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DISPATCHES FROM AFRICA

Thomas Crubaugh writes from Dzendereni, a small village in southeastern Kenya, where CrossFit HQ is working to improve the quality of life.



March 2012 // Before the first village school was built in 2004, the children of Dzendereni had to walk to the next village to attend school. It was such a long distance that the villagers did not send their kids until they were ten years old and mature enough to walk that distance. These ten-year-olds would start school in the first grade.



The top student in the highest grade level at Dzendereni in 2011 was Loice Mwaka Bemariga. She was the top student in her school and the entire district of some 2,000 eighth graders. She is now attending the national high school in Nairobi. Loice was in the first class of Dzendereni kids to start their schooling at the first-grade level at age five, instead of age ten. Knowing what we know about early childhood development, it is doubtful that Loice could have reached that academic achievement if she had not received an early start on school. Now the village starts kids even younger.

Compared to times past, the new classrooms immensely help the kids to hear the teacher, see the blackboard, sit comfortably and otherwise be able to focus on their studies.

Also, the parents and the whole community have made financial commitments to make the classrooms happen and have also labored directly in their construction. This buy-in from the students' families adds to their support of the kids being and staying in school. Girls here are often pulled away from school by family pressures, so this commitment by the community could mean even more to the girls than the boys.



Building the cistern and the dam will mean better drinking water, even in the dry seasons; this will lead to better agriculture, better nutrition, more protein in diets, and more capacity for exercise. All of these factors build better potential for doing well in school. Imagine if Loice was starting school in 2012. Well, there are plenty of other girls that will be starting in 2012 and they will have advantages never before seen in Dzendereni, thanks to the CrossFit school.

