

A RIDE INTO THE FUTURE



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It's a bright school day again and most of the children in the community are off early for classes...

As usual, Grace, a young bright girl can only look from the corridor of her home...

Oh God. How I wish I was also dressed in my uniform to join them go to school.
Hmm.

Grace! Where are you? You are running late.



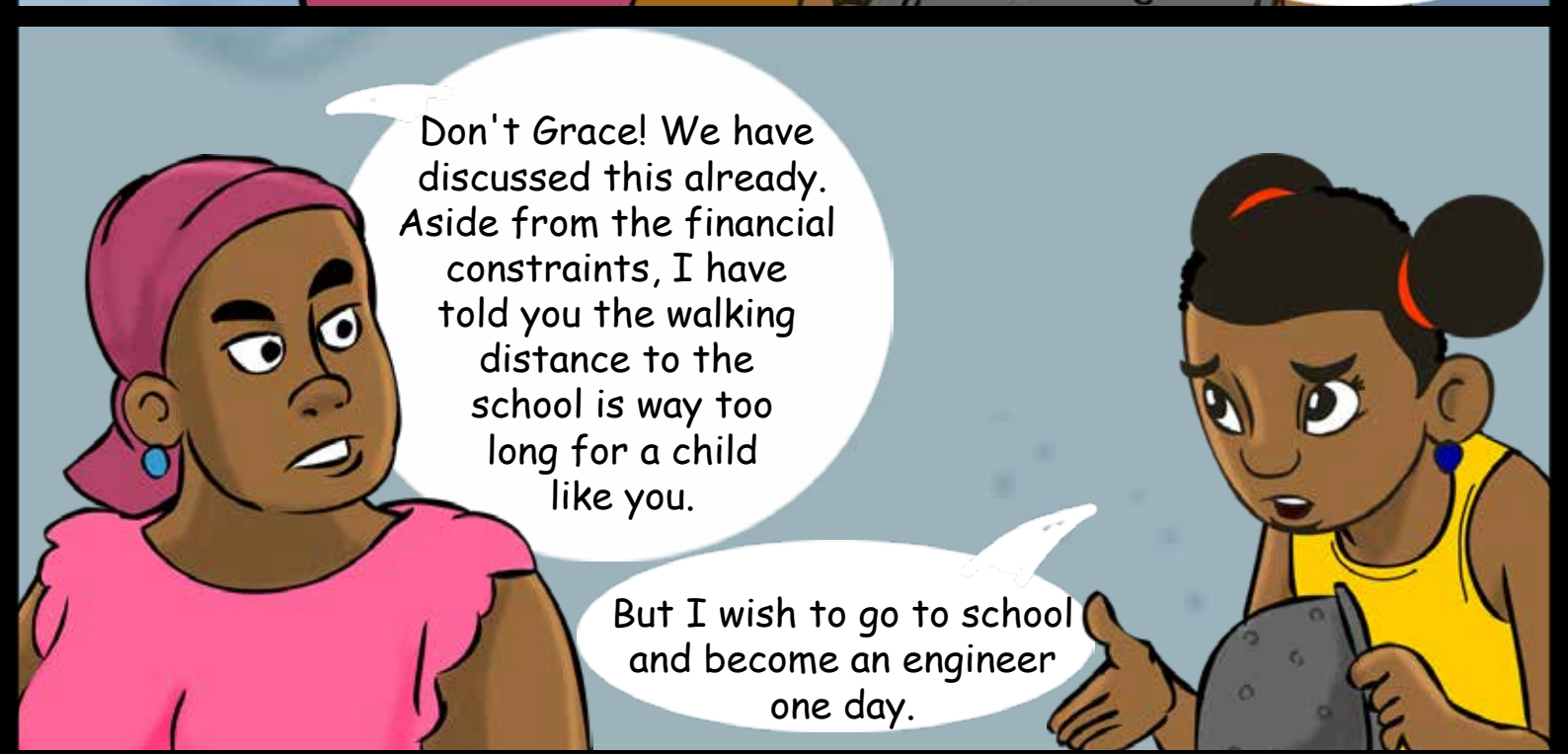


The bowl must
return to
Maame Serwa

Yes mother.


And what's with the
dropping face?

Mother...when
can I also join my
friends to...?



Don't Grace! We have
discussed this already.
Aside from the financial
constraints, I have
told you the walking
distance to the
school is way too
long for a child
like you.

But I wish to go to school
and become an engineer
one day.



That schooling and engineer
ambition can rest for now.
You do as I say. Pick the
items and off you go.

Grace sadly leaves the house and makes her way to the town centre to deliver the goods...

All I want is to be in school. How long will I continue to be left behind?



There you go Auntie Serwaa.

Thank you Grace. Regards to your mother.



The whole morning, as usual, was spent on errands, house hold chores, a little break and more chores...



Soon, school was over and most of the kids are returning home...

Hello Grace, we are back. Hope to see you soon.

Sure. Consider me there.

Great! We have some new books you might be interested in.



That Evening at Beatrice's home...

So what's the answer to this one?

It's Egypt!

Oh wow. You know the answer? That's incredible.

Thanks.

You are smart and I am wondering why you are still not in school, Grace.

Well, Hmm..It's a long story Beatrice. But I am hopeful that one day this will pass.

I really look forward to that.

Soon, It was time to go...

Bye Grace.

Alright. It's running late. I need to go home.

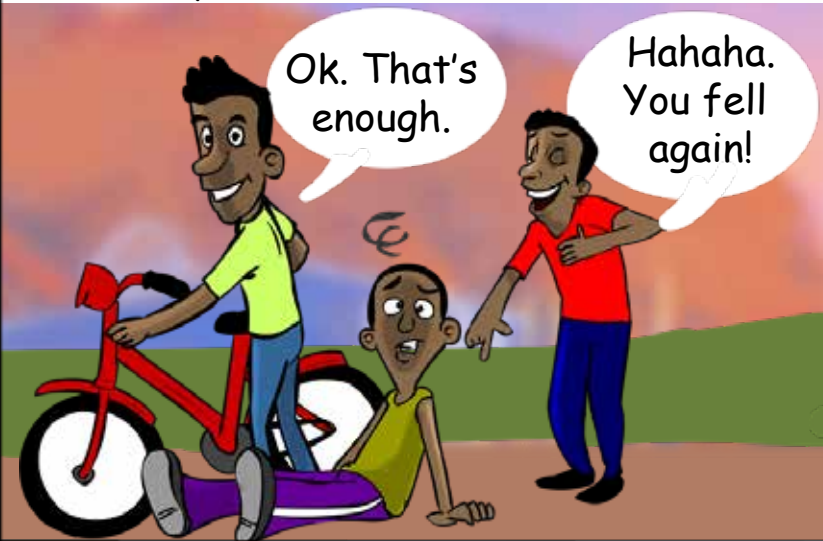
Sure. It's always been fun studying with you.

Early the next day, Grace wakes up to the noise of excited kids in the neighborhood.



It's Saturday! I wonder what could be so exciting out there at this time.

It's Abeiku, a visitor to the town having some fun with the children taking turns on his bicycle...



Ok. That's enough.

Hahaha. You fell again!

Let me show you how to ride... hands free.



Maami. Can I go play with my firends outside, please?



Sure. Right after your morning chores.

Quickly, Grace gets the chores out of the way...



Abeiku spots Grace staring at them from distance...

Would you like to try
your luck riding?

No way. She's
a girl. She can't
ride. We
couldn't.


Well, who knows?
She still can give
it a shot. Would
you?

What a man can
do, a woman can
do better! Happy
falling! Hahaha!

Let's see
how she falls!

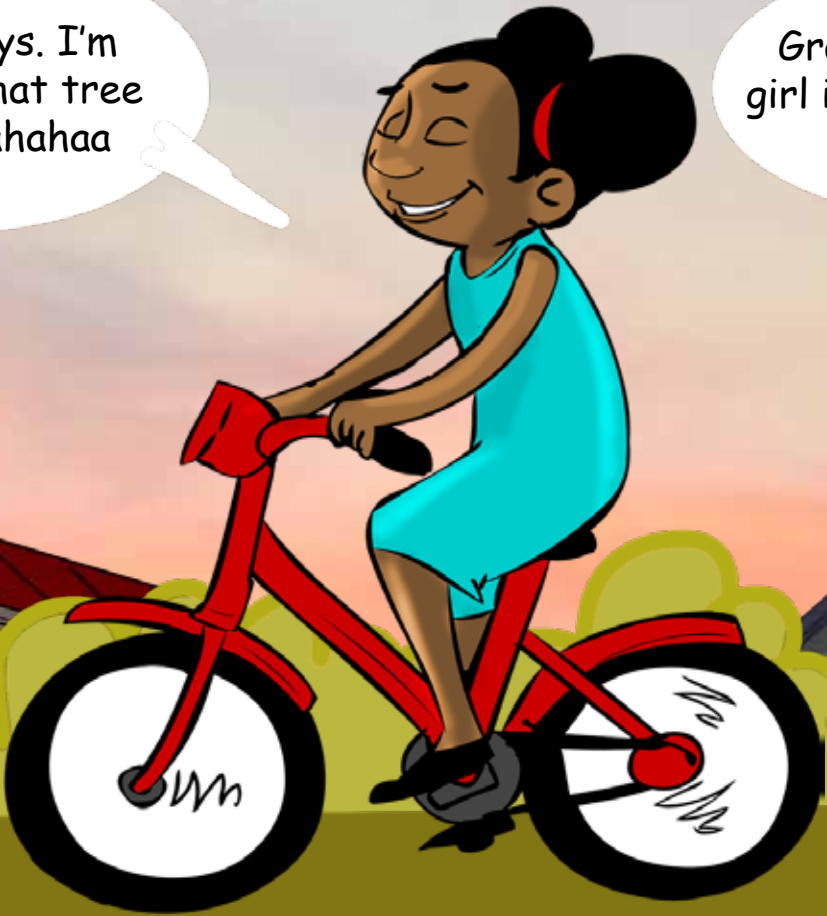
Hahaha!

Ride on!




Wha..what!!!
Unbelievable!
Is she riding??

I can't believe
my eyes!



Watch me boys. I'm
making it to that tree
and back. Hahahaa

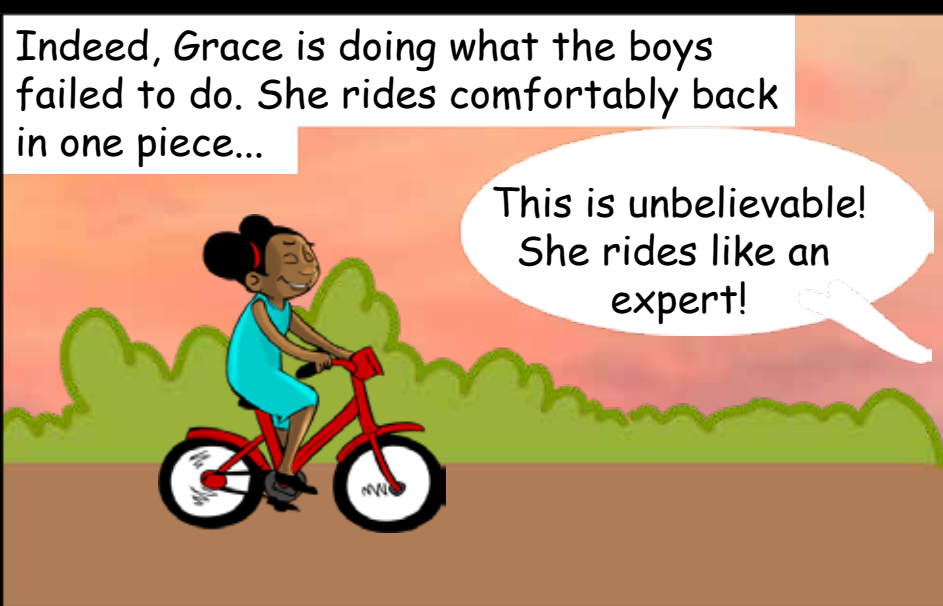
Gracious God! The
girl is riding the bike!



Hahaha. I am loving
this. Go Grace! Show
the boys how to do it.

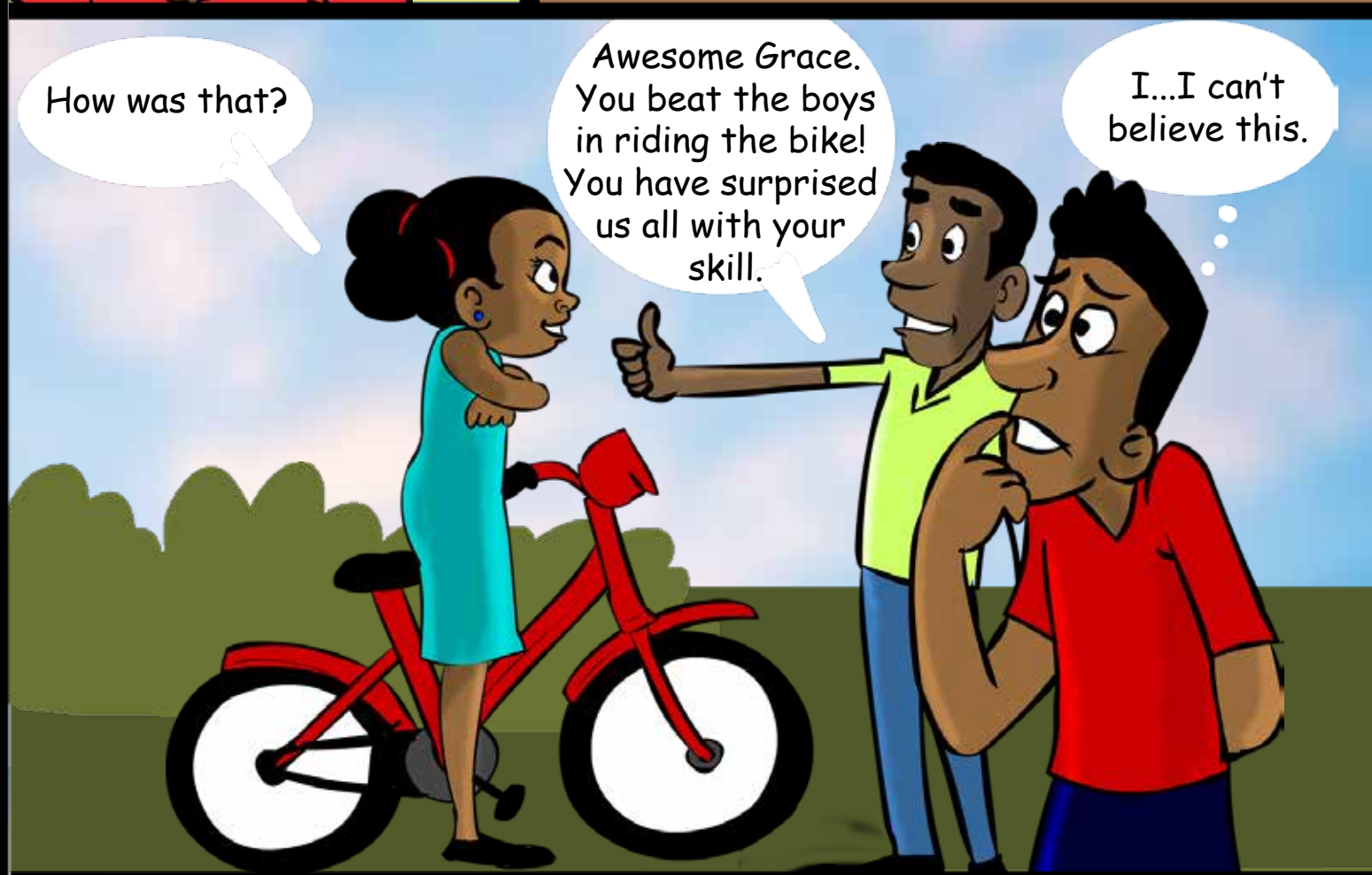


OMG!
She rides
Indeed!



Indeed, Grace is doing what the boys
failed to do. She rides comfortably back
in one piece...

This is unbelievable!
She rides like an
expert!



How was that?

Awesome Grace.
You beat the boys
in riding the bike!
You have surprised
us all with your
skill.

I...I can't
believe this.



Can you do that
again? Hahaha.

Sure.
Why not?

Grace picks herself on the bike and once again paddles her way even further and with more confidence.

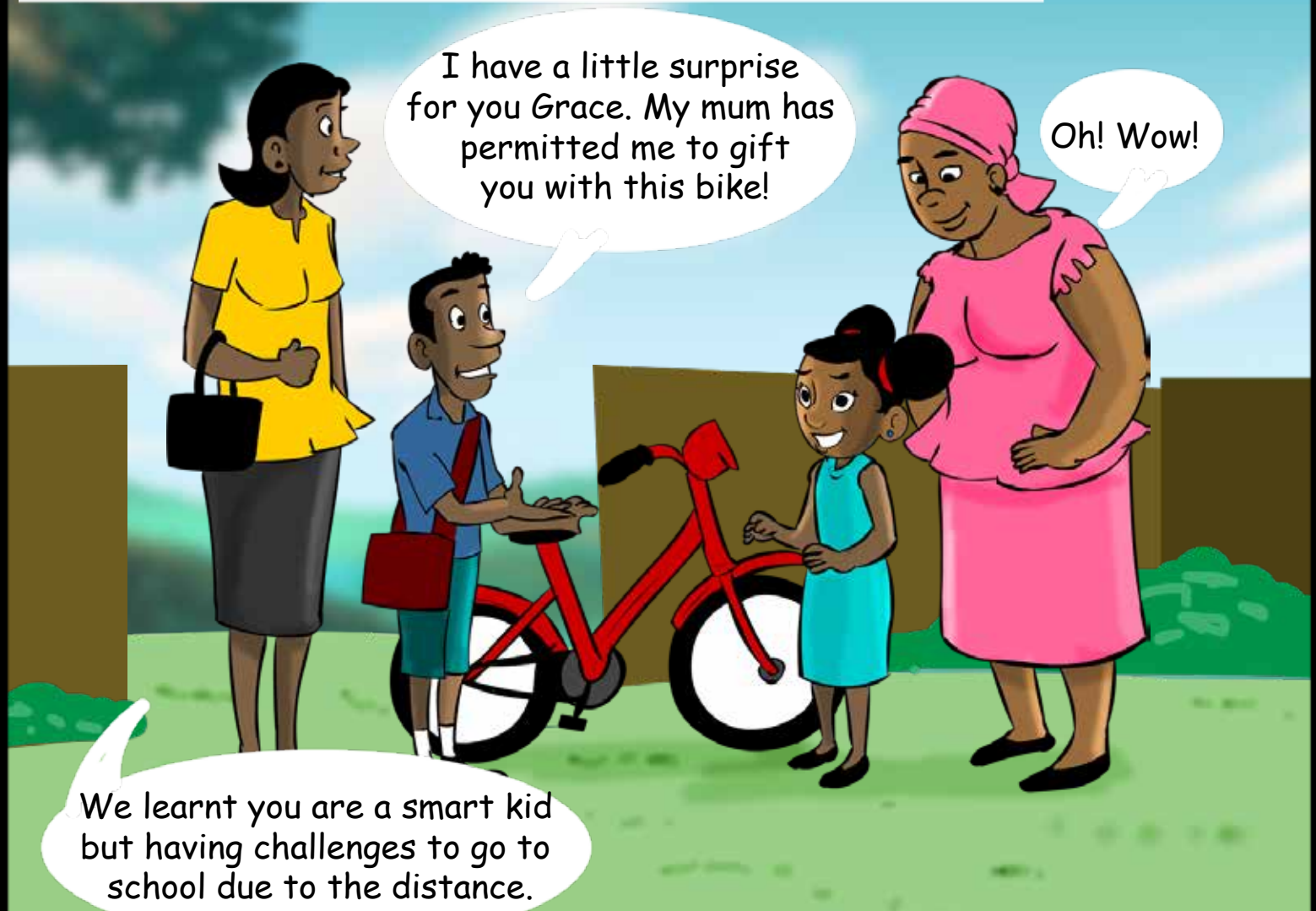
The boys had no choice than to follow her with cheers and jubilation.

Yohooo!
Yes!

Hurray!!
This is awesome!
The first female
bike rider in town!



Soon it was time to return to the big city. Everybody was sad. Just when they were getting used to Abeiku and the fun he brought to the kids, he had to leave.



I have a little surprise for you Grace. My mum has permitted me to gift you with this bike!

Oh! Wow!

We learnt you are a smart kid but having challenges to go to school due to the distance.

We hope you find this gift useful.

Absolutely! I am so speechless Abeiku. Thank you so much!

Mother, I guess the worry over "long distance" issue is over! I can now start going to school.

Absolutely! My girl!

The bike indeed was a blessing. Now she can, not just ride to school to get an education, but also run a few more errands for the family with much ease.

I will drop off these items
before heading to school.
I can't be late again.
Hahahaha.



Grace soon became popular in school and would be found giving a few of her friends a ride home after school.

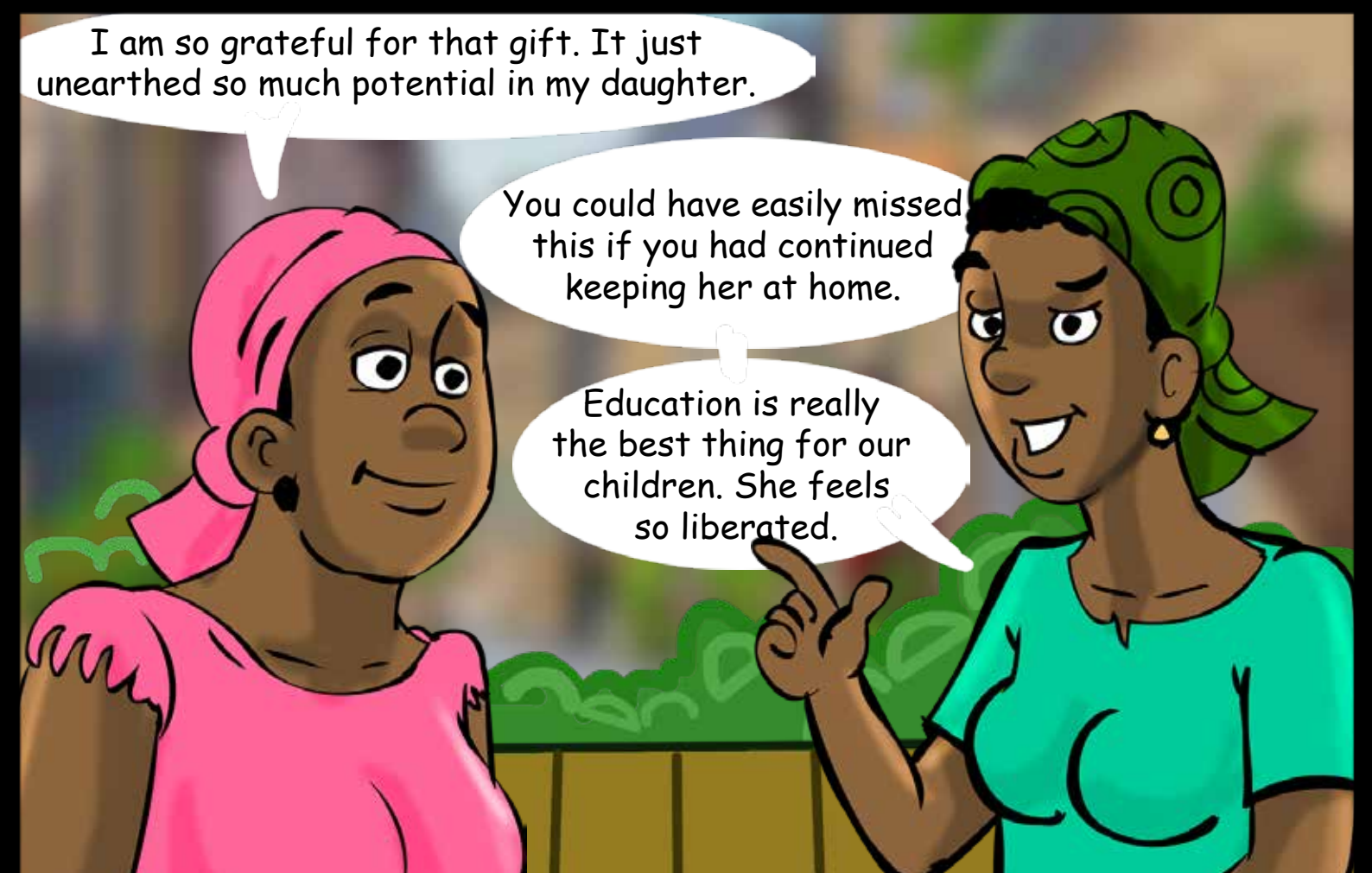


I must say, your daughter really looks different. She looks empowered.

Yes. And she has been so popular earning a nickname, "The Girl on the red bike". Imagine that!

She's also been helping other kids remain punctual at school with that bike.

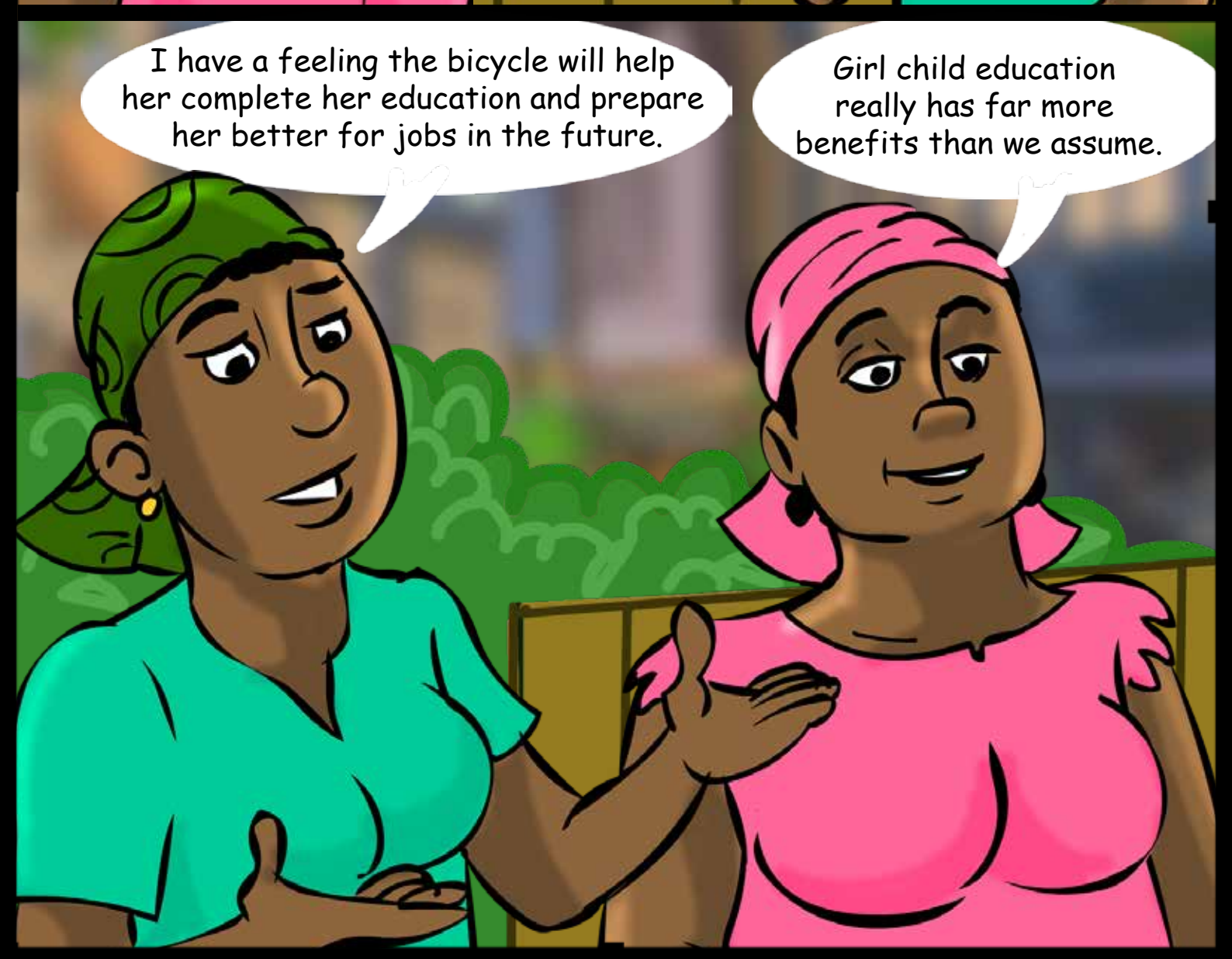




I am so grateful for that gift. It just unearthed so much potential in my daughter.

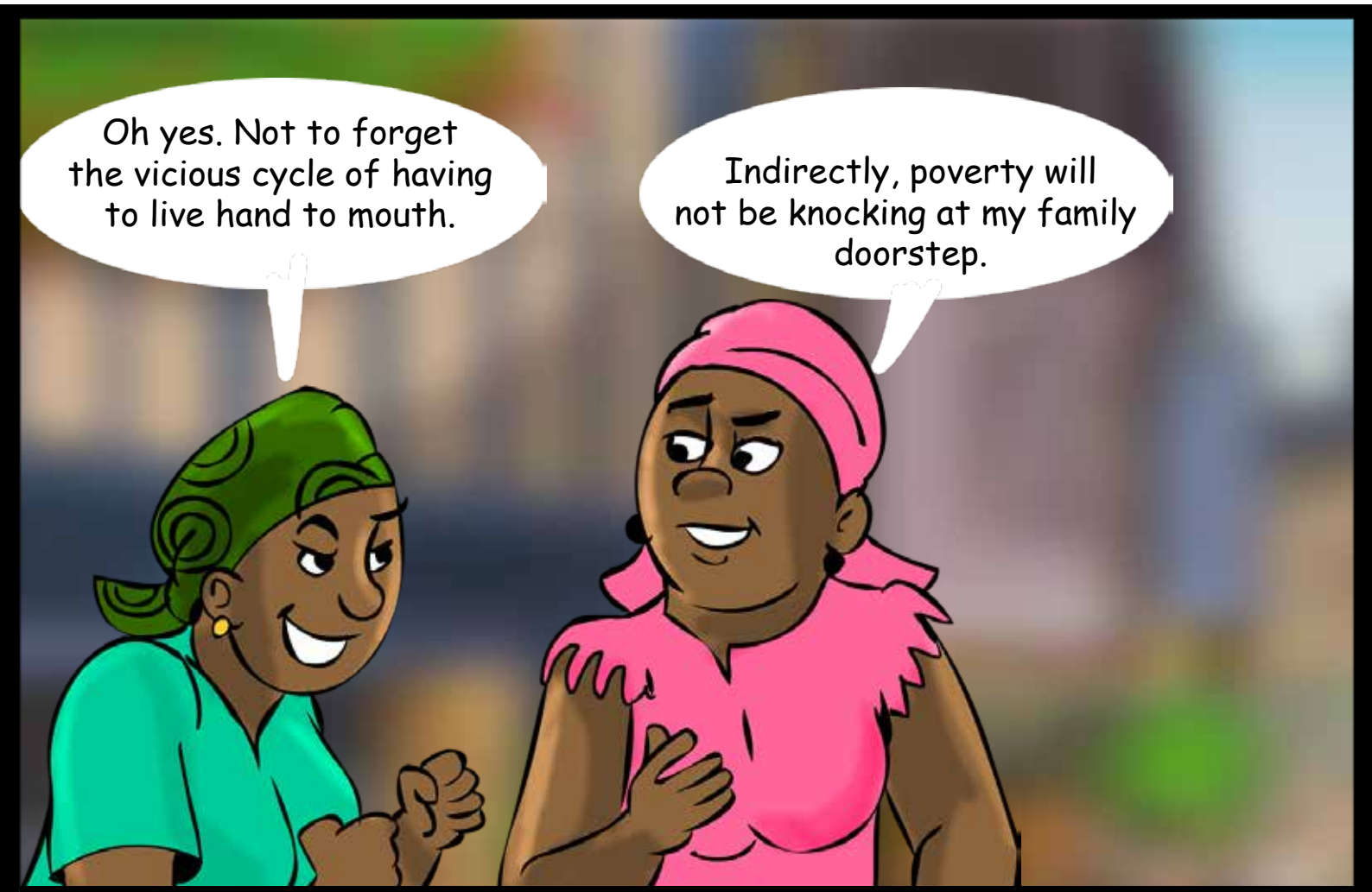
You could have easily missed this if you had continued keeping her at home.

Education is really the best thing for our children. She feels so liberated.




I have a feeling the bicycle will help her complete her education and prepare her better for jobs in the future.

Girl child education really has far more benefits than we assume.

A comic panel showing two women in conversation. The woman on the left is wearing a green headwrap and a teal shirt, smiling. The woman on the right is wearing a pink headwrap and a pink top, looking slightly concerned but smiling. They are outdoors with a blurred background.

Oh yes. Not to forget
the vicious cycle of having
to live hand to mouth.

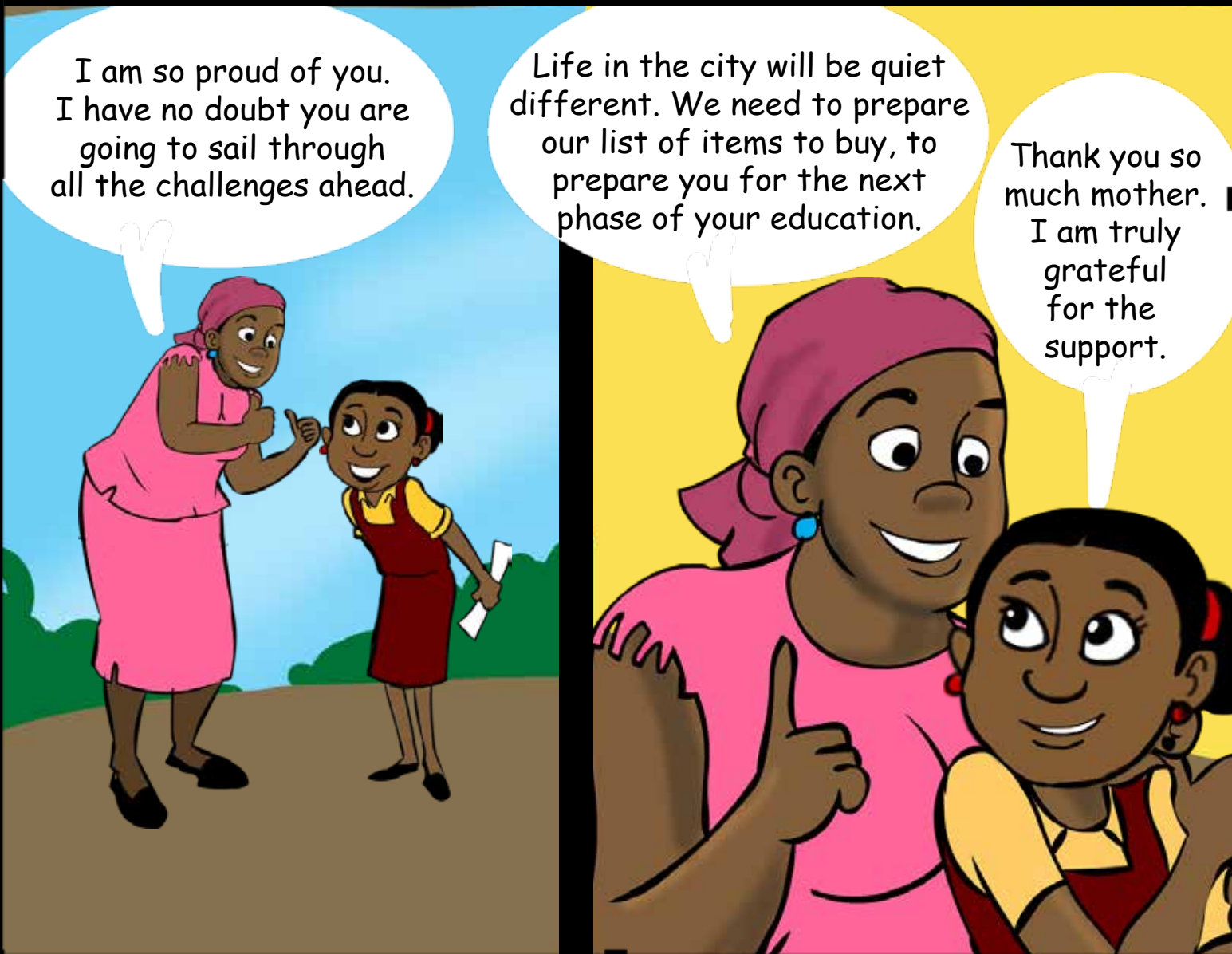
Indirectly, poverty will
not be knocking at my family
doorstep.

A comic panel showing the two women from the previous panel laughing heartily. The woman in the pink top is leaning back with her mouth wide open, and the woman in the teal shirt is also laughing, looking down. They are still outdoors.

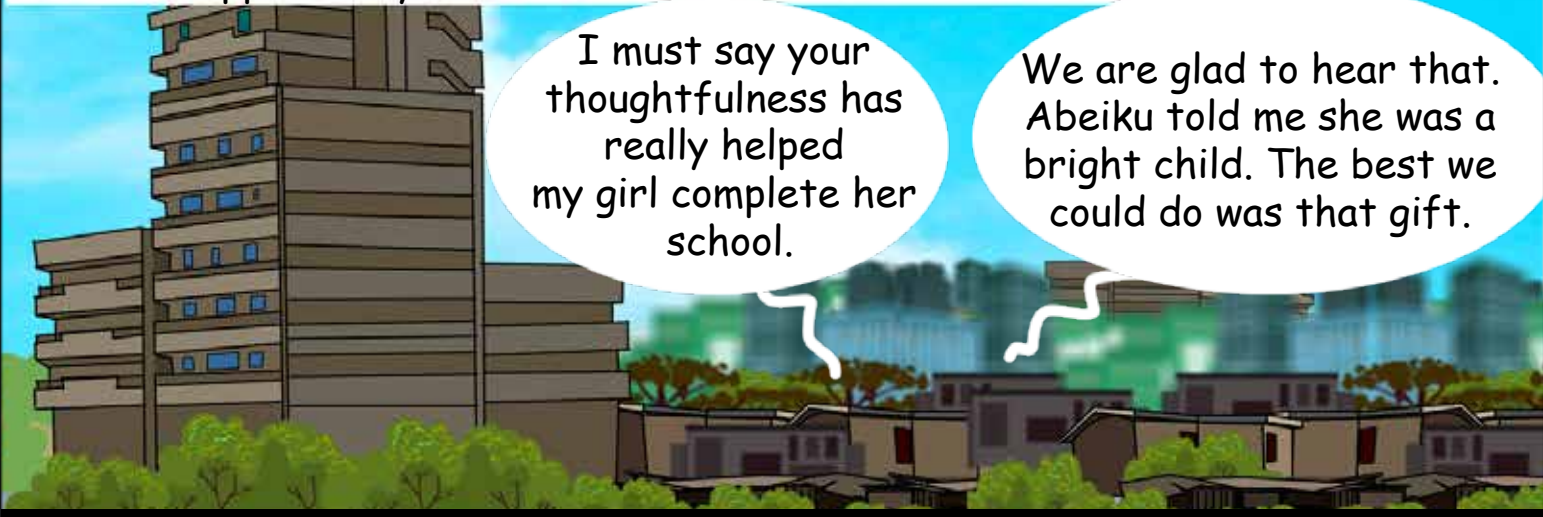
Hahahaha. Thanks
to Education!

Yes ooo.
Hahahaa.

Indeed, with that gift, Grace managed to successfully ride through her primary to senior education. She passed and qualified for higher education in the city...



A few weeks later, Grace and her mother were in the city. They took the opportunity to meet Abeiku and her mother...



I must say your thoughtfulness has really helped my girl complete her school.

We are glad to hear that. Abeiku told me she was a bright child. The best we could do was that gift.

Unlike many others, Grace arrived in school less tired, focused in class, punctual on daily basis. It really helped her improve her performance.

We are happy how far it has brought her.

I believed in you the day Abeiku told me about you. You have really proven me right. Go finish off your education and be what you aspire to be.

I will madam. Thank you so much.

After the visit, Grace and mother drove straight to the university campus, It was a whole new beginning for her...



Even though Grace found herself in a male dominated class, she was not deterred. In fact, she proved more of a tough student to beat for the top scoring positions in most of the subjects.



Her success and 'First Class Student' achievement did not come as a surprise. Grace became a successful engineer after graduating from the university...



She never forgot her roots. She always went back to the town twice a year to support more students into education by donating bicycles to the school children.

Bicycles will help children commute safer to school, keep them in school, improve student's performance, increase self-esteem, especially among girls.

I was empowered to sail through my education with the bike. It is my hope and dream that these gifts will do same for all the children here, especially, the girl child.



There is a rapturous applause from the gathering...


I really am inspired.
I will make sure my
girl child gets educated
to become like her
one day

Grace beams with smile as she looks on at a girl attempting
to ride the bike for the first time.

You can
do it girl.

My mum tells
whatever I focus
to do, I can do it.

That's right
dear. Keep
the hope alive.

A woman with dark skin and short black hair, wearing a purple long-sleeved shirt and a yellow bracelet, is shown from the side with her right arm raised high in a cheering gesture. In the background, three girls are riding bicycles on a dirt path. The girl in the middle is wearing a light blue shirt and purple shorts, smiling with her eyes closed. The other two girls are shown in silhouette. The background is a soft-focus landscape with green hills and a blue sky. A speech bubble points from the woman towards the girls.

With determination,
a girl can do and become
anything she dreams
of. Just keep riding
on.



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