

# Zimbabwe

It was only 2008 when Zimbabwe faced one of the worst economic collapses in history. For years, the country was a major tobacco producer. The appropriation of almost all commercial farms and the reduction on the demand for tobacco led to sharp falls in production in the agriculture based economy. The

country has since endured rampant inflation and critical food and fuel shortages. Today, 32% of children suffer from stunting due to malnutrition. Many Zimbabweans survive on grain handouts, and the poorest people are fighting for the little resources available.

Many much-needed professionals have left Zimbabwe. As a result, the cost of education and health care continues to exclude the most vulnerable people from receiving basic and essential services. 23% of girls are married by age 18 to older men; only 1% of boys are married by age 18. With a lack of education and a lack of value placed on women, a shocking 50% of adolescent girls (age 10-19) justify being beaten by their husbands.

The cost and difficulty of accessing health care remains a major challenge for the most vulnerable families in Zimbabwe. Few can afford treatments or transportation to medical facilities. 68% of orphaned children have been orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. Prohibitive access means people do not receive treatment in time, and many children and adults pass away pre maturely.

In the current economic environment,



Areas in the Zimbabwe being impacted by Hands at Work

## Snapshot OF THE EPIDEMIC

Population: **14,149,600**  
 Orphaned children (age 0-17): **1,300,000**  
 Children orphaned by HIV/AIDS: **890,000**  
 Under 5 mortality rating (per 1000 live births): **Female – 82 | Male - 95**  
 Secondary School Attendance: **Female – 50% | Male – 50%**  
 People living with HIV: **1,400,000**  
 Life expectancy at birth: **Female – 53 | Male – 54**  
 Lifetime risk of maternal death: **1 in 53**  
 Country rating (out of 187) on the Human Development Index: **156**

Sources: UNAIDS, UNDESA 2014, UNICEF 2014

people from the local church in Zimbabwe are also trying to merely survive. Often, the most vulnerable are not cared for. Hands at Work is supporting and encouraging volunteers from the local church to care for orphaned children and widows in their homes in the midst of their own poverty. This sacrifice and dedication to bringing holistic care to those most in need is bringing hope to the most vulnerable families in Zimbabwe.

Twice weekly, Priscilla and Longing visit Zandile and Japera, building a relationship of trust through their regular words of encouragement, housework help and prayers. As trust grows, the Care Workers hope they can encourage the family to be tested for HIV, a dangerous side effect of Japera's work and a likely cause for the poor health Priscilla and Longing have seen in both Zandile and Japera. An HIV test will enable the Care Workers to help the family receive appropriate medical interventions if needed.

Priscilla and Longing also ensured Zandile was added to the list of children waiting to be enrolled in a government school. For now, she is being educated by Angeline, another volunteer from the local church in Sakubva, along with 17 other children who cannot afford tuition. Zandile's mother has been attending support days at the Sakubva Life Centre which offer encouragement, care and education for women raising vulnerable children. While this family continues to face a myriad of challenges, Japera now believes she and her daughter will actually survive.

## A Mother's Reality



“When Japera, 23, and her daughter Zandile, 7, met the volunteers of Sakubva Christian Caring Trust, they suffered daily in their one-roomed shack in Sakubva. Their room is often bare of food. Instead, it is full of men who come and go and infringe upon Japera's dignity and threaten Zandile's safety in exchange for the meagre income that has barely kept this family from starvation. Zandile's father left when she was only three years old. Her primary understanding of relationships does not come from seeing men love women, but use them.

Priscilla and Longing are Care Workers in Sakubva who encountered Zandile early this year while visiting homes in the community. Zandile was brought under their watchful care and is now receiving a hot meal five days a week.