September 2026

A Little Gesture

Little Gestures in Action No. 42

The sounds of the playgrounds are back

There is a very distinctive sound that marks the month of September.

It is the sound of the playgrounds filling once more with laughter, running, bouncing balls, and conversations left unfinished during the holidays that pick up exactly where they left off.

This month has brought the return to school for the third term, and with it, everything that makes school so **much more than just a place to study**: meeting up with friends, playing in the playground, and the routines that provide structure and security to every child's daily life.

Returns that are also reunions

Going back to school isn't just about returning to classes and exercise books. It's about returning to a place where every child is seen and supported, and where they continue to build not only their academic journey but also their personal one.

In the communities we support, this return holds special significance. It represents continuity: the assurance that, term after term, the children retain their place at school, closely supported by our teams on the ground.

Banhine: study in motion

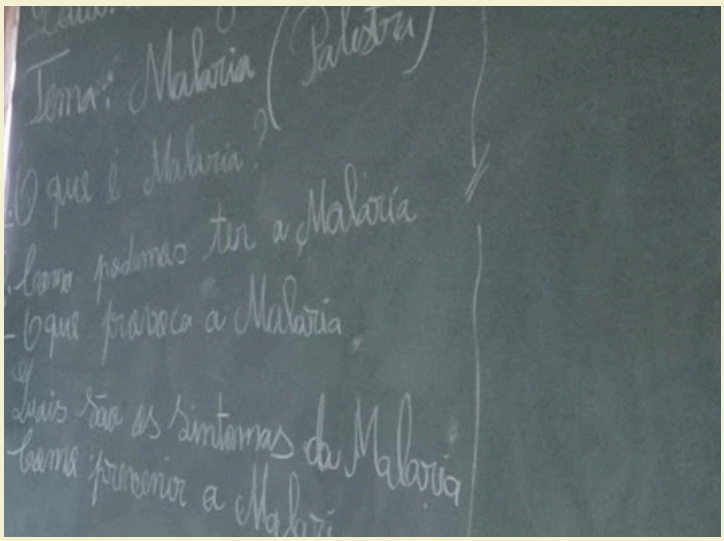
In April, we told you that the After School Support had reached Banhine. At that point, we were right at the start.

Today, that beginning has taken on a human face.

In maths class, the Year 3 students went up to the blackboard to solve carrying addition problems and tackled them with a confidence that surprised even the team on the ground. It is this sort of progress that, month after month, confirms that the support is making a difference.

This work takes many different forms. One week, we help Year 5 students with equations and written calculations; the next, we explain the formation of anions and cations in a chemistry lesson, or go over the difference between proper and improper fractions, and fractions equal to whole numbers. From copying texts and dictations to personal pronouns, each session is tailored to the individual in front of us, because academic support is not about a one-size-fits-all approach, but about personalised guidance

In the Reading Club, the progress is even more evident. Two students, who started by spelling out the alphabet, can now recognise syllables and are trying their hand at short texts on their own. It is a small step forward when viewed from the outside, but a huge one for those experiencing it. There was also time to discuss health: a talk on malaria, focusing on prevention, helped to provide essential information to the children and their families.



And to understand the real impact of this support, there's nothing like asking those who experience it every day. We spoke to Jailson, a 13-year-old Year 8 student:

"I like studying in the support room and working through exercises with my classmates because I find it helps me understand things better." "The snack is really good; it motivates me to study." "And in your spare time?" "Playing football."

It is in these simple things – the support room, the snack, the study group, the football after school – that we see what learning support really means: it is not just a place for extra tuition; it is part of these children's daily lives, with all the motivation and sense of belonging that this brings.

Vencedoras: Building Safe Spaces, One Conversation at a Time

In Santa Luísa de Marilac, we held two sessions as part of the "Vencedoras" programme. The first was on preventing sexual abuse and harassment, with a focus on something fundamental: ensuring that every girl knows she has safe spaces around her where she can speak out and be heard, regardless of the source of the problem.

The second session addressed the fair division of household chores. We discussed, together with the families, how the burden of household work can push girls out of school, often quietly, without the impact on their educational journey being immediately apparent.

These sessions don't solve everything overnight. But they open doors—and it is through these doors that trust and information flow, and with them, the possibility of change.