ZIMBABWE ORPHANS THROUGH EXTENDED HANDS, ZIMBABWE

HIV has crippled communities in Zimbabwe, leaving hundreds of thousands of children vulnerable as their parents are weakened by the virus. ZOE trains the church to stand in the gap - blessing vulnerable families by drawing them into God's family and providing them with skills and livelihoods.
WHY WE’RE WORKING THERE

Zimbabwe is home to the highest number of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) per capita anywhere in the world. Astonishingly, there are estimated to be 890,000 OVCs out of a population of 12 million people! This is mostly because of the high risk of HIV infection which has left many children with one or no parents. Their extended family would traditionally take on their care but the scale of the problem - as well as wider economic issues - has left relatives unable to cope.

Children in this situation are at a much higher risk of dropping out of school, becoming victims of abuse, and living in extreme poverty. Without support, many vulnerable children leave for urban areas where they fall into begging or working in exploitative labour in order to survive. Tragically some even turn to prostitution.

That could have been the case for Patience’s children. She has three - Promise, Ruth, and Mercy. She became a widow in 2013, and for two years her life was one of struggle and despair.

She had no livestock, no way of making income. She would forage for food in the bush. Her children had to drop out of school because they would faint during class from lack of food.

‘WHEN YOU DON’T HAVE ANYONE TO TELL YOUR PROBLEMS TO, THE ONLY THING YOU CAN THINK OF IS LETTING YOURSELF DIE. SOMETIMES I WOULD HAVE THESE THOUGHTS BUT THEN I WOULD LOOK AT MY CHILDREN AND I WOULD CRY BECAUSE I KNEW MY CHILDREN WOULD SUFFER EVEN MORE IF I DIED.’

PATIENCE MAOKO

THE AIMS OF THE PROJECT

Tearfund partner Zimbabwe Orphans Through Extended Hands, also known as ZOE, encourages churches to take responsibility for vulnerable families like Patience’s. Because of their place at the centre of a community, churches are able to identify the children and households most at risk, but often they just don’t know how to help. ZOE trains and mentors the church members for up to three years so they will know how to react in even the darkest situations.
LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

One day the local United Methodist church was conducting door to door evangelism and they came across Patience and her children. The church had gone through training with ZOE on how to look after vulnerable families, so they knew what to do.

First the Pastor and the church leadership visited the family, then the ZOE co-coordinator assigned a volunteer to be responsible for visiting them. Through these visits they could figure out what the family most needed. The church organised a collection of food items for them and a report was made to the ZOE office. ZOE staff helped them with more food and also new clothes.

This brought hope and life to Patience, Promise, Ruth, and Mercy. Volunteers visit them twice a month. Patience became part of ZOE’s goat-breeding project. She was given three goats, which she has already bred successfully once. Now they were eating better the children have been able to go back to school.

‘I AM HAPPY AND MY FAMILY IS HAPPY BECAUSE OF WHAT GOD DID FOR US THROUGH THE CHURCH. WHEN I SEE THE GOATS RUNNING AROUND OUR HOME AND THE CHILDREN RUNNING AFTER THEM, SOMETIMES TEARS OF JOY START RUNNING DOWN MY FACE. I DON’T KNOW HOW I CAN THANK THE LORD ENOUGH.’

PATIENCE MAOKO

LED BY THE COMMUNITY

Churches are trained in providing Psychosocial Support (PSS) to children and their families. They organise kids clubs, and run livelihoods training for families. Projects include rearing domestic animals like the goats given to Patience. Animals can be a crucial lifeline to those previously unable to earn an income.

These activities are supported and managed by volunteers who are passionate about working with children. Core training includes counselling, advocacy, recognising and preventing child abuse, and passing these skills onto the community. The church starts out aiming to help the most vulnerable, but the training they receive blesses everyone.
PROJECT IMPACT

With your help, over the next three years ZOE can support 18,000 children in their existing families and communities. They can help them to remain in education, provide the chance of a stable livelihood, and empower them to live dignified lives with hope and a future.

Through a network of 160 churches and 600 volunteers, the quality of life for 18,000 vulnerable children from more than 3000 families will be transformed. The help the children and families receive will cover livelihoods training and educational, social, and spiritual support.

’I LEARNT NOT TO SEPARATE MYSELF FROM MY COMMUNITY, REGARDLESS OF WHAT PROBLEMS I MAY FACE IN LIFE. THE CHURCH IS THE PLACE TO RUN TO AND THE WORD OF GOD BRINGS HOPE!’

PATIENCE MAOKO

- A gift of £350 would train someone like Patience in how to look after goats. With this training they can build a livelihood and a steady income to support their family.
- A gift of £220 would train a church in how to counsel vulnerable families, giving them vital emotional support.

JOIN US

It costs just £16 per child to change their life forever.

Will you and your church extend your hands to the church in Zimbabwe and join us in supporting ZOE?

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