



Announcing NEF's New Scholarship Beneficiaries and Partnering School!

We are excited to announce the 2023 NEF scholarship recipients! Among the new beneficiaries are four young men, the first time since NEF was launched that we've awarded scholarships to male students. In addition, NEF is now partnering with a second community school near Lake Victoria, called St. Stephen's Bujwang'a Mixed Day Secondary School. Please read on to learn more about the beneficiaries, Bujwang'a Secondary School, and why we decided to include boys/men.

The Beneficiaries:

The following students are all in Form 2/Sophomore Year and they were chosen from an applicant pool of more than 55 students across both schools. To be eligible for support the student must display significant financial need; be disciplined and dedicated to their studies; hold a C or higher; display leadership qualities; and have commitment from their parents/guardians.

BUSIJO SECONDARY SCHOOL

1. Silas, 2. Shalet, 3. Pioneer, and 4. Spencer



New scholarship recipients at Busijo Secondary School with their parents, NEF Program Manager, and members of the School Advisory Committee.

BUJWANG'A SECONDARY SCHOOL

1. Mercy, 2. Moses, 3. Shalvine, and 4. Cliff



New scholarship recipients at Bujwang'a Secondary School with their parents, NEF Program Manager, and members of the School Advisory Committee.

BUJWANG'A SECONDARY SCHOOL PROFILE:

Bujwang'a Secondary School was established in February 2007 by three volunteer teachers as a community-initiated school with an enrollment of 25 students who comprised of 8 girls and 12 boys. The community contributed money to cater for their meals and other administrative costs. As at 2022, the school has an enrollment of 1,245 students, of which 634 are boys and 611 are girls. Bujwang'a Secondary School is also near Lake Victoria and about 4 km away from Busijo Secondary School where NEF has been operating in the Republic of Kenya since 2012.

WHY DID NEF DECIDE TO EXTEND SUPPORT TO ALL STUDENTS?

[“Why enforce a barrier to a young person striving to reach their potential? Why would we risk losing out on the contribution a child may make in the future because they do not fit within predetermined gender norms?” UNICEF, Gender Transformative Education \(December 2021\).”](#)

When NEF started 10 years ago, we were responding to a call from the community to help keep their girls in school. At that point, there was a growing awareness that girls and women were falling behind in education - millions were out of school and they were more likely than boys to drop out due to various socio-economic reasons. Around the world, governments and non-governmental organizations increased efforts and started dedicated programs to uplift girls in education and other aspects of society. At NEF, we dedicated our scholarships for girls entering high school in order to improve their access to secondary and tertiary education, and increase retention rates in school. We have supported 26 young women, eight of whom have attended college and inspired their siblings and peers to strive for the same goal. In addition, we have implemented several initiatives that have benefited the school and greater community, including all-school workshops focused on health and well-being, and face masks and hygiene stations during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, some of the outcomes reported by the school administration at Busijo Secondary School include increased knowledge and application of decision-making, early pregnancies reduced by 70%, and 80% of girls with regular class attendance.

NEF has been approached by male students for support, and during consultative meetings with the community stakeholders – teachers, administrators, parents, and education officers – have brought up the issue of the neglected boy-child and their disempowerment. They specifically called upon NEF to stand tall on this by expanding and targeting more beneficiaries by incorporating boys who exhibit and meet the scholarship requirements just as the girls. As stated in Unicef's 2021 report [Gender Transformative Education](#), “Boys and men are affected by gender norms too, restricted by harmful norms of masculinity. (...) When it comes to teaching and learning positive gender norms, if we leave boys behind, then the problem becomes greater,” to the detriment of girls too. “Education can reinforce existing norms or challenge and transform them, not just for children, but for their parents, communities, and nations.” We need education systems that are inclusive and equitable, and provide quality education to all students regardless of their gender or identity.

To truly be a community-driven program, we need to listen and work hand-in-hand with our primary constituents. We want to help achieve the [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) 4.1](#) to provide “equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes” for all boys and girls by 2030, and set an example for other organizations/agencies providing educational support. Therefore, one of the focal areas in the NEF Strategic Plan 2023-2027 is expanding our reach to provide scholarships for boys as well as girls, and to create gender-sensitive programming, including mentorship and monitoring, that addresses the particular needs of all students. NEF remains dedicated to empowering girls and women through access to education by breaking down the barriers that prevent them from going to school and staying in school. We believe we will be better able to do this by bringing boys and men along as advocates and full partners. We want to contribute to the movement towards gender transformative education and create an open, welcoming, supportive environment where the students can uplift each other and have healthy competition.