

## 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. The 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*