

Community Impact Case Study FY21

Teach For Zimbabwe: Strengthening partnership between caregivers, students and teachers to support resilience

Teach For Zimbabwe has placed 15 fellows in the town of Chiredzi and 15 in Mutoko. They have delivered 300 gadgets to each of the two communities to facilitate digital learning during the pandemic, and have worked with 200 parents and caregivers in Chiredzi and Mutoko to strengthen the coherence of the support given by teachers and parents to students in the two communities.



The Basics

67.76% of Zimbabweans live in marginalized rural areas where women and children are living outside of the twenty-first century, disconnected from the digital world and separated from modern social and economic structures by lack of access to proper infrastructure and facilities. Typically parents and caregivers in rural setups are not actively involved in the education of their own children as many lack basic or higher education themselves. A year into the placement of fellows, Teach For Zimbabwe has placed 15 fellows in Chiredzi and 15 fellows Mutoko, both of which are in marginalized rural areas, with another 40 to be placed in the two regions in January 2022.

The Approach

Teach For Zimbabwe is mobilizing fellows in their first and second years as teachers to work closely with parents and caregivers in the rural communities of Chiredzi and Mutoko, building on their existing strengths in

supporting the development of their own children by building their capacity to deliberately support their children's cognitive, emotional, moral, physical and motivational development.

The Choices

Teach For Zimbabwe's aim is to strengthen school participation, raise the quality of education and grow the literacy and digital literacy of learners, communities and educators in rural communities. To that end they are making specific choices about partnering closely with parents and caregivers in their placement communities:

- 1** TFZ trains its fellows to work closely with parents and caregivers, ensuring they are not left out, but are brought 'inside' the classroom as teachers and co-creators of education. This has involved building trust through relationship-building and also building a module that defines the role that parents can play and provides a model for building their capacity to do so.
- 2** Instead of telling parents what to do, TFZ created a module that parents could work through and come up with their own view of which aspect of education to support their child on. The aim is to leverage the assets of the community, for example in building a chicken run together, playing games to motivate the child, doing art or traditional crafts, or selling at the market to learn about finances
- 3** In this effort, fellows have been key. Fellows and TFZ work in partnership to convene parents, and the same partnership worked to develop the caregiver module, with fellows at the forefront of working with caregivers and parents.

The Impact

So far TFZ fellows have worked with 200 parents in both Chiredzi and Mutoko In addition they have provided 300 gadgets to each of the communities to support the continuity of learning during school closures over the past year, as well as continuing some of the parent and caregiver trainings virtually.

The Insights

- Spending time understanding the context is crucial and involves listening and learning about the demographics, the learners, the parents, the local community, civic and government leadership
- Shifting mindsets of parents is a key lever for change as many of them are school dropouts who don't access the digital world
- Relationships are the key to shifting those mindsets as it is through personal relationships that parents begin to trust in the role they can play to support the development of the community's children
- Moving away from an idea of hero leadership in which the teacher takes care of all of the issues that face children through their efforts within the classroom

- Securing buy-in from the local community and local government is also key, as it is necessary to engage with the government stakeholders so they can understand why parents should be involved
- Patience and empathy are required as parents may not even know the most basic things – downloading Zoom, using the play store, and need to take it one step at a time – or there may be a clash of values