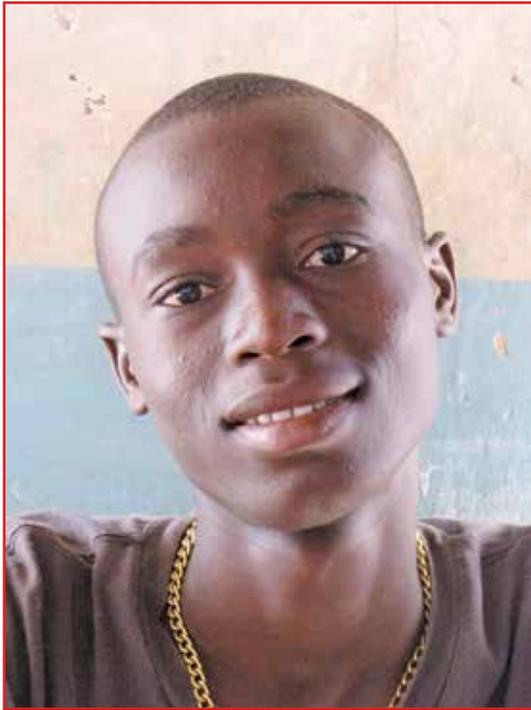




COMMUNITIES WITHOUT BORDERS

A PERSONAL PORTRAIT



Paul Banda: A Devoted Student's Dream

By Cherie Noe

On a recent trip to Zambia in March, Al Jacobson and I had the opportunity to speak with Paul Banda, a 17-year-old student supported by Communities Without Borders, who had the distinction of receiving the highest score on the 7th grade exams for the entire community of Bauleni in 2012.

We met in the twenty by twelve foot front classroom of the Bauleni family support home, crammed with desks end to end. It took a while for our eyes

to adjust to the dimness inside after coming in from the bright African sunshine. Slightly built and serious, Paul fiddled with a necklace as he told us his story.

The youngest of eight children, three brothers and four sisters, he is named after his father who now lives in a neighboring community. Paul has been supported by CWB since he started at the Bauleni family support home (pre-school) in 2001. Since his mother's death Paul has been living with his 20-year-old brother who does his best to provide food for the two of them. It is often not enough. Only one of his older siblings has completed the 12th grade and Paul is determined to be the second.

The stakes are high. To move to the 8th grade, students must pass the 7th grade exams. If a student fails, the entire grade must be repeated before retaking the exam. Students must again pass the 9th grade exam to move to the 10th grade and pass the 12th grade exams

to complete secondary school. For students who wish to pursue college, the stakes are highest then, as acceptance to university is awarded only to top scoring students.

According to Mr. Absom Chompolola, the Associate Dean of Economics at the University of Zambia, approximately 2000 students per year are accepted to the University — or one in ten applicants.

Paul hopes to become a doctor one day and is very serious about his studies. He attends school each day until 1PM, returns home to do his chores, and then spends the rest of his evening studying. When asked what he likes to do in his free time, he replies "I don't want to distract myself from my studies. I spend all of my time with my studies." His only distraction is watching the occasional football game with his friends, Jonathan and Mwelwa. Science and English are his favorite subjects and Mr. Kjkwa, who teaches math, is his favorite teacher. He also clearly admires his very first teacher, Mrs. Jessie Phiri, whom he still visits and who continues to provide the support and encouragement he needs. His dreams inspire us to renew our efforts to help every child in Zambia achieve theirs.



Paul's teacher Jessie Phiri with Al Jacobson and Jane Ndulo (from left to right).

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