

School Daze


☒ If your family is anything like ours, you understand and have survived the back-to-school daze. Purchasing new backpacks, paper, pencils, composition books, notebooks, calculators, plus the unique items on each child's "required" list—which often takes multiple shopping trips as stores run low on special supplies. Walking younger children to the bus stop to be sure they know where it is, and setting ground rules with older ones who will car pool or drive themselves. Once everything is ready we sigh with relief and await the big day!

Reflecting on this annual ritual, I'm struck by the contrast between education in the United States and in sub-Saharan African countries where CAFI works like Malawi, Zambia and Uganda.

There, children must not only purchase school supplies, but also uniforms (designated by each school's particular colors and designs) so they can simply attend class. Since there are no school buses, children from age 5 or 6 through 18 learn the route they will walk—quite often long distances on narrow dirt paths along the roadside in both urban and rural terrain. Even if public schools are available, most families try to afford private schools to ensure higher quality education. This, of course, requires tuition fees.

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By comparison, children in these nations must strive much harder to receive an education. And if parents do not have the means to purchase the required scholastic supplies and uniforms, children will likely miss the opportunity to attend class. Unfortunately, today nearly half of the world—over 3

billion people—live below the poverty rate (on less than \$2.50 per day). Too often, education is not as high a priority as food, shelter or clothing. 

So as you celebrate the completion of your back-to-school whirlwind, take a moment to say “thank you” for the educational opportunities we enjoy in the U.S.

And, please consider adding another item to your back-to-school check list: Giving the gift of education to a sub-Saharan HIV-impacted child through the CAFI website store. You can give the following for between 12 and 82 cents a day: school uniform (\$80-\$125 annually), school supplies (\$45 annually), or tuition (\$200-\$300 annually)

Anita

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