

Zambia Newsletter July 2026

Hello family and friends,

Summer greetings to each of you!

Zambian schools will wrap up Term 2 on Friday, July 31st. Following this, there will be a federal election on August 13th. As in Canada, many schools, including those supported by ZMFC, will be used as polling stations and teachers can earn a bit of income by working as polling officials. The current President, Hakiende Hichelma or "H.H." as he is most often referred to, is hoping to be re-elected for a second term and is expected to win. He has an MBA in finance and business strategy from the UK and chooses not to accept a salary for his role as President. All this bodes well for the leader of a country rich in natural resources yet still lacking in rural health care and rural education. He has a big ship to turn.

Sometimes we are asked about the current prevalence of HIV infection in Zambia, ditto malaria and maternal mortality. Stats vary from place to place, but overall, the HIV infection rate is 11% of the population between ages 15 and older, and the leading cause of death remains HIV/AIDS. Life expectancy has risen to 66 years, which still seems young to me...

Malaria infection rates in Southern Province are currently quite low, due to a concerted effort to prevent, test and treat quickly. In fact, we tell people that the best place to get malaria is in Zambia, where testing takes 15 to 20 minutes and treatment is readily available. Malaria infection has dropped 95% due to these initiatives. In the town of Choma, not far from where we stay, is Macha Mission Hospital which partners with Johns Hopkins Malaria Research Center in the United States. Current information is in this article:

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/2026/07/malaria-research-funding-cuts-missions-zambia-nih/> We are very thankful for the research they have done and the much lower risk of contracting malaria.

Good news prevails in maternal mortality as well. At Namwianga Christian Hospital, a few miles from our lodging in Zambia, there is a mother's shelter, delivery room, and an operating theatre which is mainly used for caesarian deliveries. When a woman living in a rural area is roughly 8 months into her pregnancy, she is supposed to move to a woman's shelter near to a hospital. A woman's shelter provides a bed and an outdoor cooking area, and when contractions begin, the distance to the delivery ward at the hospital is a few hundred feet. A woman's shelter is comfortable and close -- no privacy but lots of other pregnant women to talk to while you wait! In fact, we are told that if a husband does not bring his wife to a shelter prior to delivery, he can be fined. If a caesarian delivery is needed, at the Namwianga Hospital it is available right away. We are relieved and grateful to know this resource is now in place and are proud of Shepherd Mbumwae who has worked as the administrator for close to 20 years and overseen this development.

These are some current snapshots of health issues which impact the families of pupils at the schools we support. There remains a big gap in rural health care overall, but malaria is no longer the threat it once was, and the risk of a woman dying during childbirth greatly reduced. Thank you Lord.

WhatsApp continues to provide us with the opportunity to be a “fly on the wall” as various group threads converse. We are aware of school meetings, school attendance, illnesses (right now it is winter in Zambia and flu bugs are keeping many at home), and other issues. Daily we are treated to photos of the lunch program. During the FIFA games the “Alumni” thread was buzzing with comments from former sponsored students who speculated on winners and cheered for African teams until the last one was defeated. Ruhtt, who is from Peru, bucked the trend and cheered for Spanish speaking countries. I can only imagine the sparks flying in the Mbumwae living room as Shepherd and Ruhtt watched together!



On the Alumni thread we recently received a wedding photo from a former student named “Lucky Mudenda”. He was sponsored between 2011 and 2013 and now, at last, married!

Thanks to each of you for your support over the years!

Blessings,

Joan and all of us with ZMFC.

