

Welcome to The Early Childhood Development Centre of Matthew Rusike Children's Home!



Hesi Shamwari (Hello friend)!

In Zimbabwe children do not start school(Grade one) until they are 5 or 6 years old depending on when they 'Graduate' due to their birthdate. As a result children at MRCH ECD (Matthew Rusike Children's Home Early Childhood Development Centre) range from 3-6 years old. Although sometimes we take older children who have no prior experience of attending school.

We are currently a split site due to our new building being in the process of completion. We currently have a room for our children who are 3-4 years old and a new room for our 4+year's children. In total we will have 3 classrooms, toilets, a dining room and a kitchen and huge outdoor area. We will eventually have enough space for 100 fulltime children.

We are based in an area of Zimbabwe called Epworth, Harare. This is an area of high deprivation and our children are often from the most vulnerable families in our community. These could be from child-headed households, our children's home, or they could be affected by HIV or poverty. Many of our children have psychological problems due to the situations they have been through or are currently facing.

We currently have two members of teaching staff Audney Taderera and Lizzy Garandi. We also have a Mission Partner from the UK working with us. Shelley Cooling is an EYFS Consultant Teacher and will be based at the ECD for the next 3 years. We are also supported by Mai Josie who helps with domestic chores such as meal times.

This pack is designed to help you get to know MRCH ECD- we hope you will find it very useful! As it is an on-going project we would welcome further suggestions or comments that can strengthen our links.

A typical day

A typical day for our children starts very early in the morning where they are expected to complete household chores and bath before coming to school by 8.30am. Children who arrive before this time play in our outdoor area. At 8.30 am the children will go into the ECD classroom and will have a health check- this helps staff ensure that children are being well cared for and to address any issues quickly. Children in ECD all start the morning together singing songs, greeting their friends and praying. Then it's off to children's own classrooms to continue their busy day. Children will be engaged in play based educational activities until break time.



At break time children will drink sweet tea and eat snacks brought from home. Some children may not bring snacks because there is no food at home and so children are encouraged to share or are provided with snacks. This develops a great sense of children caring for one another.

After break children move into the outdoor area which has been recently developed. Children enjoy the climbing frames, swings and roundabout as well as digging, pretend play and ball skills. The outdoor play is very well developed and children are confident at staying within an unfenced area, fetching their own water for water play, and using whatever they find in the outdoors to create play opportunities. This may be a time of teacher directed skills teaching or free play.



Cooking using chopped and grated avocado stones.

Children will then spend another session before lunch either in the classroom, outdoors or around the campus maybe visiting the piggery, poultry project or gardens .

At lunchtime children eat a meal prepared at the Children's home- children eat traditional food such as sadza and cabbage or rice and beans. In Zimbabwe it is customary to use your right hand to eat your food and children are encouraged to practice this skill. When children are given their food they are expected to clap their hands, this is a way of saying thank you.

After lunch children will spend some time relaxing with friends before a sleep time. During sleep time children sleep on blankets on the floor.

When it is time to wake up the children are encouraged to wash their faces and hands and then they will have juice and a small snack. Teachers will give children work to take home such as pictures and gradually children will be collected by parents or siblings by 4.30pm.

Children are very independent and are expected to dress themselves, manage their own personal hygiene and toileting encouraged by the teachers. For example with only 1 toilet and 2 members of staff for 54 children it is important that children grasp these skills quickly!

Food, Glorious food!

In Zimbabwe sadza is the staple food, it is made from mealie meal which is made from maize. Children enjoy it served with chicken, pork, cabbage, 'greens' which is a vegetable called rape grown in Zimbabwe or small dried fish called Kapenta. They may also eat rice with beans.



Food is very simple and children do not have 'puddings' after meals. However children may have pancakes (chingwa) and peanut butter porridge for breakfast. Snacks may be popcorn, crisps, cakes, rice or lollipops which are often given out in shops instead of change due to the limited currency available.

Games we like to play

Children enjoy playing all kinds of games; here are a few you could try.

Look inside there is a lion that bites

Children are sat in a circle looking 'inside', a child walks around the outside carrying a stone. As the child walks around he places the stone behind a child, this child has to jump up and chase the child. If he catches him he says "Go and stay inside" into the circle, if he isn't caught he becomes the lion and has a turn.

"Dudu muduri" -Who is in the circle?

The children sit in a circle. One child stands in the middle and says "Dudu muduri " and names the children they know. This helps children with name recognition. When they name all the children they know say "Ndobuda muduri" and retake their place. Then another child has a turn.

As children speak Shona, we also sing songs you will recognise such as nursery rhymes and action songs like 'Head, shoulders, knees and toes' and 'Ring-a-ring of roses' these encourage children to learn English in meaningful but fun ways.

Resources and toys

Children in Epworth have access to very few toys but they make good use of what resources they have around them to make their own toys. Children love making footballs from old socks or bags stuffed with paper and tied with string or cars from bottles. They will also use their imaginations to turn found items into anything they desire! Often you will find that games are very gender influenced and this reflects traditional adult roles. Girls love to play with babies, carrying babies on their backs, sweeping and pretending to cook. Boys love football, cars, climbing, building and rough and tumble! Does this sound familiar?

In our ECD we have limited resources but we are in the process of developing areas of provision to facilitate children's learning. In our new classroom we now have a role-play house corner complete with traditional cooking utensils. We have also set up a carpet area with some small world and duplo which is an area that the boys particularly love. A volunteer recently brought us some black dolls which have become firm favourites. We have a book area, some jigsaws and we also have basic equipment for mark making. The children have limited access to activities such as painting, gluing and salt dough due to availability but these are very much enjoyed.

Our outdoor area is well resourced with fixed structures. We have some bats, balls, skipping ropes and sand toys.

In the UK one of the things we would encourage is recycling and the re-use of all resources with children. This can be problematic in Zimbabwe as there are very few expendable resources but empty bottles, bottle caps, cans and crisp packets are put to great use by the children who are amazingly adept at keeping themselves safe when using these articles.



A house made using found

materials.

Special events

We have termly trips for the children to places such as Greenwood Park in Harare. This may be an opportunity for children to go on boats or trains or have first-hand experiences of animals. Staff ensure that children have a photograph of their experience to take home so that they can tell their carers about what they have been doing.

We also have a Graduation ceremony for children who will be leaving the ECD to enter formal Schooling in November. At this ceremony children will perform the Nativity and various rhymes before breaking up for the month of December.

Our School Year

The school term is-

January-February-March

May-June-July

September-October-November

During school holidays children from the Children's home will often go to stay with relatives or Foster parents in rural areas. Most Zimbabwean families have a rural home which is where they will have land and grow crops. It is customary for families to visit these at holiday times which are based around the agricultural year. Children will then help the adults in tasks such as planting or herding animals.

Meet some of our children.....

Blessed

My name is Blessed. I am 5 years old. I live at Matthew Rusike Children's home. I like to play football. I like to eat sadza and meat. My friends name is Shepherd. When I am in in crèche I like to sing songs, I like music. I have been in crèche for two years. My house mother is Mai Kadyautare. I live with Tanyaradzwa and Chiedza from crèche.

Blessed's teacher says that he likes to sing and write. He is a good boy who likes to play football during outdoors. He likes to play with dough and enjoys eating sadza and meat. He is sometimes very funny, he enjoys playing jokes with other children.



Elsie

My name is Elsie. I am 4 years old. I live in Epworth with my father and mother and my little sister. I like to carry babies on my back. I like to eat sadza and beans. My friends name is Abigail who stays at my home. When I am at crèche I like to do writing patterns. I started crèche this year.

Elsie's teacher says that Elsie is quiet at school but her dad says she is very chatty at home. Elsie likes to play carrying babies and she is good at singing. Sometimes she prefers playing on her own. She is a good girl. She loves her food especially sadza and beans. She is very intelligent especially with her pre-writing skills.



So what next?

What information would you like from us?

We will produce termly updates on our ECD along with pictures and ideas of things you could try or share.

There may be times when we could send you some video footage or pictures that would help support specific things you want to introduce to your own children, for example around games we play. Please just ask and where we can we shall facilitate this. However please remember that the postal system in Zimbabwe can be slow, and the internet connection and electricity supply is often unreliable.

We are in the process of becoming a self-sustaining ECD.

Further information can be found at:-

Matthew Rusike Children's Home www.matthewrusike.co.zw

Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home www.friendsofmatthewrusike.org

Action For Children

Methodist Church of Great Britain