

STORIES FROM THE SCHOOLS

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Nourishing Hope: A Teacher-Farmer's Perspective on Drought, Muzarabani District, and School Meals



Ms Maweto in class, bringing her daughter "to work" while her nanny has a day off

Greetings, dear readers! As a teacher and a farmer rooted in Muzarabani District, Hwata secondary school, I find myself at the crossroads of two worlds—education and agriculture. Today, I bring you a tale that weaves together the narrative of drought, its profound impact on our community, and the vital role that school meals play in nurturing hope amidst adversity. Muzarabani District, once adorned with lush greenery and thriving farmlands, now bears the burden of a relentless drought. The scorching sun has become an unwelcome guest, withering crops and drying up our once-fertile soils. Livestock, the lifeblood of many families, suffer, and water sources dwindle. We find ourselves grappling with a formidable challenge, one that threatens our very existence. The situation is worse in Muzarabani district. People are relying on selling livestock to buy mealie meal from shops. To those without livestock it's a disaster. Some are now surviving on gold panning for barter trade to those bringing pockets of mealie meal. This is a very dangerous exercise to humans and it also leads to land degradation. Musengezi river which used to be a perennial river for the past years, is almost dry at this time of the year. That is a life threatening issue to both humans and livestock. In the past years it was experienced in some parts of the country, but this year it's said to be the whole of Southern Africa Muzarabani area being one of the most affected.

As a farmer, I witness the hardships inflicted upon our community firsthand. The drought has taught us invaluable lessons of resilience and adaptation. We have explored water conservation techniques, embracing innovative farming practices to minimize the impact of these arid times. It is an ongoing battle, demanding constant vigilance and unwavering determination.

In the face of such adversity, our children's education becomes a beacon of hope.

Schools in Muzarabani District, Hwata Secondary in particular, are not mere institutions of learning; they are sanctuaries that provide solace and nourishment to young minds. Education equips them with the tools to transcend the harsh realities of drought, empowering them to build a better future.



Failed maize crop in Muzarabani District

Amidst the drought's turmoil, school meals emerge as a lifeline for our children. They not only satisfy their hunger but also serve as a catalyst for their education. Proper nutrition enhances cognitive abilities, enabling students to concentrate, learn, and thrive. It is through school meals that we nourish both body and mind, ensuring that our children have the strength to face the challenges that lie ahead. If it wasn't for the school meals provided at Hwata Secondary through No Barriers to Education Foundation, we would have a lot of school dropouts. But they are coming in their numbers since they are saying, "It's much better we have a solid meal at lunch, even if there is little or nothing for supper at home, we survive."



Ms Maweto in her sorghum field. The failed crop deprives her family of a much needed food staple. It also leaves her out of pocket as the funds spent on fertilizer did not generate any income.

As a teacher-farmer, I stand at the intersection of education and agriculture, witnessing the profound impact of drought on my district. Yet, amidst the arid landscapes, we find solace in the nourishment provided by school meals. These meals not only satiate hunger but also fuel a brighter future for our children. Let us continue to nurture hope, for it is through unity, education, and sustenance that we shall prevail against the challenges of drought, one meal at a time.