

FRIENDS of M.R.C.H

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2001

A report visit to M.R.C.H by Joe & Eileen Whittington on their visit to M.R.C.H, Feb/Mar 2001

It was so good to visit Rusike again and to spend some time with them all. We are always humbled by the resilience of our friends at the Home who are always full of joy to see us and share their ups and downs and generous hospitality. This is a difficult time for them and their country and they ask for our prayers for both and send their thanks for our continued interest, love and support.

Mr. Mangobe, the Superintendent, was due to retire on the 28th February and we had hoped to share the occasion with him. The Board of Governors however had felt unable to make an appointment for his successor as the only suitable applicant was not a Methodist and it was felt that this was necessary. Since our return, the post has been re-advertised but again it was not possible to appoint. Mr. Mangobe is therefore still in post but he is 70 years old - his health is not a 100% and would love to retire and tend his garden.

There was a shortage of fuel while we were there and we understand that has become more severe. It makes difficult such things as journeys to the Grain Marketing Board for grain to grind into mealie meal - their staple diet, and taking the children out for visits to the Doctor or the hospital.

Much of M.R.C.H land is productive; they grow maize and vegetables but are not self-sufficient. The poultry project during our visit, was waiting for the housing for the birds to be improved; we were told there was money to restock when the housing was ready. The pig project was functioning but they were finding it difficult to feed the pigs adequately. With late rains, daily thunderstorms and rain like a curtain, cultivation and harvest, which was due to start was very difficult.

The tailoring department making clothing for the children and also school uniforms to order from surrounding schools, generates a little income for the Home. Similarly the grinding mill grinds the corn for the Home and also, for 10 Zim Dollars per 20 kg, meal for the villagers. Unfortunately the village is very poor and in a have/have not society, some come in to steal from the Home. This has made it necessary to employ security -which is an added expense.

Mainly because of International reaction to the political situation, some donors have stopped their support, but without the help of overseas supporters it is hard to see how they would manage. We sat in on the Board's budget-planning meeting. It is not easy to plan a budget, when you have no idea what your income will be, it took a long time but eventually they came up with a balanced income/expenditure plan although there was a strong feeling that this did not give an accurate picture of how things really are.

The care of the children is still good and every effort is made to educate them and prepare them to return to the community as useful and productive citizens, though there is a serious unemployment problem and a few of the older children are still on site, helping where possible, as there is nowhere for them to go. The autographed banners are on the walls in the dining room and Lloyd proudly informed us, that the litter of 13 piglets with one of the pigs was the result of the gifts of a boar and a sow from volunteers at Rusike. I think he said the sow was a gift from Katie Robinson, and that this was the second litter.

Post is being opened before it reaches MRCH and any money is removed, but monies paid directly into their account by direct transfer is still reaching them.

As all education and medical care has to be paid for as well as the daily costs of running the Home, all that we can send to them by way of support is of tremendous value in a worsening situation.

It was harder that it has ever been to say goodbye to them and return here knowing how hard life is for them, and their determination to give care to the children. Their final request to us was that we pray for their country, there is a real fear that things could get worse before they get better, and also to pray for them, the staff and the children.

News from the Treasurer.

I am pleased to report that at the end of May we have received £10,000 in the current year. This is a very encouraging amount and I would like to express my thanks to all who have helped to raise this sum. Just when I think that the flow of funds is drying up, the postman surprises me by bringing letters containng more cheques. All of you know, through Press and Television that the situation in Zimbabwe is critical and this has had a catastrophic effect on the Children's Home. Government grants are now more or less non-existent and they are relying on ourselves, Qantas Airline Crew, and the Uniting Church of Australia for most of their funds. This means that the diet has been reduced and the staff does not always get paid. So if there is any way that you can raise money by a Coffee morning, Supper party, a Garden party or encourage your Church or friends to make a donation, then please do so. Every additional pound is very worthwhile and will help us to make regular remittances to them. Thank you for your support.

News from the Chairman.

The Friends work alongside NCH and JMA in helping MRCH. NCH and JMA assist the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe in appointing a development officer, who will provide a development plan. Progress on the development plan remains slow; a recent attempt to appoint a development officer did not find a candidate who satisfied the Board. They also support staff training, mainly for MRCH Staff and also some training programmes in other homes. The Staff have done well in a training course sponsored by NCH, and all nine gained a Certificate in Residential Care.

In recent discussion with Barry Barnes, NCH Director of Social Work in the London region he confirmed that the home is struggling financially. We may not realise how valuable our gifts are but Barry said "even crumbs are crucial, and may become loaves of Bread", to which we could add, or 'plates of sadza'

There is a lot of energy in the Home and people are managing to stay positive. However as we have already reported, the financial situation is tight (we would say desperate!) The Home hopes to buy food monthly to feed the children adequately. They have not always been able to do this - as money comes in, it is spent, and if it does not come in, food cannot be bought.

Following a request from the committee through the Chairman to Barry Barnes, we are pleased to report that NCH has agreed to send an exceptional grant of £5,000 out to the Home which will ease the situation in the short term.

If you would like to see more information re M.R.C.H, why not look them up on the Web, the address is www.matthewrusike.org

A date for your Diary - Please note the next AGM will now be held on Jan 26th 2002 and not Jan 19 as previously reported. More details in October Newsletter.