

GEORGES, AN ALLY FROM THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: "I AM NEVER DISCOURAGED."

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"Despite not having the people or the materials to build and supply a school, I do have the strength that God gave me."

Every day, I cross the Bangui River to get to the island of Mbongossoua. Although this island is part of the capital city, and populated with families, it lacks basic infrastructure: no school, no hospital, nothing.

In Mbongossoua, I opened a school without walls. I first visited all the families with children to gain a clearer understanding of their living conditions. As I interacted with these families, I could see slowly that I was gaining their trust and confidence, as well as that of the head of the sector. I was able to determine which families are able to pay for

their children's educations, and which ones cannot. For those who cannot pay, I enroll their children for free, so that they too can receive an education.

I have realized that in order to ensure that all children — poor and rich alike — receive education, we must be creative.

Yet, this is no easy feat. We will encounter many difficulties. For instance, certain families leave to earn money with groups of fishermen, and because of their poverty they take along their children. How can these children complete their academic year of studies when they are far away from the school?

Regardless of these difficulties, and the doubts and mockery of certain parents, I am never discouraged. On the contrary, I am hopeful and confident that these children will learn despite the challenges faced by their families and by our school.

Despite not having the people or the materials to build and supply this school, I do have the strength that God gave me. And people will see that what I am doing is going to work.

Thanks to ATD Fourth World, I too am learning. After reading the "Letter to Friends Around the World," I know that we are "All Together in Dignity."