

# ZIMBABWE VICTIMS' SUPPORT FUND

(Registered Charity Number 1145569)

## MID YEAR REPORT 2016

[www.zimbabwevictimssupportfund.org](http://www.zimbabwevictimssupportfund.org)



Singing the Faith – Zimbabwe style  
Congregation at ZIm Bricks community giving thanks

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This community (also known as Willsgrove Farm or MacDonald Bricks) was raided last year by security forces. The house behind the dancing congregation was only saved from demolition when the occupants stripped the roof off and hid the materials ahead of the police raid. Now restored, with some financial help from ZVSF supporters, the people live in a precarious peace pending a final legal ruling.

## **Siyabonga ! Tinotenda ! Thank you !**

Dear friends,

Not much news from Zimbabwe reaches our papers or television screens but I hope you saw the story of the Baptist Pastor, **Evan Mawarire**, who attracted a huge following when he posted a video of himself, wrapped in the Zimbabwean flag, a one-man protest at the unbearable suffering brought on by a corrupt and failing government. The story of his subsequent arrest and appearance in Court on a treason charge, the rallying of thousands of supporters outside the Court, praying for his release, the 50 lawyers who offered to defend him free of charge, and the Magistrate's bold decision to throw out the charge and release him, brought a new surge of hope to a despairing nation. The Pastor has since fled the country, fearing for his life but the #ThisFlag movement he started has taken root.

I had been in Zimbabwe myself a few weeks earlier. Already at that time the signs of widespread hunger, desperate poverty and a deep longing for change were apparent to all with the eyes to see. In my four weeks travelling, mostly in Matabeleland South, I witnessed first-hand the gathering storm as three distinct crises converge.

First there is the food crisis, exacerbated but not entirely caused by a severe drought. Then there is a cash crisis as the banks simply run out of money and the economy grinds to a halt. And behind the whole tragic scenario, is the long-running crisis of a corrupt and uncaring government. As one veteran politician said to me, "I fear that

we are entering a treacherous new era in Zimbabwe's history with an increasingly cornered government and an increasingly angry populace."

Zimbabwe, once the food basket of Southern Africa, now produces less than 40 per cent of its own food needs in grains, livestock and other basics. An estimated 8.2 million out of a total population of 12.8 million - 64 per cent of all remaining Zimbabweans – are living below the food poverty line.



Distribution of mealie meal at Zim Bricks community

Time and again in my travels I witnessed this brutal reality. Children are fainting from hunger at school or lacking the energy to walk to school. Malnutrition is widespread and increasing, and death from hunger is not uncommon. On two occasions when I was travelling with Pastor Albert he received word from his own church members of the death by malnutrition of infants less than a year old. The British Department for International Development (DFID) quotes sources showing that nearly 8 in 100 children die before their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.

This is the tragic reality I saw with my own eyes. The maize harvest had failed almost completely. Even drought-resistant crops like sorghum had withered. The fields were dry and desolate and grain bins, normally full at this time of year, stood empty. Hunger stalked the land and a quiet desperation was etched on the faces of the rural poor. No wonder then that the protest #ThisFlag movement resonates across the nation. Pray God this clarion call for justice and mercy will be taken up by the churches across the land.

But be assured, dear friends, that in the midst of all the suffering there are signs of grace and hope. I mention but a few of them. There is the relief feeding of the desperately hungry, made possible by your generous support of ZVSF, and recently increased as a direct result of your amazing response to our drought appeal. There is the deployment of a new wonder nutritional food called e'Pap (a nutritionally-balanced blend of soya and maize, with added vitamins and minerals) which is already benefitting severely malnourished children. Then there is the faithful pastoral care of some of the poorest and most vulnerable by the great team of Pastors with which we are working – accompanied by new church planting! There is the appointment of two new members, Katherine Simpson and Godfrey Mhlanga, who are joining our partner team in Bulawayo.

Above all, and vividly etched in my memory, is the amazing resilience and startling joy of some of the poorest of the poor whom I saw dancing their faith and expressing deepest thanks – first to the Lord who visits them in their affliction, and then to you who hold them in your heart.

**"SIYABONGA", "TINOTENDA", they say. From the bottom of our hearts, WE THANK YOU !.**

And with my humble thanks also,

**Graham**

### ***"Grace in a Dry Land"***

This is the title of a short DVD filmed and produced during Graham's visit to Zimbabwe in May. If you would like a copy to use in worship or a ZVSF support event please contact Graham who will be happy to send you a copy.

### ***Sax's Cool***



Together with my drum kit, I joined fifteen saxophones, a couple of guitars and a bass for a lively concert at Priory Methodist Church, Bedford, at the end of April. When the band members heard of the suffering in Zimbabwe they were keen to do it.

The programme included many old favourite tunes from 1920's - 40's, a few jazz numbers, 'Libertango', '42<sup>nd</sup> Street', 'Cavatina' - and I sang a couple of pre-war, but frequently revived, vocals! We included a pictorial presentation of the tragedy and need in Zimbabwe followed by a sax arrangement of 'Nkosi Sikelel'i Afrika' to the boom of an African drum. 'God bless Africa' - This concert enabled a joyful crowd to join with Him in providing blessing for Africa.

The total raised, including some Gift Aid and a £50 donation from the bank, came to £1,789. So - many good reasons to rejoice!!

***David Winwood***

### ***Treasurer's Report***

It has been a very difficult year for our partner team in Bulawayo. The usual challenge of stretching resources as far as possible has been made more difficult because of the severe cash shortage in the country. At one point they were having to queue for several hours to withdraw a mere \$100 in cash. This has been alleviated a little being able to pay for maize meal by bank transfer and paying for the e'Pap by sending funds directly to the suppliers in South Africa but getting cash (something we take so much for granted here in the UK) remains a struggle. I want to pay tribute to the team who have continued the responsible and caring management of the funds we send on your behalf.

In 'normal' circumstances we send \$8500 per month to Zimbabwe but in the last 5 months, despite falling exchange rates, we have been able to send \$48,500 and nearly \$11,000 to buy e'Pap - \$11,900 per month. This has been possible thanks to your amazing generosity.

Thank you.

***Christine***

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