

To Bill Collins & members of SHARP, Cork & Kerry

April 8th 2022

Diocese of Mongu, Western Province,
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Dear Bill,

I am sending most recent update regarding Seembwa Community School development which SHARP is helping with funds. The situation has been complicated by Covid as you can guess as well as by transport difficulties and remoteness of School. This year, post Covid, we have managed to finalise the construction arrangements of the 1x4 Classroom Block with teachers offices. This means they are now under construction with supervision of a builder and local community workers. They had already laid the foundation and moulded 4,000 cement blocks. The building is now nearing window level. I have purchased in Lusaka this week 5 door frames, 2 with security doors, and 18 window frames etc.... and will try and transport them all in vehicle to the mission. From there Seembwa Community will collect in ox-carts. We are also purchasing in Mongu 102 roofing sheets x 4.5mts. The total bill for both the above comes to approx 66,000k(approx 3,300 Euro). We recently purchased 600 cement at 90,000k(approx 4,500 Euro). The community is very happy that the project is going ahead and we have agreed to supply the workers with a daily meal prepared by local women. I will attach some recent photos.

We have continued to support the two teachers over the period of Covid etc ... they receive approximately 6,000 Zambia Kwacha per month between them(approx 300 Euro). The average teacher salary here is not much more than that - but they are happy to have the income as otherwise they are unpaid and on the Government waiting list due to surplus of teachers. They live next to the school in grass shelters – see photos. The Education Authority has been to visit the School and will eventually step in but they need to see further development eg more classroom buildings, small teacher's houses etc.... Below I include the report, Jan 2022 of Myiwa, teacher in charge. He has been there from the beginning of the Seembwa School project.

The pace of development here is slow for many reasons. They say “patience is an African virtue”. We are also working on completion of St Edmund’s Secondary School with dormitories, teachers houses, Home Economics Building etc... and when Seembwa School Block 1x4 is finished we will work on the small Maternity Unit which people have urgently requested for the area. Seembwa School will also need further development with toilets and proper sanitation, and at least another Classroom Block 1x 3.

I hope this fills in the gap – due to the virus and lockdowns of 2021. Hopefully, now life is opening up again and, please God, we, and this beautiful world of ours can find a more healthy and peaceful existence in the latter half of 2022. I hope you and your family have managed so far, Bill, and remained in good health. Our earnest prayer at present is for the people of Ukraine.

With all good wishes and prayers,

(Fr) Pat Cashin

Most recent Report January 2022

THE UNBALANCED RATIO OF TEACHERS TO PUPILS.

Seembwa community school is in need of development based on the education system as the place is full of illiterate people. The community is really trying by all means to implement development, unfortunate, they have no strong support from its government due to national financial crisis. Seembwa community school is still maintaining the two trained teachers who are temporarily employed by Fr Patrick C since 2020. The other two untrained from the local community should be dismissed from working because they cannot meet the teaching professional standard and they are not registered as teachers under the teaching council of Zambia (TCZ) as enshrined in the constitution of Zambia. The school has received so far one female teacher under teaching training being sponsored by the Zambia Open Community Schools(ZOCS) organization. Based on the ratio of pupils to teachers, three currently teachers cannot balance the equation of teaching eight grades including early childhood education (ECE) that must open with immediate effect in the coming year 2022. All government and community schools are recommended by the Ministry of Education to establish ECE as in order to prepare learners for pre-requisites learning skills and knowledge. The school is in need of three more teachers together with the three currently teachers to make the number of 6, this will at least equalize the current situation. The community is therefore, appealing to all well-wishers to help them in employing more trained teachers at this school. Due to poverty datum embarked the area as well as the nation at large, Seembwa community cannot manage to be paying trained teachers or even meeting the least of their needs.

HOW CORONA VIRUS AFFECTED SEEMBWA COMMUNITY SCHOOL.

COVID-19 has affected many lives in the world, Zambia is also part of suffering countries, this makes Seembwa community to be unexceptional. The enrolment of learners went down about 13 percent truancy and absenteeism was recorded in the previous term (term 3 of 2021) due corona virus. The school has no equipment/materials such as washing buckets and basins, hand sanitizers, and face masks for both pupils and teachers. This has resulted in the fear of spreading the virus among learners which could be extended to the entire families. Some of the families were preferring their children to be at home as a preventive measure they believed on. The other reason that contributed to the increase of truancy at this school is lack of exercise books, pens and pencils to use among learners. Most of the parent depends on small scale farming and businesses, unfortunately, they were not allowed to trade in order raise little money that they can use to support their children at least with the necessity required at school.

THE ON-GOING SCHOOL INFRASTRUCTURE

The school is still conducting learning under two temporal classroom structure. It is also having two temporal houses accommodating three teachers. This is indicating that more help is needed for teachers houses, even the flat block houses provides a better accommodation to teachers. The community is working on the offered project of building one by four classroom block offered by Fr Patrick in the early year of 2020. They managed to mold an approximately blocks of four thousand (4,000) and setting up the foundation. The project is gradually moving though the COVID-19 pandemic become one of the hindrances in the working together process. Not only has it affected the learning and teaching process, school project was at pause in most cases. People were afraid of public gatherings, therefore, the progress of the building was so poor.

We therefore, we make a strong request to our supporters to help this vulnerable community in the areas alluded to and more other required materials that pertains the development of the education system.

Written by MWIYA MWENDANDABAI; Teacher in Charge

Seembwa Community Grade School photos March 2022



Work interrupted by Coved



Present School building



Beginning again – after Coved - Jan 2022



Today - reaching for window level



Fr Eric, Nalwei mission & meeting with Seembwa builder and local leaders – Blocks in total 4000



Teachers House – on right solar panels



Another teachers house – and pit latrine with outside shower facilities



Two teachers Myiwa, on rt, teacher in charge & Swanny & lady student teacher assigned by Government



Occasional Feeding programme/ by Zambia Community Schools Association.



Seembwa School Children are proud of their uniforms

