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Blog by Ina Mozheni on Roger's visit to the Roger Federer Foundation's programs in Zambia

When Roger landed at the international airport in Lusaka Zambia, his visit came not only as a surprise but a shock to many. Of course many know him as the greatest tennis player of all time. So the question on most people's minds was: "What would bring this tennis icon to Zambia and get him to travel all the way to remote villages in the Eastern Province of Zambia where little known game of tennis is not just foreign, but exclusive for the elite?"

Roger was not in Zambia for tennis. He was in Zambia for a much bigger course; not only to support his Foundation which focuses on improving access to quality education and learning for 2300 vulnerable communities, but to see the beautiful smiles on the faces of the many children that the Foundation impacts on.

The fanfare, the ululating, the African drumbeat and joyful noise that engulfed the once quiet community was not from fans cheering at a Wimbledon match. The sound was from men, women and children who were excited about meeting the man who had made it possible to bring better education, not knowing really who he is. They welcomed Roger as their hero who made it possible to build an ECD classroom, the person who made it possible for volunteer teachers to enhance their teaching methodologies, the person who brought in teaching & learning materials and the one who became the glue for their wider engagement and better governance of schools.



One would wonder how this renowned super star would respond to such gestures. Roger's reaction was mutual. Receiving all the praise, appreciation and adoration with such humility, joining in a traditional dance, sitting in and delivering a quick English lesson, playing netball with the girls, recognizing girls that had been brought back to school, going on a fantasy ride with children at the play park andwait a minute, removing his shoes to sit cross legged with 3-4 year olds in an ECD class.



Having poured more than US\$5 million in education programs in Zambia, Roger wanted to see himself the impact on the ground of the investments. In many statement and speeches during his visit Roger expressed his satisfaction of what he could see: Where children had to learn under a tree or an incomplete church building they moved from to a proper classroom block and experience now a stimulating learning environment for both learners and teachers. Where teachers struggled with teaching methodologies, we saw teachers with interactive teaching skills through training and the use of

technology to deliver self-guided courses. And what better way to attract early learners to school than provide learning through play material and equipment.

Roger took the opportunity to thank government and communities for their continued support and hard work in promoting children's education. What Roger demonstrated during his visit was that his Foundation does indeed work through its local partners but with great support, guidance and involvement of traditional leadership, community and government.

Roger was once been quoted as saying *"I believe in the power of people"*. In this regard I could only conclude that Roger believes in people right across the whole spectrum. He not only engaged with His Excellence, the President of Zambia Edgar Lungu where he echoed the human right to education in equal measure as the core of his Foundation, he listened to and encouraged the Government Officials, Headmen, Chiefs, local people and above all the very children that his Foundation focuses on.

While Roger could see firsthand how his Foundation is transforming the lives of vulnerable children, the challenges are still mammoth and would need a multi stakeholder approach with much greater efforts. Community schools in Zambia continue to struggle with the absence and/or insufficient trained teachers, learning materials, infrastructure and scarce resources to support the delivery of teaching and learning. The journey ahead is still long. But Roger has taken the first strides in supporting vulnerable children with pride.

The 4 days that I interacted with Roger gave me a new meaning of humility. What Roger has done for vulnerable children many have failed to even comprehend. For the successful sportsman that Roger is, he has gone above and beyond to demonstrate the joy and satisfaction in giving. BIG UP to Roger. Continue being the Roger Federer that the world adores.