilor Mthokozisi Tshuma.

“Having a single class with four different grades is a disaster on its own. A pupil can’t concentrate in a class where four teachers teach different subjects at the same time in the same room.”

In its [latest report](#), the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education says rural schools, especially satellite ones and those in underserved communities, remain in poor condition.

However, Taungana Ndoro, spokesperson for the Education Ministry, says satellite schools provide quality education just like mainstream ones.

“They provide quality education already,” Ndoro told *The Citizen Bulletin* via [WhatsApp](#).

But several independent reports on public education gleaned by *The Citizen Bulletin* show that satellite schools, across the country, Matabeleland included, are in dire straits.

Satellite schools have precipitated educational injustices and inequitable access to education, says Pfurai Chimhunde in his [2021 study](#) on the emergency of satellite schools and access to education in Zimbabwe.

“Satellite schools suffer from squalid infrastructure, acute shortage of resources, rampant school dropouts and general shortage of classrooms and teaching staff,” Pfurai says.

Asnap survey conducted by *The Citizen Bulletin* in Matabeleland South shows that primary schools such as Dwala, Mashura, Dryhook and Riverblock in Gwanda district and Ghovha in Beitbridge district, are hit particularly hard by a lack of basic infrastructure to support quality education.

Matabeleland North also faces the same problem. For example, satellite schools in Bubi, Enaleni Primary, Emhlabathini Primary and Emkhonyeni Primary are ill-equipped and struggle to meet basic standards for a conducive learning environment.

A [study titled](#) “Education on the edges: Reflection on satellite schools in Binga

District” by Laison Mwiinde and Taruvinga Muzingili shines a light on shortcomings of satellite schools in Matabeleland North.

A public education pundit, [Benny Moyo](#), says teachers are not keen to work in Matabeleland because of poor infrastructure, bad roads, and lack of access to reliable sources of water in local schools.

“All that affects children. We get the worst of teachers as the best leave,” says Moyo.

“We need a deliberate affirmative action policy which targets Matabeleland in terms of infrastructure, deployment of learning material, recruitment and deployment of teachers that are based and equipped to work in the region.”

When the [COVID-19 pandemic](#) emerged, poor infrastructure and lack of classrooms in satellite schools was laid bare.

Tshuma says classroom shortages in ill-equipped schools such as Dwala made it difficult for children to follow COVID-19 measures such as social distancing.

“With three fully packed classrooms, there was no way social distancing could be practiced,” says Tshuma.

Nonhlanhla Sibanda, a 33-year-old parent, says Dwala Primary School is not suitable for her child, but she has no other choice.

“I wish to transfer my child, but I can’t afford anything else other than Dwala Primary School,” Sibanda says.

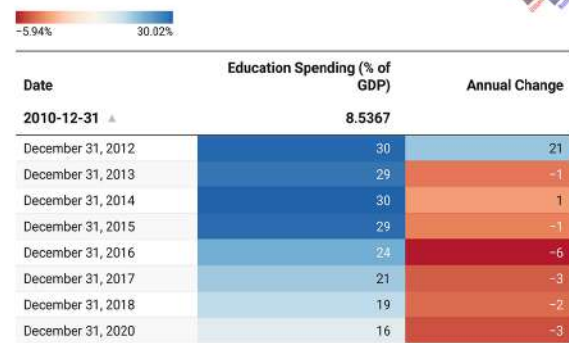
Tuition for a single term costs ZAR300 (\$US17), according to Dwala Primary School Development Committee Chairperson,

Clifford Masevedze.

But most parents cannot afford the fees because of poverty, Masevedze says.

“Out of over 300 pupils, only 10% can afford to pay fees, and we can’t even think of infrastructure development.”

Zimbabwe Education Spending from 2010 - 2020



Data Source: World Bank

Over the years, the central government’s funding on public education has been fluctuating.

Since 2010, the central government’s spending on education has been fluctuating with only 9 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) spent in that year. In 2012 and 2014, the central government spent at least 30 percent of its Gross Domestic Product on education. However, this dropped to 16 percent in the year 2020, [public data](#) shows.

Data on education spending for the year 2021 and 2022 has not yet been made public. However, in the [2023 national budget](#), the central government promised to fund the education sector with ZW\$787,8 billion (US\$1,2 billion). Of this lump sum, ZW\$631,3 billion (US\$976 million) was allocated to primary and secondary education.

Sibongisiwe Banda says despite an 18,5% budget increase for public education for 2023, there is no positive change she hopes to see given that there is no clear government policy to fund public schools in underserved communities such as Dwala.

“The government has failed us,” says Banda, a 27-year-old mother of a Grade 3 pupil at Dwala Primary School. ■

FROM THE WEB



Cllr Skhue @SkhuMoyoWard17
@skhumoyoward17

Izakhamizi zikaWard 17 ezigqela u zone 3, zone 2 (library section) and Zaoga section zone 2 B zithethe isikhathi sokucithiza amadundulu enhlabathi emigwaqweni etshiyeneyo @CityofBulawayo @byopra @citezw @Bulawayo24News @bonganinkunzi

Translate Tweet



#byovendors
@bvtatrust

Nkulumane Fresh Produce Wholesale Market opening soon. We applaud the Urban Resilience Safe markets project implemented by @bvtatrust @CityofBulawayo and @DanChurchAidZW supported by @UNDPZimbabwe @mdladaspeaks @wildtrustzim @citezw @zcieazim @visetinfo @bakie2008 @byopra



Hwange Local Board
@hwangetown

COMING SOON...the state-of-the-art Empumalanga Community Library, a PPP arrangement between Hwange Local Board and South Mining Pvt Ltd @HwangeResidents @molokele @LyejaFM @MoPSEZim @InfoMinZW @ZimGvt_NDS1 @RutendoMapfumo @ChronicleZim @mhtestd @communitypodium @UcazOfficial



OpenCouncilHRE
@OpenCouncilHRE

Bulawayo has a US\$60 million skeleton mall that is failing to come to life. How long do we need to wait since 2016? @OpenParlyZw



opencouncil.co.zw
The Story of Bulawayo's US\$60m Skeleton

PICTURE OF THE WEEK

The Citizen Bulletin is doing more than just community storytelling. Please send us great pictures which are inline with our reporting themes from and around Matabeleland and Bulawayo.



11 APRIL 2023

Without ICT Infrastructure, In Binga E-learning Is Just A Pipe Dream

Students in parts of Binga and other areas in Matabeleland North are falling behind due to a lack of Information Communication Technologies infrastructure for e-learning which forms part of the country's updated education curriculum.

by Calvin Manika | @The_CBNews

Antonia Sibanda (35), a villager from Luunga area in Binga, Matabeleland North, is frustrated that the digital divide has seen learners from the district missing out on e-learning due to lack of an enabling telecommunications infrastructure.

“Learning is changing; people now talk about CALAs but it’s clear that our kids are not really engaged in these activities because of poor telecommunication connectivity,” Sibanda says.

Sibanda was referring to the Continuous Assessment Learning Activities (CALA), a new curriculum assessment model that requires learners to conduct research based activities to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and proficiency in a specific subject.

Without Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), learners in Luunga Ward, situated close to the Nsengwa River, and which serves as the provincial border between Mashonaland West and Matabeleland North, are lagging behind on CALA, a key component of the country's Education 5.0 strategy.

A contemporary ICT-based curriculum is incorporated into the current primary and secondary education strategy. The education 5.0 approach combines Research, Teaching, Community Service, Innovation, and Industrialization in order to prepare learners to find solutions using local resources and enable development without importing expert knowledge.

Located 42 kilometers from Siabuwa community and 142 kilometers from Binga District, Luunga Ward is well served by Econet and Netone networks.

However, the absence of cell phone repeaters, generally referred to as boosters, prevents locals from connecting with the outside world, resulting in an information gap between rural and urban learners.

“

The Ministry in charge of ICTs must have traveled around the nation to ensure that every village is networked and connected.

Antonio Sibanda, a villager

”

In order to understand the causes of the digital divide in e-learning, *The Citizen Bulletin* conducted community listening sessions. The newsroom learnt that there is a lack of ICT infrastructure in the area and the wherewithal to invest in such by government authorities and big companies running telecommunications in the country.

Nkululeko Mlotshwa, a parent, says lack of ICT infrastructure contributes to poor standards of education in Binga and other parts of Matabeleland.

Lack of ICTs in local schools contributes to poor grades and general education standards, Mlotshwa says.

“It’s nearly impossible to do CALA projects without ICTs, which is why learners score poor marks.”

The use of technology is also inaccessible to parents who are supposed to assist their children with their CALA projects, says Mlotshwa.

A rural development expert, Trust Dhlwayo, says the Luunga community will be able to benefit from connectivity and participate in the global economy if there is deliberate investment in ICT infrastructure in marginalized areas such as Binga.

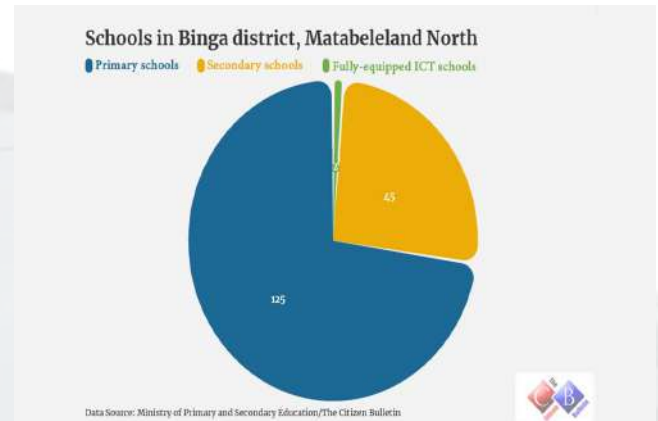
“Schools must be connected (to the internet) in order for them to provide quality education, but (in Binga) they are not, and that’s unfortunate.”

According to official data from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Binga District has 125 primary schools and 45 secondary schools.

Two of the schools have fully-equipped ICT centers. These are Binga High School

and Bunsiswa Primary School which received support to set up e-learning infrastructure from NetOne, a state-owned telecommunications company.

Other schools have computers but do not have internet connection.



In Binga, only two schools are fully equipped for e-learning.

Our [recent story](#), which is part of the *State of Education in Matabeleland* reporting series supported by the [Pulitzer Centre](#), uncovered the challenges faced by underserved schools across Matabeleland.

Villagers affected by the connectivity issues believe the central government deliberately sidelines them. Zimbabwe has a centralized system of government that relies mostly on a top-down approach to local development.

Dubeko Ndlovu, a villager, says they are tired of false promises from central government officials.

Ndlovu says politicians often make promises to connect Binga to the outside world during elections, but fail to deliver once elected into public office.

“Last year there was a by-election and the

President (Emmerson Mnangagwa) came here with his entourage of ministers,” Ndlovu says.

“He later came back again and people reported these issues, for instance to the ruling party candidate anticipating that his closeness to the center of power would help. However, nothing was done.”

According to data released by the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (Zimsec), the majority of schools in Binga recorded a zero pass rate in the final 2022 Ordinary Level examinations.

Schools that recorded a zero pass rate include Chisiza, Gwatagwata, Manyanda, Katete, Lubanda, Saba, Zambezi, and Zumanana secondary schools. Secondary schools in Simbala, Msenampongo, Sinampande, Siabindi, Nakaluba, Chasamba, Muchesu, Sinakomba, Masibitha, and Ntivule also did not record any passes either.

Unions representing teachers said the state of education in Binga was not surprising because schools in that area lack basic infrastructure and ICT resources.

“

75% of elementary schools
and 65% of secondary
schools in rural areas lack
electricity or other forms
of backup power at a time
when the government
has made computers a
requirement for the new

curriculum.

Takavafira Zhou, president of the
Progressive Teachers Union of Zimbabwe

”

He adds: “Essentially, requiring ICT in schools when institutions have no intention of putting it into practice or making it a reality is a perverse strategy.”

According to Elvis Makoni, an assistant researcher in ICT and Rural Development at Campaigning for Female Education (CAMFED), the central government needs to ensure network coverage in all rural areas to promote e-learning.

According to the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (Potraz), more than 1000 computer labs were constructed in educational institutions country-wide in 2022.

Wonder Mutale, one of the village heads in Luunga ward is pessimistic and feels Binga is far from adopting e-learning.

“We have tried for years to interact with government representatives, especially when they come to Siabuwa or Binga Centre. However, we are always told that everything will be resolved and it ends there,” Mutale says. ■



MORE LOCAL. MORE INCLUSIVE. MORE INTERACTIVE

SUPPORT LOCAL NEWS. BUILD YOUR COMMUNITY

“

We deliver hard-hitting reporting and analysis which empowers our readers to be agents of good governance and social progress.

”



+263 718 636 459

**JOIN OUR WHATSAPP
BROADCAST LIST TO RECEIVE
OUR HARD HITTING STORIES**



www.thecitizenbulletin.com