



What we do in Zimbabwe

- We're helping 26,107 households stay free from hunger
- We're training home-based care teams to support orphans and other vulnerable children
- We're registering 386 children for identity documents so they can claim their rights



Zimbabwe is in the grip of a severe political and economic crisis. In June 2008, President Mugabe was declared the winner in a run-off presidential election after the opposition party candidate withdrew because of widespread violence and intimidation. The economy deteriorates each day. Officially, inflation is a staggering 2.2 Million %. In reality, it's much higher. **One-third of all children are chronically malnourished**, and 10 million people (out of a population of 13 million) live below the poverty line. People go short of food, water, fuel and other basics on a daily basis. Hundreds of thousands of people have left the country to escape crushing poverty, many of them children. Repeated droughts and floods in the last decade have made the situation much worse.

The crisis is destroying lives. In 1990, life expectancy was 60 years. Three years ago, life expectancy for women was 37. Today, it stands at 34 – the lowest in the world. Zimbabwe's also facing one of the worst HIV epidemics in the world, even though the rate at which it is spreading has fallen recently. Still, one in five adults (aged 15-49) is living with HIV and AIDS.

Save the Children in Zimbabwe

We're helping the poorest children go to school, making sure they have enough to eat, giving them access to healthcare, and protecting them from exploitation and abuse. Last year, more than 140,000 people benefited directly from our support. We're also ready to help people across the country whenever a natural disaster or emergency occurs.

We've worked in Zimbabwe for nearly 25 years. For most of this time we've worked in poor rural areas of the Zambezi valley (Binga and Nyaminyami districts). But in response to worsening urban poverty, we've started working in seven urban areas (Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Masvingo and Gokwe, Gweru and Chitungwiza) as part of a Joint Initiative with national and international partners and in Victoria Falls in partnership with UNICEF, IOM and a local NGO.. We work with community groups, teachers and health workers, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government ministries to bring about change for the better in children's lives. Through one of our partners, Ntengwe, 173 children with disabilities have been able to access rehabilitation services.

Key areas of work

We're protecting and caring for children

Desperate poverty is forcing many children and young people to migrate to neighbouring countries to find work or go to school. This often makes them more open to exploitation and abuse. Children who stay at home often drop out of school because they can't afford the fees, books and uniforms. We've ensured that 432 orphans and other vulnerable children are in school by paying block grants to schools.

We support 16 Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centres in the areas where we work, benefiting 1,058 children. These centres provide meals (which for some children may be their only nutritious meal of the day), healthcare, education and play activities that children would otherwise miss out on. We're training ECCD teachers in child development, protection, nutrition, basic hygiene, and HIV and AIDS. We also involve parents, who make toys and play equipment for children who attend the ECCD centres. Some centres have even set up their own vegetable gardens to provide food all year round.

We're training community leaders, government officials, police and parents in child protection, including how to report and deal with cases of suspected abuse. We've translated guidelines into local languages. We've helped 386 children obtain birth certificates so that they can receive other support they're entitled to. And we're training 513 children and young people in life skills, decision-making and reproductive and sexual health.

In all our work we try to get children involved at every level. Through the Joint Initiative with other agencies, we're supporting vulnerable children in urban areas to talk about the problems they face and help suggest ways they can best be protected from harm. Children's involvement and feedback has led the organisations involved to change some of their programmes to address the needs the children have identified. We're also working closely with three local NGOs on a project to provide care and protection for displaced children and their families, who face particular problems and discrimination when it comes to provision of basic services.

During the recent pre-election violence and displacement we provided baby kits for 118 babies whose mothers had to flee the violence, and provided clothes and toys for displaced children. We also trained partners on child protection in emergencies, including how to prevent children being separated from their families and tracing families of those children who do get separated.

We're helping children survive and grow up healthy

The economic crisis has put healthcare services under great strain. Shortages of clean water contribute to the spread of disease. And the AIDS epidemic continues to destroy lives – more than a million children have lost one or both parents. Some end up running their household, having to find money to feed and care for their younger brothers and sisters.

We're helping children lead healthier lives and learn how to protect themselves from HIV. We work with children and their families, through drama groups and other community activities, raising awareness of how to avoid deadly diseases such as cholera and malaria. We're providing health and nutrition education to parents and carers and have built pit latrines and water pumps to improve access to clean water and reduce outbreaks of diarrhoea. We continue to train village health workers to identify childhood illnesses so that they can refer sick children to other services early on.

We run regular workshops on good health and hygiene practices for parents and community leaders. So far, 300 parents and 45 teachers in ECCD centres have benefited from this training. We know that children often learn more effectively from others their own age, so we're also training 33 peer educators to talk about sexuality, growing up, and how to prevent HIV. We work with the Ministry of Health to improve reproductive healthcare services for adolescents and young people.

Many families are struggling to care for relatives who are seriously ill. We've trained 267 community volunteers to provide home-based care for people living with HIV and AIDS. We give them bicycles, care kits and other equipment so that they can reach people who are isolated and very ill. The community groups we work with have found practical ways to help orphans and other vulnerable children. In some villages, they've used the proceeds from community gardens to renovate huts for child-headed households.

We're helping the poorest children and families get enough to eat

Every day in Zimbabwe, one in three children don't get enough to eat. They get ill more often, and if they're in school they find it hard to concentrate. Their mental development may be impaired and they're likely to die younger. Poor harvests are a regular feature due to a combination of drought, flooding, chronic input shortages, poor agricultural and marketing policies and a collapsed irrigation infrastructure as well as frequent power cuts that affect irrigation.

We're helping children get enough to eat, and helping their families increase their income so they can afford food all year round, as well as have a bit extra to pay for healthcare and school costs. In Kenkando, Binga district, we've helped the poorest families achieve a 6–7% increase in their cash income levels by providing extra support such as fencing materials to protect crops, and irrigation pipes. And in Binga and Nyaminyami, working with the World Food Programme (WFP), we enabled 26,107 households to stay free from hunger during the past year. We helped them grow more food and provided some food aid, which is more useful than cash in a country where hyperinflation means that prices double weekly and often daily. We've also promoted drought-resistant crops such as sorghum and groundnuts and provided fertiliser and some goats and chickens to the poorest households. We've also improved household resilience to hunger and diet diversity through promotion of drought-resistant crops such as sorghum and oils seeds such as groundnuts, sunflower and provided fertiliser and some goats and chickens to the poorest households.

We're continuing to find innovative ways to help people protect what they grow – for example, using chilli pepper plants to deter elephants from trampling crops. There's been a 30% reduction in crop losses in the areas where we work, meaning more food for children and their communities and reduced child labour among 3,600 children through targeted tillage support schemes allowing them to enjoy their right to play and attend school.

Next year, we'll be working with WFP again to provide targeted food aid to the most vulnerable families in the Zambezi valley. Our aim is that by 2009, the poorest 50% of children in Binga and Nyaminyami districts (35,000 children) will have more access to food because their families will have increased their income.



Save the Children UK
1 St John's Lane
London EC1M 4AR
Telephone +44 (0)20 7012 6400
Fax +44 (0)20 7012 6963
savethechildren.org.uk

Registered charity no. 213890