

# Hi

I'm glad you have come to my homeland, Namibia. My name is Tuilika and I'm 9 years old. I live in the outskirts of Swakopmund. It is a city located in an unusual place. It lies on the shore of the Atlantic ocean and is also adjacent to probably the oldest desert in the world – the Namib. So although there is water nearby, the area where I live is dry and sandy. Nature makes the spaces between towns and villages in my country large and almost uninhabited.

I have prepared a few photos for you so that you can imagine what the neighbourhood I live in looks like.



This is what the streets in our neighbourhood look like.



This is my little sister playing on the street near the house.

You have to have a car to get to work, school or a doctor. Not all families have one. My neighbours who live in my area don't have cars, either. It makes it very difficult for us to get around. It is more than 7 kilometres from my home to the nearest hospital. We have to walk this distance on foot. It's a 1.5 hour march just to go one way. Imagine how difficult it is to walk when someone is unwell, ill, and has to get to the clinic. That's why I was so happy when I got a bike!

For a long time I couldn't learn how to ride it, though. I kept falling, I was all covered in sand. I tried learning by going downhill and putting my legs up to keep my balance better. I tried pushing off with my legs and going a bit faster, but the pedals kept hitting my legs. My mum tried to help me and stabilise my bike with a stick, but as soon as she let go, I fell. I did not give up and even though I was getting cuts, scratches and bruises, and it hurt, I kept getting back on my bike. It took a long time. Sometimes I was so tired that I wanted to give up learning.

Eventually I learned to ride! I'm so happy because of that! With the bicycle, I can get to school and back home much faster. Before that, getting to school took me almost an hour one way. Now it's only 15 minutes! I have time for myself and for playing with my friends! I transport my friends with the bicycle. I can also take someone who's not feeling well to the doctor. They just sit on the back of my bike and we're on our way. If that person is a lot heavier than I am, I lend my bike to an adult. I transport shopping on my bike. Having a bike in our neighbourhood is important. Not only can we go to different places independently. We can also help others. Every time one of the people we know buys or gets a bike, several other people use it – his family, friends, neighbours.

See what a large group we are!  
We appreciate the fact that we can be independent!



Riding a bike makes me feel free; it makes my life and the life of my loved ones easier. I think such independence is of great value; being independent is very important to me.

*I send you my warmest greetings,  
Tuilika*