

## **Building Education in South Africa: Brick by Brick**

The children of the Intabazwe community in Harrismith, South Africa, ages 0-8 years old, have been attending school in a tin building that is crumbling. This flaky tin classroom building is barely left standing, as the average wind speed during Harrismith's windiest month of the year is 9.8 mph, with gusts up to 15.6 mph. Shivering and worried that the roof above their heads could collapse on them at any second, the children of Harrismith risk their lives to simply sit in the classroom.

Each year, our program's teacher sponsors ask the adults of this community what type of projects and services they would like to have accomplished; this year, their response was to have the previous tin school building taken down and to replace it with a sustainable concrete infrastructure instead. If built correctly, tin buildings are expected to last for about 30-50 years; concrete buildings, on the other hand, are designed to last between 50-100 years. These concrete classrooms would offer stability and durability to provide these children a fortified structure, ultimately improving not just their safety, but their academic achievement as well. The majority of these schoolchildren are under the age of five, and the first five years of life are most crucial for social, emotional, and cognitive learning development - these students should have the opportunity to learn how to count, not learn in hazardous walls flailing around. My individual service project aims to meet the people of Harrismith's vocalized needs by building sustainability so that these children can focus on their education and learning, rather than worrying about their health and safety.

My name is Brianna Guinigundo and I am a student at the University of Central Florida eager to make a difference. It is my goal to help bring sustainable classrooms to the children in Harrismith, South Africa to provide them a safe physical environment to learn in. There are several hundred children present in Harrismith dreaming of attending a safe school; to accommodate this larger population, the best way to conduct this project would be to have two classrooms within this building, one room for the younger children and one for the older students. To do this, the price for the various components that go into constructing a school building are approximately \$6,000 USD as this includes the cement walls, mortar, flooring, roofing, electricity, doors, windows, and labor being the main components. It is important to note that the conversion rate between South Africa and the U.S. is 0.053 USD for 1 South African Rand, so the American dollar here goes a long way in South Africa. These next few weeks until mid-March are critical for us to fundraise, as every contribution goes solely to funding these service projects.

During this upcoming May of 2024, my eight other classmates and I will implement our individual service projects together in South Africa. This experience not only provides us an opportunity to practice leadership in a group setting, but it also gives us a chance to promote education and sustainability. With your generous contribution, you would be helping us produce a building made for learning that will outlast us, providing a safe environment and shelter for generations of children to grow and thrive. It would be a great honor to have your support to help my classmates and I create a life-changing difference for the people of South Africa.

Sincerely,

Brianna Guinigundo