

Sport for change



Young girls engage in sport, which gives them the opportunity to share ideas on how to overcome challenges of growing up in Binga.

Despite continuing challenges in Zimbabwe, particularly the recent food crisis (see box opposite), we've achieved a great deal there in the past year.

The Christian Aid country programme has been providing different kinds of support to poor communities, particularly targeting minority ethnic groups, women, people with disabilities and young people.

In 2015, with your help, we directly reached more than 10,000 poor households (60,000 people), while pushing for wider policy changes to benefit entire communities of poor, marginalised people.

The poorest of the poor

Binga district in northern Zimbabwe is one of the remotest, least developed and poorest regions in the country. It's inhabited by the Tonga people, who are marginalised not only because of their remote location, but also because of their ethnicity.

This poor region presents few opportunities for the young people growing up there. The communities' patriarchal culture and negative social norms, combined with the cost and distance of schools, mean that few

children will reach secondary school. And less than 14 per cent of those who do will leave with a pass. The situation is worse for girls and children with disabilities, who face additional barriers, including discrimination and, in some cases, abuse.

Sport for Change

Our partners Christian Care, Open School World Wide and Silveira House have been working with communities in Binga to improve the opportunities for, and educational attainment of, children and young people. With their Sport for Change programme, they are also improving young people's physical and emotional wellbeing, and educating them about gender, sexual and reproductive health, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and their rights and responsibilities.

Thousands of young people have been attending sports clubs and competing against each other at Sport for Change football, netball and volleyball tournaments. The team captains have also been trained as peer educators tasked with educating their team mates on children's rights, education, entrepreneurship and life skills. The sports

clubs provide literacy and numeracy classes, and vocational training, as well as sessions on child abuse, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and gender issues.

The tournaments give an opportunity to reach out to communities with similar messages on health and child rights. The messages are aimed at changing negative norms, particularly relating to girls, children with disabilities and violence against children. Already local chiefs and village heads are taking more action to address violence against children.

Changing together

So far, almost 2,000 young people have taken part in the sports clubs and tournaments, while more than 530 parents, guardians and community members have attended learning sessions at the tournaments. Sport is helping change attitudes, reduce stigma and discrimination, improve skills and confidence, and boost uptake of local services.

We have already seen a greater number of young people taking part in education and entrepreneurial activities, as well as increased reporting and action on child abuse. Young people are demonstrating a greater understanding of their rights and participating more in decisions that affect them. The Sport for Change programme has also promoted leadership skills among young people, encouraging them to participate more in their communities.

Josias Mutale, a trained team captain and peer educator, shares messages on sexual abuse and children's rights, with support from nurses from the local hospital.



Childhood in Binga

Before starting work in Binga, we conducted a study, exposing the harsh reality of childhood in the communities we are working with:

- **23%** of children are orphans or are otherwise vulnerable.
- **24%** of children don't have a birth certificate – preventing access to school and vital services.
- **10-20km** is the distance many children travel to school.
- Just **17.5%** of children passed Grade 7 of primary school in 2013.
- **40%** of children reported experiencing at least one form of physical violence in the last 12 months.
- **20%** of children reported experiencing at least one form of sexual violence in the last 12 months.

Update: Zimbabwe food crisis

Zimbabwe has declared a state of disaster triggered by a severe drought, which has been made worse by El Niño weather patterns.

Following prolonged dry spells, experts predict 75 per cent of harvests will fail, particularly in southern areas, and close to 4 million people will be affected. This means families will be unable to grow crops or feed their livestock: their main source of food and income.

We have four partners ready to respond in the worst-hit areas. They plan to provide supplementary food for livestock, cash or cash vouchers to help families purchase essentials, and food aid where necessary.

To support our emergencies fund, please visit: christianaid.org.uk/emergencies