

Subject: Zambia update and letter from Arnold Munkombwe

Dear friends,

Since our last update in which we reported the closure of schools until 2021, the President of Zambia decided it was safe to open schools for Term Three. Pupils reported back to school two weeks ago and students and teachers are scrambling to catch up. If your sponsored student(s) is in Grade 12 or in college, they returned to classes on June 1st. Now, all pupils are back in classes.

If you are supporting teachers they are also back in their classrooms. The teachers did a remarkable job of connecting with their pupils (often referred to as 'learners') during the months schools were closed. They walked (sometimes referred to as 'footing') many kilometers to connect with the children in their various villages. Their commitment to their profession has been commendable.

In Zambia the pandemic is still present though the number of cases, and deaths, remains fairly low. The same is true for some other African countries and while it is a bit of a mystery -- it is a merciful mystery.

Attached you will find another letter written by one of the teachers supported by ZMF-C: Arnold Munkombwe. I hope you enjoy Arnold's letter. He refers to himself in a very traditional Zambian manner: last name first. And, often, a first name is referenced by an initial. Quite formal!

I cannot thank you enough for your support for both the students and teachers. May God bless you and continue to keep you safe.

Blessings, Joan

My name is Munkombwe, Arnold, a Grade six (6) class teacher at Butale Christian Community School.

I have been teaching at the same school for one year and eleven months - closer to two (2) years now and have been attached to the same Butale community through the learners I have been teaching and am currently teaching. I was quick to easily associate with this community because as a teacher, it is my duty to know each and every learner's guardian in trying to help them in their classroom needs.

Born in a family of 16 children, I'm the fourth born son of Mr. Munkombwe Dickson and Luvweji, Mary and the only one who reached college level in education through self-sponsorship because my parents couldn't afford.

The sudden closure of schools in Zambia due to the corona virus disease (Covid-19) brought a lot of effects and affected the education and learning system. Most vulnerable to the pandemic are the rural learners who may have less or no access to television and radios for educational programmes.

I, Munkombwe A., as a Grade 6 class teacher could not fold my hands and stand idle letting the innocent souls of my class wander about with their bright and encouraging striving spirit they portrayed in the class. This had made me think of other ways of helping my learners in their different residences and localities. Though not easy because of long distances I could cover footing/walking, I had found it good for me to help my learners by following them to their different residences and localities from Monday to Friday. I have been doing this from the second week after a sudden closure of schools in March 2020. In some cases, I could cover more than 6 kilometer distances footing to teach a group of 7 learners and I have since made 4 groups from a total number of 28 learners in Grade 6 class. These groups of learners meet in different localities in different days of a week.

Though not easy with the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic and because of some government directives, restrictions and guidelines which we all need to abide to stay safe from the disease, I am still able to attend to my Grade 6 learners in different days of every week and promise to continue doing the same until the situation is normalized.

With great support from some of the community members, this has made my teaching in their localities easier because many parents have supported the move by allowing their children to attend group teaching and learning in their localities so that their children may not be left behind and in relation to the Zambian syllabus.

All in all and with my heartfelt gratitude, I wish to thank ZMF-C for their great support throughout and even in such times when there is an outbreak of the corona virus. May the Almighty God continue to bless all the donors and every member of ZMF-C.