



Dagama School for Physically Disabled Children

A Catholic School for Handicapped Children

— Luanshya, Zambia —



For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Psalm 139:13



We are a Catholic ministry

that mobilizes the global Catholic Church to transform the poor and their communities materially and spiritually for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Rather than create new institutions to distribute aid, we support existing ministries and churches already serving the poor. In addition to being the most cost-effective way of helping the poor, empowering these ministries allows us to support the Church's spiritual mission and its important position of leadership in poor communities.

We consider every gift we receive as a precious resource from God. We direct every donation to its intended project, provide honest and accurate reports to our donors, and keep overhead costs to an industry low. We handle funds with utmost integrity and hold our ministry partners in the field to the same high standards by asking them to document costs and the impact of their outreach.

We invite you to join with us as we seek to transform the lives of the poor materially and spiritually — ways that please the Father and glorify him in Heaven and on earth.



Project Synopsis

Description

This project will provide daily meals and other support for both physically disabled and vulnerable children at a Catholic boarding school.

Purpose

To educate handicapped children while meeting their emotional needs.

Location

Luanshya, in the central
Zambian Diocese of Ndola.

Cost

\$51,000 helps provide daily meals, therapy, orthopedic mobility appliances and prosthetic limbs for the boarding students and day students at the Dagama School for Physically Disabled Children.



Highlights

- In the Catholic Diocese of Ndola, Zambia, the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi operate the country's first school for the handicapped.
- 130 disabled students and 44 day-students are currently enrolled at the Dagama School which offers a full primary and secondary level education, as well as residential facilities.
- Disabilities among the students include cerebral palsy, post-polio syndrome, amputations, congenital deformities and trauma-related injuries.
- The school provides physical therapy three days a week and helps the children get access to medical care and orthopedic aids.
- The students learn Catholic moral values and faith practices and are encouraged to serve others in need.
- The children's families pay only a small tuition according to their ability.
- The Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi rely on Cross Catholic Outreach to help provide the students with three nutritious meals a day.

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Matthew 25:35



The Need

In Zambia, it's long been believed that if a child is born with a disability, it is a curse on his or her family. These families often feel ashamed, causing them to hide handicapped children inside their homes away from the world. Isolated, most of these children never attend school and grow up believing they're not worthy of experiencing life in their communities.

Even in supportive family environments, parents are at a loss for how to properly meet the needs of their disabled child. Most Zambian families live in shacks and work as day laborers or subsistence farmers, barely eking out a living. Most struggle to meet their most basic needs like food and shelter, much less afford special therapies and medical treatments that disabled children require. As a result, these children simply go without the care and nutrition they need.

Unfortunately, Zambian public schools are also ill-equipped in the area of special education. Handicapped children are rarely given the same opportunities as other students, simply because public schools do not have amenities like wheelchair ramps to accommodate their specific needs.

If the child is orphaned by AIDS or another illness, the situation is bound to be worse. Even if an extended family member is willing to bring the child into their home, the child is often abused, neglected or food deprived. Instead of being a blessing, they are considered a nuisance and a waste of the family's limited resources.

These children have not only been born into poverty, but they are robbed of the opportunity to achieve their dreams and goals like any other child. As Catholics, we believe all people are created in the image of God and have inherent dignity, and that includes handicapped children. They are created in the image of God and have a unique purpose to fulfill.

Thankfully, a Catholic school in the community of Luanshya is making a tangible difference in the lives of disabled children. The Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi want disabled Zambian children to have the same opportunities to get an education in order to achieve their dreams. With your help, Cross Catholic Outreach can empower the sisters to give these children a reason to hope and thrive!



The Ministry



When Jesus and his disciples encountered a man blind from birth, the disciples asked, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him’” (John 9:1-3).

The Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi believe this passage to be true — they don’t see disabilities as a curse, but as a way for God’s glory to shine through affected children. That’s why the Dagama School for the Physically Disabled seeks “to provide care to the whole child,” physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. The goal is that children are able to further their education and grow up to become independent adults.

As the nation’s first school for handicapped children, Dagama is revolutionary for the disabled population. Students receive a full primary and secondary school education, and are given the opportunity to board on campus, or attend as day students.

Dagama’s children suffer from a variety of conditions, such as cerebral palsy, post-polio syndrome, amputations, congenital deformities and trauma-related injuries. Dagama not only offers the opportunity for these children to obtain a traditional education, but they receive physical therapy three days a week and access to needed medical care, surgeries and orthopedic aids.

The sisters also realize the importance of a healthy balanced diet for poor children, so students are provided with daily meals. Many of these children were malnourished in early childhood, so nutritional intervention is critical to their physical and intellectual development.

These are services that the poor would never be able to afford without help — but these families are charged only a small fee to enroll their children in the school.

One of the best parts of this program is that shunned and stigmatized children are accepted for who they are, loved unconditionally, and taught the truth of their value to God. Through Catholic spiritual formation, they are given eternal hope and understand they were “fearfully and wonderfully made” with a unique purpose to fulfill. Dagama is more than a school, it’s changing the way Zambian society sees disabled children and their families.

As you can imagine, the costs of providing education, therapies, medical care and nutrition to these children are substantial. The Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi need our financial support to serve these children and transform their futures!



Help Zambia's Disabled Children!



In Psalm 139, King David declared, “For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well” (Psalm 139:13-14). Zambia’s disabled children were also formed in their mothers’ wombs and have been given a unique purpose to fulfill by their Creator. The Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Assisi are working hard on their behalf, but they need our help to educate and equip children for a future filled with hope.

Like all of us, disabled children are created in the image of their Heavenly Father and therefore possess intrinsic value. Seeing to their special needs and giving them hope are both our role as “family” and our privilege as believers in Christ. With your financial support, the sisters can bring Zambia’s disabled children out from hiding in the shadows of society and into the light. We don’t want these children to be defined by their disability; but to understand that they were created for the same purpose as all of us: to glorify God!

This school in Zambia is a blessing for disabled children and their families, so our help is critical to meeting this need of handicapped children and promoting the dignity of all human life. Will you join Cross Catholic Outreach to support this important cause? Your gift will give a voice to the voiceless!

Our Promise to You!

Donations from this campaign will be used to cover any expenditures for this project incurred through June 30, 2022, the close of our ministry’s fiscal year. In the event that more funds are raised than needed to fully fund the project, the excess funds, if any, will be used to meet the most urgent needs of the ministry.

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