



Claire Robinson

News from Zambia

Prayer & Newsletter March 2011

The Zambian Education system

During my first six months in Zambia I have been learning about the Education system here and wanted to share this in turn with you.

It is the desire of the Zambian government that lack of finances should not be a barrier to education. Consequently education in a government school, otherwise known as a 'Basic School', is funded by the government for children in grades 1-7. The parents of the children may be asked for something towards building funds but this is usually minimal. (Mukinge Basic asks for K5000 per child per year, the equivalent of about 65p.) Sadly, despite this provision by the government, some children are still not sent to school if the parents feel they are needed at home.

At the end of grade 7, children sit exams and these determine where the children go to school from grades eight to twelve. In the Kasempa area children attaining high standards will go to Mukinge Girls, Kasempa Boys or Kasempa Day school (co-educational). Mukinge Girls and Kasempa Boys are both boarding schools. The



41 Grade 3-5 pupils squeezed into one classroom!

Girls' school was formerly staffed by SIM missionaries but now the majority of teachers are Zambian. If children do not receive high enough grades to enter these schools, they may stay at the Basic school until further exams are taken at the end of grade 9.

Grade 12 exams are taken in November with results at the end of February. Unfortunately the timing of results is such that the students are unable to enroll at university or vocational training schools until the following year. Regrettably, as temporary employment is hard to find, this can be a difficult year for the young students to remain focused and stay out of trouble. Many girls end up falling pregnant which makes it harder to pursue further education.



Mukinge Basic Grade 1s. In absence of a school bag bread & sweet packets hold their books.

Mukinge Hill Academy

By contrast M.H.A. is a private school governed by the Evangelical Church in Zambia (E.C.Z.). It was founded initially to serve Mukinge Mission station, by providing quality education to attract staff with young families to the mission and to educate children of E.C.Z. workers. Entrance is now extended to those who can afford the fees and the school has grown to 80 pupils.



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The foundation slab for the new two block classroom

Challenges and opportunities

As a private school, fees of approximately £50 per term are charged. For some families this calls for sacrifice in order to give their child the opportunity of a good education, especially if they have more than one child. It is difficult for families to save money for the fees - culturally if an extended family member comes to stay, they must be provided for and return transportation paid or if a family funeral arises the saved money will be expected to cover expenses. This presents a challenge for the families and for us in collecting fees on time each half term.

Having 80 young people to guide and inspire is a privilege and to have the opportunity to openly teach them from God's word in assembly each day provides a wonderful opportunity for them to form a personal relationship with Jesus.

Growing numbers of children in the school also present challenges. In Grade 3-5 the Accelerated Christian Education (A.C.E.) Curriculum is used in teaching R.E., Social Studies, Science and English. This curriculum worked well when numbers in the school were smaller but as the scheme requires a lot of one-to-one teaching it becomes increasingly difficult to manage with large classes. To assist we employ helpers, mainly grade 12 graduates, in

order to help them while they wait to go to college. However, this means a high turn over of staff and requires considerable input from the teachers in training them. It is clear that the school now needs a fourth teacher on a more permanent basis. As the school budget is not adequate to support another teacher, we are praying that a teacher may be called to serve at Mukinge with SIM.

The challenge of space!

In previous emails I wrote to you about the shortage of desks and chairs. Now we have the required furniture, I joke that I have to 'hurdle' my way round the room and I add to my collection of bruises daily!

We have the opportunity to build another two block classroom which would enable the grade 2 children to move out of the rented Sunday school room and grade 3 and 4/5 to have their own classrooms. The foundation slab was laid in November and Noel from New Zealand who oversaw this is willing to return to see the project to completion – if we have the funds!

To bring the building from slab to ring beam level £7200 approx. is required and roofing expenses (yet to be calculated) would be on top of this figure.

If you are interested in taking the opportunity of donating to this project you can go to the SIM website, click 'donate' and designate the gift to my ministry account marking it M.H.A. building fund.

Personal challenges

This week I have begun my role as acting headteacher. It's a varied role from organizing management agendas, to collecting fees & paying staff, to instructing grade 1 in the proper use of toilets! I have found myself pulled in many directions while still trying to teach my classes well. However I know that the Lord who called me has also promised to equip me for the task. Knowing I have an army of prayer supporters behind me is so encouraging. Thank you and please don't stop! With much love, Claire.

Claire's Prayer Bookmark

Give thanks for...

- The access children have to education in Zambia
- Freedom to share God's word openly without fear of persecution
- My continued good Health & contentment here

Pray for ...

- Grade 12s in the interim between school & further education
- Unity & dedication in the M.H.A staff & future staffing needs
- Spiritual growth of children & staff
- God's provision of All that is needed for the new classroom block
- God's wisdom & Guidance as I seek to lead the school well & that I would find joy in the task

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Cut along dotted line and use as a bookmark

