



Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home

A UK charity supporting Matthew Rusike Children's Home in Zimbabwe

Newsletter, September 2024

Report from the Home

Greetings from Zimbabwe.



Finances continue to be difficult at the Home as we struggle to meet the cost of salaries, electricity and security. We have solar power for lighting, but we still need electricity for cooking and have a salary backlog of six months.

Steps to address the crisis include a temporary freeze on new recruitment and on extensions of staff contracts as they come up for renewal. We've also decided to reduce the working hours of non-critical staff and to pay them by the hour.

In addition, we're considering a cut in our capacity from eight houses to five, so reducing the number of children in our care from 100 to 60. To achieve this, we need to complete the discharge process for those children due to leave while reuniting children and parents where this is appropriate and transferring some of our children to foster parents. The process will be supervised by the Government's Department of Social Welfare.

We've had to make a number of hospital visits in the last few months with the inevitable medical expenses. In my last report I mentioned the death of baby Mukundi. Church members generously provided the coffin for his funeral and the local Epworth community donated the grave, for which we're very grateful.

The drought of the last few years means a looming water crisis at the Epworth home. The water table continues to drop and one of our boreholes has failed, leaving us with just one. Water supply is also a challenge at our outreach centre at Donga where borehole drilling has proved very difficult. We know that families in the area are going hungry with both maize and sorghum in short supply.

On the positive side, our Big Sunday fundraising event in June raised Z\$5,300 along with a pledge of Z\$20,000 from a local business person. Funds generated from our piggery, poultry and market gardening activities continue to help with expenses such as buying fuel and dealing with emergencies. We'll soon need to think about replacing our ageing minibus.

Last month, two of our girls took up places at the University of Zimbabwe to study Social Work and Law respectively. Congratulations to both.

Sadly, my assistant, Zvirinane Matore, has had to leave us in order to move to the UK with her family. She's been a pillar of the Home for the past 16 years and will be very hard to replace. We would love her to have stayed, but we understand her decision and pray that she'll settle well in her new home.*

Despite the many problems, we remain optimistic that these can be overcome and that Matthew Rusike Children's Home will continue to fulfil its God-given task of providing hope and security for Zimbabwe's disadvantaged children.



Thank you, as always, for your prayers and support. May the Lord bless you.

Rev Linny Mutendzwa
National Director

** Zvirinane has also been a great help in compiling these newsletters over the years. She leaves with our thanks and our prayers and best wishes for her future.*

A visit from the UK

Jane Mellor reports on a trip to the Home with her family

With my husband Andrew and children Rebecca, Mark and Jonno, I was lucky enough to be able to visit Zimbabwe in August this year.

We visited the Home twice. Our first visit enabled us to drop off three suitcases of clothes, toiletries, torches, craft materials and other items provided by supporters in the UK, along with a donation from a church in Birmingham. We met Linny Mutendzwa, and the social worker at the Home gave us a guided tour of the primary school and the houses where the children live.



The Mellors with Linny and his wife, Mercy. 'We greatly appreciated the visit,' says Linny. 'It was a joyful moment. We're also grateful for the wonderful gifts they brought for the children.'

We returned at the end of our holiday and stayed overnight. When we arrived, the choir were practising for the Methodist Sunday School choir competition (they won last time). The singing, drumming and Scripture readings were absolutely beautiful and the enthusiasm of the children taking part was really infectious.

Next day we joined the morning devotions with the staff and then had a tour of the agricultural projects. We saw healthy crops of cabbages and tomatoes, healthy looking chickens and pigs ready for slaughter. We understand that around 30 per cent of the food produced is used to feed the children and the rest is sold to sustain the work of the Home.

It was school holidays, so there was time for some fun activities. Mark and Jonno joined in a barefoot game of football (there were many



British blisters!) using one of the footballs we'd brought with us.

Andrew, Rebecca and I helped out with painting and colouring and tried to help with crochet hooks and wool. We were relieved when the house mothers joined in and showed the children how it should be done!

"Although there are many struggles, we really felt the children were loved and well cared for, which is an amazing testimony to the team there"

It's clear that there are challenges with electricity, running water and refrigeration at the Home and most of the houses could benefit from some investment in redecoration, repairs and new kitchen equipment. However, the children were clearly loved and cared for.

We came away feeling moved to provide more support to the Home and to encourage others to do the same.

UK fundraising

At Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home, we rely heavily on fundraising events by individuals and churches in the UK. In July this year, our Chair, Ed Standhaft, celebrated his 80th birthday by hosting two cream teas, one at home and one at the Methodist Church in Wells. Together these raised over £500 for the Home.

If you're holding your own fundraising events, we'd love to hear from you and give you a mention in this newsletter. Please contact Debbie Berrill (see 'Contacts' on page 4).

School holiday outings

During the August school holiday, 45 children from the Home attended the Methodist National Youth Rally at Chemhanza Mission in Hwedza District. Other trips closer to home included Mukuvisi Woodlands and the National Heroes Acre in Harare.



Enjoying lunch on a day out at Mukuvisi Woodlands where 40 Matthew Rusike children watched buffaloes, zebras, monkeys and antelopes



In the playground at Mukuvisi Woodlands



Posing at the National Heroes Acre which commemorates those who died fighting for independence – a joint trip with Harare Children's Home

Christmas cards

A variety of electronic cards is available directly from our website* where you can also see the 'real' card designs still available. Proceeds go to support the Home.



For the electronic cards, go to:

<https://www.dontsendmeacard.com/ecards/charities/friends-of-matthew-rusike-childrens-home/christmas>

* See page 4

Thank you for your support – but did you know there are more ways you can donate?



As the National Director reports on page 1, the Home faces increasing financial pressures and we want to do everything we can to help it survive and thrive.

We currently send £2,500 a month to the Home, but our target is £5,000. If you're in a position to re-think your giving, there are many ways you can do so.

Standing orders. A regular donation of as little as £5 a month to our account with the Cooperative Bank makes our income more predictable. Account name: Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home. Sort code: 08-92-99. Account number: 65869309.

Bank transfers. One-off donations can also be made direct to our Cooperative Bank account.

Gift Aid. If you're a taxpayer, Gift Aid increases your donation by 25% at no extra cost to you. Amounts raised through Gift Aid recently enabled us to provide solar panels for the premises in Harare and Donga. Contact the Treasurer for a Gift Aid form or download one from our website (*see opposite*) and send it to the Treasurer.

Cheques. These should be made out to 'Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home' and posted to our Treasurer at the address opposite.

PayPal. Pay through your PayPal account via <https://www.paypal.com/gb/fundraiser/charity/3193742>. Select the amount you wish to donate and say whether you're able to Gift Aid it in order to complete the transaction. Find a link on the *How You Can Help* page on our website.

Mobile phone donations. Text **RUSIKE 3** to 70085 to donate £3: this will cost you £3 plus the charge of a standard rate message. Text **RUSIKE 10** to 70085 to donate £10: this will cost you £10 plus the standard charge.

Shopping online. Go to our website and the *How You Can Help* page explains how to set up an account.

Crowdfunder. If you collect Nectar points, you can now donate them to Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home via Crowdfunder. Crowdfunder can also be used to make a one-off donation, donate regularly or fundraise for the charity. The *How You Can Help* page on our website contains a link.

Also very helpful is when churches or other groups decide to 'adopt' us for a year of fundraising – something else you may like to consider.

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* Ed has taken over as Chair from Carol Banham. He's been a Trustee of the Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home for many years and has visited the Home several times with his wife, Audrey. Carol will be staying on as a Trustee.

** With Carol Banham stepping down, Debbie is now the main contact for news from the Home. She's also the person to contact with UK news such as fundraising events by our supporters.

Many thanks to Ed and to Debbie for taking on these roles – both an answer to prayer!