

FRIENDS OF MATTHEW RUSIKE CHILDREN'S HOME



Charity Number 1120944



FoMRCH annual report 2021

The poor economic situation in Zimbabwe continued throughout 2021 causing the Children's Home much financial difficulty. Problems with daily price rises and shortages of basic staples continued. In February they said they had enough basics to last until April but they were running short of milk, kapenta (dried fish) flour, tea bags, peanut butter and beans, also toothpaste, Vaseline, toilet paper and cleaning materials. It wasn't clear if these basics were unavailable nationally or the Home couldn't afford to buy them. They had 4 lockdowns due to covid 19 during the worst of the pandemic and these continued to affect the children's education and their ability to leave the residential site. Donations in kind were left at the gate as visitors weren't allowed in. During these times non residential staff had to stay at home. Residential staff tried to continue with the children's education but as much of this had moved online they didn't have the devices available for all the children to use. When the children were able to return to school it was on a part time basis due to social distancing.

The rainy season had been good and they had planted a hectare of maize, about an acre of beans and some sweet potatoes. The vegetable garden was doing well, good rains continued and boreholes were filling up. Generally the projects did well enough in sales to enable them to give the staff a bonus for Christmas 2020.

Donations to the charity had picked up slightly so we increased the monthly remittance by £250 to £2250, so 4500 is now sent bimonthly. The home still depends on our regular remittance in order to plan the full care of the 100 children resident in the Home as it is the only money which is guaranteed to arrive. They do receive donations in cash and kind from local supporters and businesses but these are intermittent due to their own financial situation.

In June there was a big celebratory party for one of the children whose family had been traced and he/she was leaving the home to go and live with them

In June we received news that the Board had acted on some of our concerns about staffing and that they were hoping to have a qualified social worker employed by August. Unfortunately it meant that 2 long serving senior management staff were to be made redundant and their jobs would be taken on by the social worker. These are extra to the loss of the Senior Childcare officer who was moved into a rural area to run the Outreach centre at Donga and which still has no electricity and only one borehole they share with 40 families.

Due to covid 19 the Methodist Conference was finally held in November 2020 and we were pleased that the new Presiding Bishop had been receiving our newsletters for many years and would hopefully be up to date with our work and connection with MRCH. The new Chair of the Board also indicated that he was interested in the connection so we suggested online meetings could be set up to meet together. Our first one took place in June 2021. We submitted a list of all our concerns to everyone we hoped would be able to attend – in Zimbabwe, the National Director (also the director of the home), chair of the Board, The Missions Secretary and in the UK the FoMRCH Trustees. The meeting went very well and it was good to have direct contact so questions could be asked and answered particularly about all the staffing changes taking place- the reasons given were government requirements, financial constraints and elimination of duplication of roles. We were updated with their plans to increase the income from local projects to at least 30% within 5 years.

We also agreed to meet twice a year on the same basis.

By July Zimbabwe was in lockdown again and we heard that 23 children in the home had tested positive though all had mild to no symptoms. The resident nurse imposed the strict quarantine rules, they all moved into 2 of the houses with a house mother in each to care for them. No staff members contracted the virus and there were no further cases among the children. Several weeks later 1 child tested positive, was isolated and no further cases occurred.

The new social worker joined the Home in August and was immediately involved in drawing up the new Safeguarding document with Church officials and updating all the children's records.

The fishery project was revived, a greenhouse had been donated to replace the two destroyed by a storm and was now full of tomatoes and peppers, and 2 sows (at least 1 pregnant) were delivered to the outreach centre in Donga. The food situation was slowly improving at this time.

In November we had our 2nd online meeting with our Zimbabwe colleagues, attended by the National director, Chair of the Board and most of the FoMRCH trustees. We were updated on various points which we had discussed in June including

- sponsorships for A level students
- 2 students are now attending university but the home struggles to support them
- the diabetic child is improving with the counselling targeting her dietary problems
- the social worker has settled well and is working with 29 children identified as having behavioural problems
- arrangements for the 18 year olds leaving the Home
- the Outreach Centre at Donga still doesn't have electricity or burglar bars
- the implementation of the new organogram

By the end of the year we had at last moved our account from HSBC to the Coop and the old account was closed. Transactions to Zimbabwe had worked well online for a couple of remittances and proved to cost significantly less than previously. Transference of standing orders had proved problematic for some people but these were finally resolved early in 2022.

Although fundraising continued in the doldrums we were able to continue sending £4,500 bi-monthly.

Having ceased selling actual Christmas cards we decided to try Christmas e cards. These brought in a small amount of money, but it's early days. We continue to be with Amazon Smile, Pay Pal and now Give as you Live (Virgin Money Giving closed down at the end of 2021) and these also steadily brought in small amounts. We are also now partnered with over 5,500 online retailers and with CrowdFunder, which enables supporters to donate Nectar points.

As usual, the officers and 3 members of our committee stood down at the AGM and were then re-elected as no one else had come forward. A replacement minute secretary wasn't found so Michael Mapako agreed to continue on a temporary basis until someone comes forward. We are very grateful to him for staying in post.

Late in 2021 our prayers for a replacement treasurer were answered and Mrs Niki Phillips was warmly thanked for offering her services to the charity and Immanuel Mudzingo chose to stay with us as a trustee. He was warmly thanked for his 5 years of service especially agreeing to stay on for 2 more years until his replacement came forward. Niki is a Chartered Accountant so is well qualified to help us forward

The aftermath of Covid 19, the dire economic situation exacerbated by the war in Ukraine and world wide food and fuel problems mean the outlook for childcare at Mstthew Rusike Children's Home continues to be challenging with a constant need for financial support. We are grateful to all our supporters who have stayed with us during these difficult times.

Carol Banham
Chair FoMRCH

May 2022

www.friendsofmatthewrusike.org