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Back-to-School at Mitendi Primary School



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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

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Dear Ones,

It's back-to-school time for Mitendi Primary School! Lord willing, it will be our final year of squeezing 330+ primary school students into three classrooms at the Mitendi Women's Center building each day. It's amazing to think that by this time next year, our new school building will be finished, and there will be enough space to provide education for more than double the number of students we currently have!

While meeting with the primary school director, Tata Bienvenu, we looked over some photos from last year. When he saw this photo of the 4th grade girls, he said, "Oh! You don't even recognize "Sabine" (not her real name) anymore." I said, "who is Sabine?" He said, "our deaf/mute student. She's in her 4th year with us now."

Mitendi Primary School Fourth Grade Girls

How could I have forgotten her?! I only vaguely remembered Tata Bienvenu telling me the story about meeting her and her father in the nearby village and that her father begged Bienvenu to let Sabine come to school. Bienvenu explained to him that we have no expertise to meet her needs. Her father pleaded, since we are a christian school, couldn't we find some way to help her? Sabine, at that time, couldn't communicate with anyone except her father (she has no mother) and was completely isolated. Her father feared that that would be her whole life. Bienvenu, as well, couldn't bear the thought of leaving her in that state and agreed to give her a try at Mitendi Primary School.

I asked Tata Bienvenu how Sabine is doing now, 4 years later. He said they don't really understand how, but she has learned to read and write at about a 3rd grade level and can do basic math. I asked if they had used any special teaching methods with her. He said they worked with her a lot one-on-one, at first, but results were slow in coming. After that, she learned like all the other students: by observing and participating in class as much as she can. He said, though she still can't speak, if you ask her questions, she can read your lips and writes down answers. Amazing! According to Bienvenu, she's no longer isolated in her own world. She has a group of friends with whom she communicates through lip-reading and their own form of sign language. He said Sabine's friends watch out for her and they go everywhere together.

As we talked about "Sabine", it was easy to see how proud Tata Bienvenu is of the impact that Mitendi Primary School has had on her life. He mentioned how grateful he is for our scholarship program that allows "Sabine", and children like her, to go to school. I said to him that Sabine is a special case. He laughed and said that Mitendi Primary School is full of special cases. He said our children live with "unimaginable realities", but at least they are getting an education, which can transform their entire future!

Our fund-raising for the new Mitendi Primary School Building is going well. Out of the \$168,500 needed to complete the entire project (including furnishings), we've already received \$109,500! That's 65% percent of what we need. Once we reach 80%, we can begin construction. Boy, we are anxious to get started! I have faith that we'll get there, but we need all the help we can get! Please pray with us that God would touch the hearts of people to contribute to this desperately needed project. Maybe that includes you?

I'm thanking God for you all right now! It's through your prayers and financial help, in partnership with the Congolese Baptist Women, that Mitendi Primary School is able to transform the lives of children like "Sabine" and give them a chance at a real future! May God richly bless you for your sacrifices on behalf of children that you'll never know, but have reached out to in God's love.

*You can contribute to the **Mitendi Primary School Building Project** through the following link: <https://internationalministries.org/projects/255>.*

If you'd like to contribute to the **Mitendi Primary School Annual Fund** which provides scholarships for families who are unable to pay school fees, you can do so through the following link: <https://internationalministries.org/projects/257>.

Many Blessings,

Jill