

**mountain children's ministry**

**Mid Year Summary June 2023**

Dear Family and Friends ~

Happy June! I am so happy warm weather is finally here and hope you are playing outside too!

One of the striking differences between our MCM children and most children from developed countries is their lack of free time to play or study. Families caught in poverty need their children to help with fetching water and sticks for the evening dinner fire, farming, cleaning, cooking, animal rearing and many other chores. Over the past ten years Ivan and I have noticed this loss and tried to make changes to help the children succeed academically. We installed solar in our children's homes so they can study after 7 pm. We built a library for children to catch up on school reading and we began boarding older students at school. MCM now boards 148 of our 196 students.

Boarding is a somewhat foreign concept to most American families and initially I was opposed to the idea of separating teens from their guardians. But I have learned over these years, based on academic success and children's reports of well being, in this Ugandan culture boarding is indeed a blessing even for many primary students. Ivan's update highlights these inside and our feature about Bonita Ayebare, is an amazing turn-around success story. It illustrates how MCM, using extra resources to provide this level of education, has seen struggling students find their gifts, self confidence and even time to play!

Thank you so much for helping make this a reality!

Love wins!  
mum michele :)



# UPDATES FROM IVAN IN UGANDA: JUNE 2023

Greetings from Uganda!

We thank God who has kept you and your loved ones well. We have a lot we are grateful for as MCM Uganda and we want to start by sharing the difference boarding at school is now making in 148 of 196 of our sponsored children. Our reasons are many to make this choice to board MCM students.



Trinity Christian Campus

## ACADEMICS:

If a child shows extraordinary scholastic potential, we want to support this gifted child with a move to a more academically stimulating, competitive school. This always makes them smarter because they find other students and teachers who can challenge their intellect.

After COVID we noticed many students made disappointing declines in class. We attributed this to the two years they were out of school combined with every

child skipping forward a year on their return. The skipped class content would never be recuperated in rural schools because they did not teach the lost year. However, the urban schools were helping their learners go back and cover this content very fast. They understood if they did not, students would fail and so would their institutions. High final exam marks result in higher admission numbers the following year.

## HOME BASED SITUATION/ABUSE:

Many of our teenage girls (and occasionally boys) are culturally required to become like servants of the household. They do the cooking, fetch water, look for firewood, babysit siblings, wash their uniforms and many more chores await them after returning from school until late into the evening. When MCM learns of this, the child is removed from the situation and placed in boarding school so she may have ample time to focus on her studies. MCM does not support a culture which allows guardians to use children as laborers. Less common, but sadly does occur, is physical or emotional abuse of children. MCM has seen fathers released from prison, drunkards, guardians who resent the very children they have taken in, and mentally ill caregivers resort to abusing children. In this case they are obviously much safer boarding away from the abusive family member.

## BOARDING SCHOOLS ARE AN UPGRADE:

- The **best teachers** tend to shun rural schools so competition is greater for urban boarding school jobs. This allows them to hire the best teachers.
- Urban teachers are well paid and provided housing close to the school. With stiff competition they are motivated to get the **best out of their students**.

- Urban schools have **better food & sleeping conditions** with beds and bedding vs dirt floors with mats
- Urban schools are well exposed to **the latest teaching tools, technology and have electricity maintained with generators**.
- Urban schools have **on site tutoring** from both teachers and other students.
- **Extracurriculars** as well as **daily chapel** are a blessing!

## HOWEVER, BOARDING IS EXPENSIVE:

- **Ten times the cost** of the local village schools, MCM has had to add it gradually. In addition to tuition it is also costly to provide mattresses, bedding, jerry cans and other supplies necessary to live away from home.
- MCM is also very blessed the boarding schools we partner with give **discounts on tuition** because we are like-minded ministries. Their discount can take off up to 50%! Without it, costs would be prohibitive. We thank our American partners for extra resources to move students into dormitories.



Girls Boarding



village dayschool (left) vs city boarding school (right)



## RESULTS:

- We always pray for more resources to board as many of our students as possible because the results have been almost instant in **improved academic success and the children's welfare** reported to me.
- For our sponsors whose children have moved to boarding, this change is visible when you look at **your children's progress reports**. It is very satisfying seeing the improvement.

- Some students went from scoring third grades to getting **FIRST grades on P.7 exams**. It is just short of a miracle! Last year we moved four of the girls who had been struggling in our village school. All four scored FIRST grades in their P. 7 exams! This would not have happened if they had stayed at home in rural schools. (see story on *Bonita Ayebare on the next page*).
- Last year we had 8 students sitting UAC exams (taken after six years of secondary school). All but one **qualified for university!** These are not easy exams so we are proud of our children who excelled. Praise God these Ugandans are going to transform our community with their diplomas!



Child Africa Dorm

available at their disposable, just small distances from students' homes, has also been a huge convenience, help, and resource for them. We hope to keep seeing additions to our library materials causing more improvement in student performances.

**The self sustaining farming projects** are going well, especially the banana plantation which gives us monthly income as it keeps expanding. Sorghum and Irish potatoes continue to provide income seasonally.

**The Boda (motorcycle) program** now supports in excess of 140 primary school children! Our office used to be swamped with people requesting help who are now blessed. If we had more of these machines, we could easily help more children! We pray God enables us to purchase more Bodas to help more families.

**God has always been good.** MCM keeps moving from glory to glory bringing change all over Uganda. MCM graduates are working in different parts of the country improving those communities too. Please receive our great appreciation for all the ways you have helped this ministry reach the vulnerable here. Without your generosity and kindness, our villagers would still be in trouble. Slowly, one family at a time, we are seeing transformation.

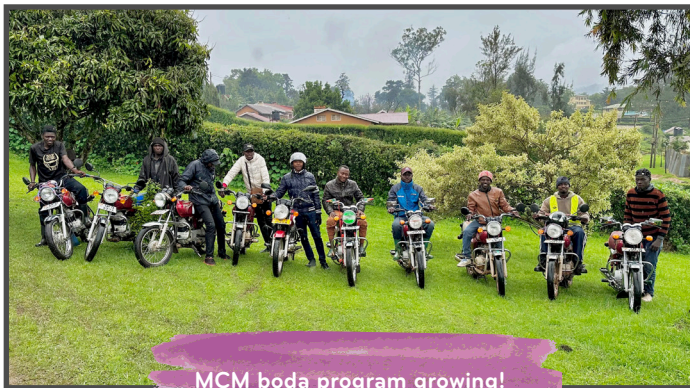
May God bless all of you enormously.

**Mpeirwe Ivan Twino**  
Executive Director, MCM - Uganda



### ADDITIONAL UPDATES:

We cannot attribute our academic improvement to boarding schools alone. The existence of the **MCM God's Joy Library** has been phenomenal too! The simple fact that we have a wide variety of books and conducive reading space



MCM boda program growing!

## MEET ESPY AND CHRISTIAN

*Espy (short for Esperanza Coronado-Jimenez) and her fiancé, Christian Caamano-Garcia, have been God-sends to MCM - USA this year! These two are both so soft spoken and gentle in their suggestions and comments! Working alongside them has been a blessing. They are hard working, competent and I am also inspired by their humility and kindness overall. Thanking God for these two! Please enjoy a brief introduction written by Espy...*

Michele came to me in June 2022 requesting help with "everything" from updating student files to tuition spreadsheets to getting sponsor letters and newsletters mailed. I work full time as an Assistant Teacher for a Spanish Immersion 4's Preschool however, I love the mission of MCM and wanted to help there too so I agreed to work on a semi weekly basis.



Not long after, Michele and I ran into difficulty creating a complex excel sheet so I invited my fiancé, Christian, to also get involved. Christian uses IT daily as a Senior Materials Technician ensuring materials meet AMS standards. He also agreed and together we have been both helping and learning the hope MCM gives to so many. The children being sponsored are a ripple of change for their families and communities. Seeing God work through this ministry is such a blessing.

Christian and I are excited about writing to two MCM students, Ronald and Rooney, brothers who are teens in high school. We look forward to getting to know them more. In addition, we enjoy spending time with family and friends and our three cats. We also enjoy being outside (especially when it is warm), trying new creative things and traveling. Our wedding is planned for August!

# BLESSED BY BOARDING; BONITA'S STORY

When Bonita Ayebare was added to the MCM program in 2013 she was six years old, in Primary One and the oldest of three children. Both her parents were alive but her father was sickly and the family had little land to farm. Bonita was sponsored in February 2014 by Jim and Linda Oddo who have faithfully stood beside both Bonita and another boy, SO supportive and always giving extra.

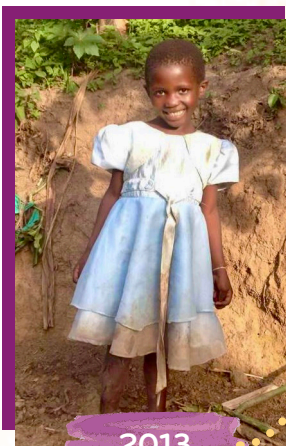
Since then Bonita has experienced one hardship after another. In 2015 her Mum abandoned her Dad for another man and moved away leaving the three children under 8 years old with their sickly father. In 2016 Bonita's father died. All three children were taken in by their Auntie Ann who already had 3 other children she cared for. Scholastically Bonita ranked in the bottom 20% of her class and had to repeat Primary One and Primary Four.

In 2019 Bonita became the oldest child in Auntie Ann's home as the older children left. This increased her responsibilities for fetching water, washing clothes, gathering wood for fires, cooking, cleaning and watching the younger children. Then Auntie Ann, in her 60's, suffered a stroke and was hospitalized. Ivan took action at that point and MCM hired a neighbor to help take the burden off Bonita who was looking very thin and stressed at age 12.

Then in January 2020, when MCM was blessed with the extra resources required for boarding tuition, both Bonita and her brother were enrolled at Child Africa, a wonderful new school MCM had received tuition discounts from. Unfortunately after only 6 weeks of Primary Six, the COVID pandemic locked down all Ugandan schools and Bonita was sent home for two years to continue running the home.

In 2022 Bonita should have been returned to Primary Six however the Ugandan Ministry of Education required all students to skip to the next class so Bonita entered her hardest, most challenging "Candidate Year", Primary Seven. Candidate students are driven hard all year to prepare for a national exam which ranks them for high school placement. By the grace of God, with a full year of Child Africa Teachers helping her, regular daily meals and good sleep, without time lost on chores, Bonita scored a FIRST Grade on her exam!! Everyone was THRILLED for her! Honestly, she was the talk of the village!

In January of 2023 Bonita began boarding at a top ranked secondary school, Solberg College, where she is studying to be a Nurse. Bonita's goal to be a Nurse has been her heart's desire every single year since she was seven years old. We hope she will someday attain it with the blessing of boarding!



2013



2015



2017



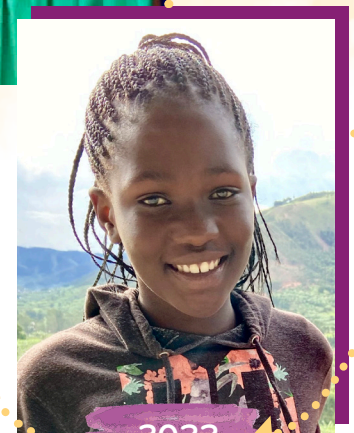
2019



2020



2023



2022

## A SPECIAL THANKS

Since 2014 the paper and printing required to create these MCM biannual newsletters has been paid for and donated by Darwill. We at MCM are so grateful for their years of generosity and support! A special Thank you to Troy and Brandon Van Dyke, and Mark DeBoer!

# PLEASE SPONSOR A CHILD

All six of these children have been waiting for a sponsor on the MCM website for awhile and one student for over two years. Please please consider making a difference in their lives and bringing them the joy of being YOUR choice. Sponsorship is \$50 per month, less than \$2 per day. Thank you!



## **DOREEN N.**

Doreen (19) in Senior Four wants to be a Nurse. Her father disappeared long ago and never helped her mother. Without land or help Doreen was sent to live with her grandparents when she was small. Doreen has been waiting for a sponsor since April 2021.



## **ASHAVIN N.**

Ashavin (7) in Primary Two wants to be a Pilot. His father was killed by a speeding car in 2018. His Mum, Mackline is a farmer and takes care of the children but struggles since they have no property to farm and just looks for manual labor from place to place. He has been waiting since June 2022



## **GIFT E.**

Gift (12) in Primary Four wants to be a Teacher. Gift's mother died in childbirth without revealing the name of Gift's father who is still unknown. Gift has lived with her grandfather since she was born but he is elderly and cannot afford her care or school fees.



## **BRIGHTON A.**

Brighton (17) in Senior One wants to be a Doctor. His mother was never known because his father brought him as an infant to his grandma then disappeared. Brighton's grandma died in January 2022 so he now lives with an Aunt. Brighton has been waiting since June 2022



## **FAITH A.**

Faith (15) in Senior One wants to be a Lawyer. Her parents are peasant farmers who work for others as they have no land of their own. Their income cannot sustain their family. Faith has been waiting for a sponsor since May 2022.



## **KENNEDY T.**

Kennedy (14) in Senior One wants to be a Lawyer. His mother died in 2014 from a neck tumor. His father suffered a stroke in 2020 and cannot move or speak. Kennedy lives with his grandma a peasant farmer who can no longer dig with her back pain. Kennedy has been waiting since June 2022.

If you would like to sponsor a child above or see our other needy children go to [MOUNTAINCHILDRENSMINISTRY.COM](https://MOUNTAINCHILDRENSMINISTRY.COM) and click on "Sponsor A Child"

## WORDS FROM OUR SPONSOR

written by Amy Ahlenius

Mountain Children's Ministry has always been in our hearts and prayers from the beginning. I have known the Pageau family my whole life and Tim has for over 15 years since we got married. We enjoyed watching MCM grow and flourish through God's many blessings. In early 2020 we felt the Holy Spirit nudging us to support the ministry through sponsoring a child. Our two older boys would be able to write letters and I knew from experience with World Vision what a neat experience it is to connect with people around the globe. I asked Michele if there were any brothers that we could sponsor but there weren't any at the time. After reading about the many kids waiting to be sponsored, we decided to sponsor four boys as we had just welcomed our fourth son.



The Ahlenius Family (L→R) Tim, Levi (7), Sam (10), Zach (9), Amy, Bennett (3)

We are proud to sponsor Timothy, Edson, William, and Paul. It was exciting to find out a few of the boys' ages lined up with ours! Our boys enjoy writing letters, drawing pictures, and sending stickers to the boys in Uganda. It has been neat to



Sam, Zach, Bennett and Levi...  
4 boys plus 4 boys = 8 friends!!

witness their curiosity as they want to know all about life in Uganda. The boys in Uganda do a great job responding to the questions of favorites; food, animals, Bible verses and hobbies. Once we learned they all like soccer (football) it has been a consistent topic of letters and pictures as our boys thoroughly enjoy soccer! Last year we gifted the Ugandan boys their own Bible. It was great seeing a picture of them all with their Bibles knowing that God's word is now always available to them. Our biggest prayer for them, as well as our boys, is that they come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

As a mom and teacher, I know how important it is to have a "team" supporting and providing encouragement to a child. In this positive environment they can thrive and grow confidently into their God-given talents. By sponsoring our MCM children we get to be a small part of that team. We pray our family can bring additional support to foster healthy growth in each Ugandan boy through words of encouragement and financial means. We value this special connection to show our boys the similarities and differences they have with the Ugandan boys in school, work, and play. Tim and I continue to be impressed with the ministry of MCM. The time and effort that goes into interviewing children to be sponsored is a tedious, exhausting task and I know that Michele (and Ivan) are the perfect people to tenderly pour through applicants and find sponsors across the globe to partner with them. We pray that all the MCM children continue to be inspired to work hard, learn about Jesus and grow into the unique talents that God has placed within each of them.



## STAY CONNECTED!

### MICHELE'S ADDRESS:

1609 Jerome Street  
Holland, Michigan 49423  
(630) 606-3165

michelepageau@gmail.com

Subscribe to our blog and newsletter at our website:  
[mountainchildrensministry.com](http://mountainchildrensministry.com)

Follow us on Facebook and Instagram:  
#mcmkabale

[mountainchildrensministry.com](http://mountainchildrensministry.com)