



Newsletter June 23

NO BARRIERS EDUCATION FOUNDATION: We assist children and youth in rural Zimbabwe to overcome barriers to education, encourage their learning and create opportunities for them to thrive



Running water now at both schools - made possible through the Rotary Clubs of Norwood & Harare

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REPORTING BACK: OBSERVATION FROM RECENT VISIT

In February 2023, Sigrid Pfaffle, Executive Director, No Barriers Education Foundation spent three hectic weeks in Zimbabwe visiting our schools and reviewing the progress of our work. She observed the following:

Key developments / observations:

- 1. Significant increase in total student numbers:** Over the past 12 months student numbers increased by 10% from 546 to 603 across our two partner schools. The increase occurred mainly for Form 1 students (first year in secondary education): in 2023, 42% more students enrolled in Form 1 than in 2022 (178 versus 125). Principals of each school identified that of the 50+ additional students enrolled in Form 1 more than half of the families feel the assistance provided by NoBarriers (school meals, school fees, sanitary/toiletry kits, bicycles) warrants for the child to attend school, even if the parent may feel skeptical about the benefits or affordability of secondary education.
- 2. Girls outnumber boys at school:** Girls represent 52% of all students enrolled. While girls’ representation is high in the first 4 years at secondary school (up to O-level), they tend not to progress their studies towards A-level.
- 3. Improved school attendance:** During school year 2022 student attendance rates improved: from 96% in Term 1 to 99% in Term 3. According to the principals of both schools this is also due to daily school meals and menstrual assistance.
With suitable sanitary wear now provided, girls no longer miss school for a few days a month: Girls’ attendance rate improved from 94% in Term 1 to 99% in Term 3. We hope that this will translate into improved academic outcomes for girls and result in more girls progressing to A-level studies.
Bicycles, which were distributed to long-distance students in October 2022 are also expected to underpin school attendance: To retain their bikes recipients cannot be absent from class unless for a valid reason.
- 4. Teenage pregnancies reduced:** During school year 2022 only 2 students across the two schools fell pregnant. In 2021, 7 child pregnancies occurred. We believe the Sexual Health & Reproductive Rights workshops we conduct in partnership with fearless nurses from the local primary health clinic have contributed to this outcome.
- 5. Bicycles reduce fatigue of long-distance students and free them up for learning:** The bikes distributed in October 2022 changed the lives of students, many who had to walk 10+ km from home to school. With bikes, their commute now takes ¼ of the previous walking time. They arrive on time at school and return home before it gets dark.

- 6. Teachers are more motivated:** Teachers report improved levels of wellbeing and motivation - they feel empowered by the textbooks NoBarriers provided last year, making it easier for them to prepare for class. They also report the free meals at lunchtimes help them to better cope with their tough economic circumstances (meagre salaries in a hyper-inflationary environment).
- 7. Rotary Club of Norwood & Harare- Water & Sanitation System completed:** The “Rotary water & sanitation systems” were handed over to the schools during small ceremonies on 11 February. They provide -
 - Access to safe drinking water for students and teachers residing on school campus.
 - Safe toilets allowing for privacy and dignity



Sportsday, 10 Feb 2023 at Hwata Secondary with around 1,000 students from schools across the district participating – throughout the day students were able to readily access safe drinking water
For further details and photos on the project see page 7.

- 8. Sustainable Teaching, Learning & Communication Hubs:** The **Australian Embassy in Zimbabwe through its Direct Aid Program** approved NoBarriers grant application for the roll-out these hubs. They entail for both schools a large, battery based solar system, satellite internet connection plus a powerful printer, laptop, projector and screen. The project was implemented in May 2023.



For further details and photos on the project see page 8.

STORIES FROM THE SCHOOLS

Nyika Sekai, Deputy Principal and Science Teacher, Hwata Secondary

I've been teaching at Hwata Secondary since 2017 and I also live in one of the teacher residences on the school grounds together with my husband, who is also a teacher, but at another school in the district.



Throughout these years of living and teaching at Hwata Secondary School, we had to deal with a plethora of challenges, which hindered our teaching and students' learning. For instance, we suffered from recurrent water shortages: Our learners when walking to school had to carrying 5 litres of water each day from their homes to the school, so they had water throughout the day for drinking, but also so we could clean our very run-down Blair toilets. We count ourselves very lucky, that last year through a partnership between the Rotary movement and NoBarriers, a state of the art water system was installed – borehole, electric pump, big water tanks and pipelines were laid across the campus to water taps and sinks. Because of this intervention, our water crisis is now a thing of the past and teachers and students have now access to safe drinking water coming out of taps. No longer do we need to work hard to pump water and to carry buckets of water across the school grounds.

Moreover, this initiative also brought our learners state of the art, new toilets with running water for handwashing. The students now enjoy hygienic, individual toilets which are safe and private.

We teachers were not left behind either: We now have a new shower & toilet block close to our houses. This shower system has improved our punctuality for work as we no longer have to catch and carry water in heavy buckets in the morning to get ready for school. Recently, we noticed, that more teachers are now interested to transfer and teach at Hwata Secondary, because word got around, that we now provide decent living facilities to our teachers.

Many of our learners hail from very disadvantaged families. Typically, they walk several hours to school on empty stomachs, which compromises their concentration in class.

NoBarriers offered a solution: They supply provision for the preparation of hot meals every school day for both teachers and learners. I'm convinced these meals have contributed a lot towards improving our learners' pass rate at O-level, which rose significantly over the past years. Our school enrolments are also increasing, thanks to the hot meals. We have now 275 learners enrolled. In 2020, before NoBarriers school meals commenced, we only had around 200 learners.

I believe the increase in new enrolments can also be attributed to NoBarriers' bicycles initiative (*see note below*). Each learner living more than 5 kilometres from the school was given a bike. It is a marvel to watch learners in the morning riding their bicycles into the school yard on time and ready for lessons.

We also noticed a change among girl learners. Before, many girls did not come to schools for several days each month, as the girls could not afford proper sanitary wear. They now receive from NoBarriers washable pads plus bathing and laundry soap. This not only improved girls' hygiene, but also their confidence and school attendance. Hopefully, we'll soon see more girls progress to A-level, as they no longer have to struggle with period poverty.

Textbooks were also a problem. Until about a year ago, one textbook had to be shared by ten learners, which was not conducive for good teaching or learning. This has drastically changed now through a delivery of textbooks bought by NoBarriers. Learners now can study in pairs sharing one textbook. And we teachers can now much better prepare for our lessons.

With generous funding from the Australian Government NoBarriers installed this May a solar power system at our school. We are very excited about that - now we can study at night. Teachers can now charge their cell phones anytime and the solar power ensures that water is reliably pumped from the borehole into our tanks. Thanks to the laptop and projector, which was also provided through the same project, we teachers are now introducing more modern teaching methods into our class rooms.

A lot has improved in the 2.5 years NoBarriers has been supporting Hwata Secondary. Because of this, it is my joy to submit to the supporters of NoBarriers, that their efforts were put to good use and NoBarriers has lived up to its promise. It has removed many barriers to education. But many are still left.

We hope and pray NoBarriers and its supporters will continue working with us, the teachers at Hwata Secondary to improve the education of our learners. We, the teachers of Hwata Secondary, herewith pledge our support.

Note: *The bicycles are provided in partnership with World Bicycle Relief and No Barriers Education Foundation*

STORIES FROM THE SCHOOLS - continued**Presiclla M, Muzarabani High School (Note 1)**

I'm 17 years old and attend Form 4 at Muzarabani High.

I spent most of my childhood moving around different rural provinces in Zimbabwe, as my father was employed by the army and was stationed in different parts of the country. Our last place before Muzarabani, was in Harare. I attended there Form 2. Then the pandemic came, schools locked down,

my father lost his work and money became very tight. It was then, that it was decided that we move to Muzarabani, where my parents had some relatives.

By the time we moved to Muzarabani, things had gone worse: not only was there no money, because my father could not find any work, there was also a lot of fighting between my parents, sometime it became violent. There was never enough money for food, school fees or stationery.

I enrolled at Muzarabani in 2021 to repeat Form 2, which I could not finish in Harare because of pandemic lockdowns. While attending school, I was also expected to work in the fields so we could supplement food for the family. Because of this, I struggled to concentrate on my studies and I was falling behind.

So, I decided to live at the boarding house for girls on the campus of Muzarabani High. By being a boarder, I also tried to escape from the violence at home, which has gone worse because of my father's drinking. He is trying hard to support the family, but he is not able to make ends meet.

Currently, relatives and teachers give me supplies, so that I have food for breakfast and can prepare meals in the evening. On school days I eat at lunchtime a hot meal of sadza, beans and vegetable, which the school prepares with the supplies NoBarriers delivers every term.

NoBarriers also pays my school fees and the fees for my examinations. Because of this I'm able to sit for my O-level examinations later this year. I'm hopeful that I will get good marks and will be able to continue my education to A-level.

Comment from Madam D Chiwandamira, Prescilla's Science Teacher:

Precilla is a strong student with a strong aptitude for science subjects. She dreams about going to university and I like to think, she would do well there. However, given her bleak family and finance situation, I think she is better advised to get some vocational qualifications quickly through a diploma, so she can earn some money and become independent from her family.

For me as a teacher, it is sad to see that a girl with strong academic skills like Precilla will not reach her potential because of the situation she has been born into.

Note 1: Name is changed to protect student

**Prezilla's dormitory / informal boarding house:**

At the rear of Muzarabani High's school ground. The dormitory is available to girls living far from school, without family or from difficult family situations such as domestic violence. They have to provide their own food supplies and do their own cooking. A female teacher lives next to the dormitory and provides supervision after school / during night.



Girls at Muzarabani High – in between classes

STORIES FROM THE SCHOOLS - continued

Cathrine D, Hwata Secondary School (Note 1)



I am Cathrine doing Form 3 at Hwata Secondary School. I'm 15 years old and I live in a small village, which is 10km away from the school.

I used to wake up at 3am, do my chores and prepare for school. I then had to walk the 10 kilometers, which took me two and a half hours. I always arrived late at school

and I missed lessons. I sometimes fell asleep during classes because I was so tired and because it is always so hot here.

In October last year, I received a bike when NoBarriers distributed them at Hwata Secondary (Note 2). Now, I only need to wake up at 5am. I still do my chores and then I cycle to school. It takes me about 30-40 minutes. I now arrive at school on time and I no longer fall asleep during classes. I hope this will help to improve my grades. Nowadays, I come home much earlier and there is still daylight to do my homework.

I now feel confident that I will do much better at school. I hope that I will be able to have good enough results to go to college and to study to become a nurse.

I take well care of my bike, and take every 3 months to the school mechanic for maintenance, because it is so important to me.

Note 1: Name is changed to protect student

Note 2: The bicycles are provided in partnership with World Bicycle Relief and No Barriers Education Foundation



The heat, very early starts to the day and long walks to school take their toll on students' capacity to concentrate



Tough bikes, "Buffalo Bike" for tough conditions – Hwata Secondary



Girl student leaving Muzarabani High – on way home.



School is more fun with a bike – students at Muzarabani High



Bikes 'parked' during classes at Hwata Secondary

STORIES FROM THE SCHOOLS - continued**Tinotenda M, Muzarabani High School (Note 1)***His story is narrated by Runyararo Mutongomanya, his Math teacher*

Tinotenda is a Form 6 learner at Muzarabani High School in Muzarabani District, Mashonaland Central Province in Zimbabwe. Tinotenda lives with his grandparents because both his parents passed away. While his grandparents try their best to look after him and to take care of his meals and also clothing, they lack the income to assist him with school fees, stationery and other learning materials, such as tablet or laptop. He has to make do with the very limited facilities available at Muzarabani High. For his Zimbabwe Secondary School Examinations Ordinary Level he did very well and attained 6 passes inclusive of Mathematics and Combined Science.

In 2022 NoBarriers came to his rescue and commenced paying school fees for him, so he was able to continue his studies. He enrolled for Pure Mathematics, Statistics, Computer Science and Physics in 2022. He will be writing his final exams later this year.

Tinotenda is bright, eager and hard working. He is determined to get the necessary points so that he can proceed to university and study mathematics or computing. How he will be able to finance his university fees and his living expenses is unclear, as his family does not have the financial resources and government funded scholarships are very few on offer.

Note 1: Name is changed to protect student



Computing Lab at Hwata Secondary with Principal Huruva Mukucha.



Computing Lab at Muzarabani High, picture taken in March 2022. Of the 5 desktop computers pictured, all around 15 years old, only 3 continued to operate in Feb 2023.



Mr. Wisdom Kufa, IT-teacher at Muzarabani High, using the laptop provided through the “Sustainable Teaching, Learning & Communication Hub” in his lessons.

The “Sustainable Hubs” were funded through the Direct Aid Program of the Australian Embassy in Zimbabwe.

For further details and pictures please see page 8.

ROTARY GLOBAL GRANT – WATER & SANITATION

Work on the Water & Sanitation project, initiated by the Rotary Club of Norwood and jointly funded with the help of a Rotary Foundation Global Grant (USD 65,000) was completed in early 2023 and handed-over to the school communities on 11 February.



Guests at ceremony at Hwata Secondary: Representatives of Provincial Education Department, local Chief, local community, Principal of Hwata Secondary, Project Manager & Contractor with key staff, Rotary Club of Norwood and D9210 Harare



Handwashing basin –running water in school toilet blocks is locally considered as “above state of the art” for rural schools

With work completed the schools now benefit from:

- **Access to safe drinking water:** since the completion of Water and Sanitation project, students now just go to any of the many taps/sinks on the school yard to fill up their water bottles. “Filling up one’s water bottle” it is a huge improvement, as previously, several kids were needed to manually pump with great effort water of poor quality and taste from an old well. Now, safe and tasty water is pumped by an electric pump from 60m deep bores and then fed via reticulation pipes to “water stations” across the campus.
- **Safe toilets allowing for privacy and dignity:** At Hwata Secondary, kids now have new toilets (13), all in individual cubicles with lockable doors, and with running water for handwashing. The girls’ section also includes a shower and should provide for improved menstrual hygiene.
- **Improved teacher well-being & motivation:** Teachers also enjoy better facilities with a new shower & toilet block built in close proximity to their houses. Teachers now consider Hwata a more attractive location for work.



Water on tap - at Muzarabani High School



Student toilet block: for girls on left with 6 toilets and 1 shower, boys on right with 7 toilets plus urinals



With water now available for irrigation, vegetables can now be grown in the school garden to supplement school meals.

SUSTAINABLE TEACHING, LEARNING & COMMUNICATION HUBS – AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY, DAP PROJECT

NoBarriers was fortunate to have been accepted for funding by the Australian Embassy in Zimbabwe for the roll-out of “Sustainable Teaching, Learning & Communication Hubs” for both schools. The total value of Direct Aid Program grant: USD35,041.

These *Hubs* are to provide the schools with electricity and internet infrastructure and basic IT-equipment to advance the schools’ teaching and learning capabilities. The *Hub* project, implemented during May 2023, entailed the following components (per school):

- **Installation of large, battery based solar systems:** both schools regularly experienced major power outages: on 8 out of 10 days, with the average outage lasting for 16 hours.
The solar services are connected to the schools’ administration buildings only, which have power points for appliances / charging of phones / laptops (classrooms have no electrical wiring).
- **Large, portable battery:** to be charged by solar energy, which then can be taken to the classrooms to power laptops and projector.
- **Installation of satellite internet services:** Because of the locations being very remote with poor mobile coverage and no landlines, satellite internet connection is required.
- **IT-equipment -printer, laptop, projector and screen (1 item each per school):** to enable teachers to better prepare lessons and lesson materials to be shared with learners via printed copy or screening during class.
- **ICT-training workshop for teachers:** a workshop was conducted to train all teachers and admin staff of both schools in the safe and sustainable use of the solar system and IT-equipment, including integrating ICT into teaching and learning.

Needless to say, that teachers, admin staff and students from both schools are very much excited about finally having all the components in place on which to build modern-day teaching and learning practices: reliable source of power, internet connectivity plus a minimum set of IT-equipment.

Our aim is to assist the schools over time in offering online learning to their students, especially in the area of vocational training. We also know, that for this to occur more IT-equipment, especially laptops and tablets are needed.

We thank the Australian Embassy and ultimately, the Australian Government and Australian Taxpayers for having laid the foundation for major educational advancements.



Solar panels mounted and fenced to protect from livestock



Printer (high volume capacity) being installed at Muzarabani



Excited students at Hwata Secondary



ICT-Teacher Training Workshop, 19 May

NOBARRIERS' INITIATIVES--SCHOOL YEAR 2023, 1ST HALF CHALLENGES - *continued*

Although the focus was on improving the schools' learning infrastructure through the *Sustainable Hub Project* (see page 8), we continued to deliver the core initiatives needed to overcome barriers to the education of the learners at Muzarabani High and Hwata Secondary Schools:

1. School Meals

At the start of each term (Term 1 in January; Term 2 in May) NoBarriers delivered maize, beans and cooking oil to both schools for the preparation of daily hot meals for students and teachers.

2. Menstrual & Sexual Health

In March all newly enrolled girls (Form 1) received their "Sanitary Starter Kit" (re-usable pads, undies) plus a set of toiletries. The toiletry kits (bath & laundry soaps, petroleum jelly) were also distributed to girls in the other grades and to all boys.

The distribution was accompanied by a workshop on Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights conducted by Sanitary Aid Zimbabwe and nurses from the local clinic.

3. School Fees

NoBarriers continues to pay each term the school fees for 92 children from vulnerable families. 18 of these learners plan to sit examinations later this year. NoBarriers stepped up and paid these fees as well.

4. Bikes

In 2023, 53 more children enrolled in Form 1 than in the previous year (+42%). This brought with it an unexpected high number of long-distance learners: 78 children with a distance of 6+ kilometers from home to school needing a bike to overcome the barrier of distance.

Facing this unexpected funding challenge, NoBarriers was greatly assisted by its partner World Bicycle Relief (WBR) which donated 43 bikes, while NoBarriers provided the other 35. Thanks to WBR's generosity, all distance challenged Form 1 learners can since May 2023 pursue their education without fatigue and long hours walking.

CHALLENGES

We at NoBarriers are excited about the developments we could observe at our two partner schools over the past 2 years: more students are enrolled - many who else would not continue with their secondary schooling --and improved school attendance.

These positive results, however also mean that increased quantities of school meal supplies and of sanitary & toiletry kits are needed. More vulnerable children present themselves for school fee support and more students with long distances to school hope to receive a bicycle. In brief, more funds are needed to support ongoing program commitments.

This pressure is compounded by two additional factors:

- **Hyper-inflation:** Zimbabwe's consumer price inflation during calendar year 2022 was 230%. We are trying to mitigate this by dealing mainly in USD and by sourcing supplies from trusted, supportive providers. But we still experience cost increases ahead of forecasts.
- **Unfavourable AUD / USD exchange rate:** Over the past 12 months we had to cope with a lower AUD/USD exchange rate, which caused a 12%-decline of "purchasing power" of funds raised in Australia.

DONATING

If you are in a position to help us supporting more students to access education, please donate towards our "More Mouths to Feed" appeal via the button below. The money you give will make a difference and is tax deductible.

[Please help us "More Mouths to Feed"](#)

Thank you for your support.

Or use Electronic Fund Transfer:

- Account Name: No Barriers Education Foundation
- BSB: 065-115
- Account: 1048 8995

Please inform of the transfer by emailing admin@nobarriers.org.au

THANKING OUR SUPPORTERS

We know very much that none of the developments, we proudly documented in this Newsletter would have been possible without -

- the generous support of financial donors: individuals, businesses and foundations, and
- volunteers, who provided much needed skills, time and advice to the operations of NoBarriers.

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT.

We also like to thank all the organisations, which partnered with NoBarriers to deliver better assistance to the children of Muzarabani High and Hwata Secondary. They are:

- Australian Embassy in Zimbabwe, its Direct Aid Program and Australian Aid
- Lang Foundation
- Rotary Club of Norwood and Rotary E-Club of D9210 in Harare
- Sanitary Aid Zimbabwe; Solar Energy Plus, Infomax
- World Bicycle Relief

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS COOPERATION.

NoBarriers' Executive Director is planning to travel to Zimbabwe in February 2023 to visit the schools to review existing initiatives and to assess the overall situation. The outcome of this visit will refine NoBarriers' program for 2023.

For now, NoBarriers remains committed to delivering its 3 core initiatives:

- School Meals
- School Fee Support
- Menstrual & Sexual Health

Learning Materials – Continuation

We will also continue with our Learning Material initiative, which was started in May 2021. Click [here](#) for video.

We are awaiting input from the school administration to determine for which subjects and grades books are most urgently needed.



Sustainable Teaching, Learning and Communication Hubs

We are currently investigating funding options to provide both schools with solar systems (battery based) and internet connectivity (plus laptops, printers, projectors and mobile power banks) with the aim for the schools to develop into “*Sustainable Teaching, Learning and Communication Hubs*”. This then could become the platform on which online learning and vocational training can be built.

Note: Both schools urgently require solar energy systems as they experience power outages on 2/3 of all days, with the average outage lasting 12+ hours.