



Newsletter Dec 22

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



Adelaide Vevedza, who had to walk every day 15km from her home to Hwata Secondary School, receiving a NoBarriers bike on 14 October. Click here to see [her story](#).

Inside This Issue

P2: School Year 2022

P3: Core Initiative 1: School Meals

P4: Core Initiative 2: School Fee Support

P5: Core Initiative 3: Menstrual & Sexual Health

P6: Bicycles for commute from Home to School

P7: Plans for School Year 2023

P7: Thanking all our Supporters

SCHOOL YEAR 2022**1. School year 2022 – finally a “normal” year**

School year 2022, despite starting 2 weeks later than scheduled (because of teachers striking), proved to be the first “normal” school year since the start of the pandemic in 2022: classes were held without any further interruptions, the school year run its full length and ended on 2 December.

This sense of normality is also reflected in improved student enrollments and attendance rates at the two schools supported by NoBarriers: Muzarabani High and Hwata Secondary, in Mashonaland Central Province, Zimbabwe.

- Enrollments increased across the two schools by 4% since April 2021: During the 3rd term (Sep to Dec), a total of 566 students were enrolled across the two schools. The gender balance was about equal: 285 girls and 281 boys.
- Student attendance also improved over the same period from 93% to 98%.

At NoBarriers, we like to think, that the continued delivery of our core initiatives of 1) daily school meals, 2) school fee support and 3) menstrual & sexual health assistance contributed to these improvements.

2. Worsening economic situation in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe’s economic activity slowed in 2022, as a result of worsening agricultural conditions and price instability. Inflation is expected to be 213% by the end of December 2022. The ongoing war in the Ukraine and resulting supply problems for key food items such as grain and cooking oil, fertilizer and fuel were a major factor in Zimbabwe’s escalating inflation rate.

GDP growth is projected to be 3.4% (down from 5.8% in 2021) due to reduced agricultural production because of insufficient rains and increasing agricultural input costs.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa is struggling to tackle this economic crisis, which began many years ago under former President Robert Mugabe.

3. One third of Zimbabweans were facing hunger

Climate change is bringing harsher and more frequent drought to Zimbabwe, including to Mashonaland Central, threatening the staple maize crop: Zimbabwe’s production fell by 43% in the current season due to poor rainfall.

The United Nations' World Food Program estimated that during 2022 five million Zimbabweans - a third of the population - were facing hunger.

Given the deteriorating food supply situation in the country and especially in impoverished, drought affected provinces like Mashonaland Central, NoBarriers remains committed supporting the students at its partner schools with daily meals: It delivered to the schools throughout the year much needed supplies of maize, beans / soya products and cooking oil. These supplies ensured that students received a substantial meal at lunchtime to nourish them during their long days away from home.

**4. Key Activities at partner schools**

Since the last Newsletter, June 2022 we delivered the following activities at the schools:

- **Jun 2022:** Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights workshops with all students (p.5).
- **Sep 2022:** Food supply delivery for Term 3 (p.3).
- **Oct: 2022:** Bicycle distribution to students with long distances from home to school (p.5).
- **Nov 2022:** Sewing workshop for re-usable sanitary pads for all girls in their final school year (p.5).

Core Initiative 1: School Meals

Throughout the school year we made three deliveries, at the start of each term, supplying a total of –

- 19t of maize,
- 2.4t of beans / soya products – for protein, and
- 460l of cooking oil.

These supplies – with the help of community volunteers, who prepared the meals - ensured that students could enjoy a substantial meal at lunchtime. Click [here](#) for video.

Annual Student Survey - Findings

The survey of students, now conducted twice, first in September 2021 and more recently in November 2022 confirms the following:

- Over half of all students, feel hungry while at school: 59% of all boys and 45% of all girls.
This is not surprising, given that many have to leave home very early and walk long distances to get to school on time.
- About 75% of all students feel *“knowing that at school they are providing food makes [them] want to come to school”*.

Based on this, we concluded:

- School meals continue to be much needed to supplement children’s nutrition and to sustain them throughout the day.
- School meals remain effective in drawing children back to school.



Core Initiative 2: School Fee Support

Our School Fee Support initiative aims to encourage school attendance for girls and boys from vulnerable families who otherwise would not be able to pay required fees. Without the payment of school fees, students will not be eligible to receive graduation certificates and recognition of their learning.

Currently we are paying school fees for 92 children from vulnerable families - 48 girls and 44 boys.

- Children living with elderly grandparents, as one or both parents are deceased.
- Children with parents with severe health problems or disability; and
- Children, living with siblings or alone without any adult guardian.

The initiative covers school and examination fees until students complete their secondary education with either O- or A-levels.

We are excited, that 2 of the 9 Form 4-students we supported last year and who sat O-level examinations in December 2021, are now continuing their education with A-level studies. This is a “A-level”-continuation rate of 22% compared to 5% average for the whole district.

Also, it is exciting to note, that the schools use the fee income they receive from NoBarriers to undertake much needed maintenance on their run-down school buildings. For instance, Hwata Secondary has used a proportion of the fee income to install new doors at its classroom blocks (see *before and after repair photos on right*).

Click [here](#) for video.

Annual Student Survey - Findings

According to our annual survey, (conducted twice, Sep 21 and Nov 22), children at our partner schools are motivated and keen to progress their education:

- About 75% feel confident that they will pass O-levels and graduate.
- 90% would like to progress their studies through to A-level.
- 90% feel supported by their parents and encouraged to do well at school.

Based on this, we conclude: Children at our partner schools struggle with physical and economic barriers to their education, but not because they lack motivation or support from their parents.



Hwata Secondary – March 2022, *before repairs*



Hwata Secondary – July 2022, *after repairs*

Core Initiative 3: Menstrual & Sexual Health

During this school year, our implementation partner Sanitary Aid Zimbabwe, delivered our Menstrual & Sexual Health program through 3 visits to the schools:

- To distribute –
 - to all girls dignity kits: re-usable/washable sanitary pads & undies.
 - to all students, boys and girls, toiletry kits: laundry & bath soaps - to build their confidence through improved appearance and hygiene.
- To conduct workshops on Menstrual & Sexual Health matters.
- To teach girls in their final year the making of reusable sanitary pads and give them sewing kits with all required materials and tools.

These visits followed the program as first implemented during 2021. However, learning from an evaluation conducted in late last year – and because of Zimbabwe’s ongoing high incidence of teenage pregnancy (which in most cases seems to end the education of the girl and often also of the teenage father), we decided to finetune the program:

Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights Workshop

We invited nurses from the local Primary Health Clinics to deliver the lessons given their strong position and respect in the community. These nurses delivered a fearless session spelling out to the students the risks of unprotected sexual contact, how to avoid these risks and where students can go for advice and assistance in these matters. We know this approach needs to be in place for years, before we will be able to see real change. However, schools already reported that during 2022 fewer girls abandoned school because of pregnancy than previously.

Re-usable Sanitary Pad Sewing Workshop

Learning from last year’s experience, we decided to expand the training workshop to include a session on how to develop a small income generating project, by using the self-made sanitary pads with other women in the community as exchange for small livestock. We also encouraged the workshop participants to share their knowledge and skills with female family members and other women in the community. Click [here](#) for video.

Impact measured so far: 91% of all girls believe they now manage their menstruation better than before (78% in 2021)



Dignity kits



Kit distribution



Local nurse delivering Sexual Health & Rights workshop



Sanitary pad sewing workshop

Bicycles for commute from home to school

At our partner schools, distances from children's home to school are long: For 120 children the distance is 6 or more kilometres (one way). For 50 of them, the distance is even longer: 10+km and the only way to get to school is on foot.

These children used to arrive at school late and throughout the day they were fatigued. Often, they failed to attend.

To overcome this barrier, we commenced in October 2023 our bicycle Initiative:

- We purchased 120 bikes from World Bicycle Relief (WBR, also a not-for-profit), of which WBR donated 30. Each child with a distance of 6+km from home to school received a bike.
- The bikes are sturdy and were by WBR specifically designed for tough, African road conditions.
- Children (i.e. their guardians) signed a pledge, which provides that the child will retain the bike as their personal property, if they complete Form 4 and sit O-level exams. In similar projects conducted by WBR, this was an effective incentive resulting in improved school attendance and school completion rates.
- 2 community members were trained by WBR as bicycle mechanics in their workshops. These mechanics are responsible for the regular maintenance of the bikes and for ad-hoc repairs.
- The bicycle distribution (14-15 Oct) was attended by students and their parents, community leaders and the local police, who conducted road safety training.

If funds permit, we intend at the start of School Year 2023 to provide bikes to "long-distance" children who start their secondary education at our partner schools.

Click [here](#) for video.



Results of WBR's evaluation of similar projects:

- Bikes reduce travel time by 75%.
- Bikes improve school attendance by 28%.
- With bikes students' academic performance improves by 59%.
- For girls, bikes reduce the risk of sexual assault to/from school.

We have committed to monitoring the impact these bicycles may have on the lives and education of these children.

Plans for School Year 2023

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.

Thanking all our Supporters

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

- 1) the generous support of financial donors: individuals, businesses and foundations, and
- 2) 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:

- Rotary Club of Norwood and Rotary E-Club of D9210 in Harare
- Sanitary Aid Zimbabwe
- World Bicycle Relief

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND AND GENEROUS COOPERATION.



Donating

If you are in a position to assist us towards funding our 2023 program, please donate via the button below. The money you give will make a difference and is tax deductible.

[Make a life-changing donation now](#)

Thank you for your support.

Or use Electronic Fund Transfer:

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

Please send email informing of the transfer