

## STORIES FROM THE SCHOOLS

## 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