



# Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home

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

## Newsletter, June 2026

### Matthew Rusike Children's Home today

**While its mission remains constant – to provide a nurturing, Christian environment for some of Zimbabwe's most deprived children – Matthew Rusike Children's Home continues to evolve in response to changing needs and conditions. In this issue we step back for an overview of what the organisation now looks like and how it seeks to fulfil its mission. Our news contact, Debbie Berrill, reports.**



Earlier this year I was able to spend about a week at the Matthew Rusike residential home in the Epworth suburb of Harare. I also visited the community outreach centres at Donga and Mzinyathi.

#### The main centre at Epworth, Harare

The Epworth site includes the residential home for vulnerable children and orphans, founded in 1965 by Methodist minister Rev Matthew Rusike. The site is also home to the Matthew Rusike College, a fully functioning secondary school; the Matthew Rusike Academy, a primary school still in development; and income-generating projects including a market garden, a piggery, a chicken project and, while I was there, the start of a mushroom-growing project.

The residential home has eight houses able to accommodate up to 100 children. However, two of these are currently closed due to lack of funds, so the Home has just 61 children at present. The children live in mixed-aged and mixed-gender family units with a house mother who works 24/7 for three weeks and then has a week off. Following recent

retirements and redundancies to cut costs, there are now just three permanent house mothers between the six houses and the Home relies heavily on volunteer relief mothers who are paid a nominal salary.

The biggest challenges for the residential home are its debt and being able to pay its staff. Salaries for staff are now many months in arrears, largely due to government directives to increase pay but with no extra resources to cover the cost. Over the past five years, the wage bill has increased by 50% with increases of 10-12% year on year.

June every year sees Matthew Rusike Day when Methodist churches in Zimbabwe are asked to donate money and items such as clothes and toiletries. This year, they've also been asked if they can sponsor a child at a cost of US \$270 a month. While this level of support will be beyond the means of most churches, the hope is that Matthew Rusike Day will at least boost the coffers.

**The Matthew Rusike College**, a secondary school now with a sixth form, has 450 pupils of whom around 200 are boarders. The girls have a dormitory block on site and the boys are



transported 2km to and from the Ruwadzano/ Manyano centre in Epworth as there's little space and no funds at present to build a boys' dormitory on site. There is land nearby belonging to the Methodist Church which could be used had it not been taken over by settlers who've built houses on it and made access very difficult.

The school is run separately from the Home and generates income from fees to support teachers' salaries. Children from the Home attend free of charge and a percentage of income from the college is used to support the Home.

**The Matthew Rusike Academy** started off as a crèche block for the under-5s at the Home and is slowly growing into a primary school to help meet the urgent need for education in the local area. It currently has 102 children (21 from the Home) across five classes equivalent to nursery, reception and years 1-3. A two-classroom block was recently opened, funded in large part by Solihull Methodist Church, and there are longer-term plans to build another block to accommodate primary years 4-7.

Two of the teachers in the Early Child Development (ECD) Centre – equivalent to nursery and reception – are paid by the Home. The head teacher is also the Home's chaplain whose salary is paid by the Methodist Church. The salary for one of the teachers has been gifted by a donor in the UK for this year and the remaining salaries are funded by school fees charged to external students.



*Debbie visits the Early Child Development Centre with Rev Linny Mutendzwa*



*Visiting staff at the Donga outreach centre, headed by Lloyd Kupeta (second from left)*

**The 'projects'** – garden, piggery, chickens and now mushrooms – provide some food for the children, but also generate income when produce is sold to local residents and supermarkets.

### **Community outreach centres**

These two centres extend the work of the Home by providing support for disadvantaged children in their home environments with families and communities encouraged to contribute to their care.

**The Donga Centre**, south of Shurugwi in Zimbabwe's remote mining belt, has two paid members of staff – a childcare support worker and a gardener/facilities maintenance worker. The community it supports is widely spread and the team currently doesn't have access to a vehicle as one previously sent from the UK has broken down and parts are hard to come by – all of which makes the work extremely challenging. It currently provides school stationery – and in some cases school fees – for 88 particularly deprived children referred from local schools.

Among other difficulties, the Centre urgently needs a more reliable water supply. Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home recently

funded the digging of a 90-metre, solar-powered borehole. However, this has not been as productive as hoped and the community has had to revert to a 40-metre manual borehole which is more productive but still not enough during the dry season.

**The Mzinyathi Centre** is south east of Bulawayo on what was previously a Methodist farm. The main building – badly in need of repair after being vandalised some time ago – houses a student social worker on placement and a gardener/facilities worker. From here, some 700 children are supported by volunteer childcare co-ordinators across a huge area of Hwange District and Matabeleland South.

The installation of a solar-powered borehole at Mzinyathi in October 2025 has been much appreciated and now provides enough water for the Mathew Rusike site along with Mzinyathi Primary School and over 60 local homes.

## In summary

The organisation as a whole faces enormous challenges. Having to close two of its houses to help reduce its debts was a painful decision and it means that children in need are having to be turned away almost daily. Local donors are hit ever harder by Zimbabwe's economic troubles and, with church numbers dwindling, the Home's local fundraising is targeting a diminishing pool of people.

That said, I was met everywhere with tremendous optimism and faith that things will get better. The Methodist Church in Zimbabwe remains committed to the work of the Home and within the country it's much admired as an exemplar of good practice. Staff and local supporters remain generous, resilient and dedicated, determined despite the obstacles to continue the Home's founding mission to provide the best possible care for vulnerable children and orphans.

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## News highlights from National Director, Rev Linny Mutendzwa

- \* We're working hard to reduce our debt. Our plan includes an increase in support from the Methodist Church in Zimbabwe, the selling of assets we no longer need, a drive to attract more corporate donors and continuing to raise income from the Matthew Rusike College and Academy. The debt is still substantial but it is now falling. We managed to pay 100% of staff salaries in March and April and to clear the outstanding salaries of two of the seven employees who've been laid off.
- \* We're very grateful to the Friends of Matthew Rusike Children's Home for taking on some of the salary obligations for three house mothers, one Academy teacher and the Home's nurse, all of which has helped with reducing our debt. We're also grateful for the provision of winter clothing and blankets along with funding for furniture and learning materials and the solarisation of the new classroom block.
- \* The power situation has greatly improved due to solar power for lighting, entertainment and refrigeration, solar geysers for warm water and gas for cooking.
- \* Despite the drive to reduce our numbers, we still get calls from Government seeking places for children in need. We recently admitted two abused siblings following the arrest of the perpetrator.
- \* Two more leavers, a girl and a boy, have secured job opportunities in Turkey through *Destined for Greatness* – an organisation that helps children from orphanages to integrate into society after discharge.



## UK fundraising

To help fund the salary of the Home's nurse, Cambridge Road Methodist Church in Birmingham has launched a 'Grow a Tenner' challenge, inviting people to take £10 and put it to work to raise further funds.

Fundraising by Ben Rhydding Methodist Church near Ilkley has resulted in solar geysers for the residential houses so the children now have warm water for bathing.

Money raised in memory of Paddy Coles, a Friends founder member who died in December, has been used at the request of his wife, Jenny, for plumbing repairs and repainting in the Home's clinic along with medical supplies and consumables.

We're delighted to hear that the Methodist Church in Headingley, Leeds, has adopted Matthew Rusike Children's Home for support this year – many thanks to them.

***If any churches or groups would like more information on the Home with a view to offering support, our news contact, Debbie Berrill, is willing to come and speak wherever possible. You'll find Debbie's contact details opposite.***



*Recent donations from the Friends have been used to buy new mattresses for all the children and the sofas in the houses have either been repaired or replaced. New gas cookers mean the house mothers no longer have to collect wood and cook on outdoor fires.*



***A new line in mushrooms:*** Crops grown at the Epworth site include tomatoes, cabbages, water melons, butternut and green mealies. A three-room house was recently converted into a mushroom production centre and produced its first crop in March with over 370 pallets harvested so far. Technical support and initial capital came from Harare's Trinity Church.

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