

Session 4

Challenges for children



‘I’m a witness, climate has changed. Nowadays it’s not the way it used to be when we were children.’ Margaret Nsona

Despite some improvements, many children in Zimbabwe are still poor and have limited access to clean water, nutritious food and shelter. Many are affected by gender violence, child labour, child marriage.

Water For children in rural Zimbabwe, access to safe and clean water is not a guarantee and some struggle to find water. It often has to be carried long distances, usually by women who carry it on their heads. The Falcon Primary School has a bore hole, which means the children attending the school can have access to water to drink and can wash their hands. Access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities is essential for health and it is important to educate people about hygiene and to distribute soap.



Food A third of the children in Zimbabwe are malnourished. This has been made worse by droughts, the cost of food and other things going up, currency instability, widespread electricity shortages, and fuel and food scarcity. Many children in the more rural areas will attend school hungry as their parents are unable to afford much food. The staple dish that is eaten is Sadza.



Health Unlike in this country, where we have the NHS and can go to the doctor for free, the health system in Zimbabwe is quite expensive. If you have to pay to go to the doctor, a consultation fee is around \$10 plus any medication on top, which is a large part of a poor family’s monthly income. Children under the age of five are treated for free if seen in a government hospital. The single leading cause of child mortality in Zimbabwe is HIV and AIDS, which contributes 21% of deaths. The other major contributions to under-five mortality are pneumonia, diarrhea and measles. Vimbai Nyamakambo, the head of the Falcon Primary School, reports that many of the children suffer from a lot of respiratory problems with coughing and sneezing. When the weather is cold, the windows have to be kept closed, as just one child can infect the whole class.

Poverty Of the 6.3 million boys and girls in the country, 4.8 million live in poverty, including 1.6 million in extreme poverty. Of the 13 million people in Zimbabwe, 48% are children. Salaries range from \$80 to \$100 per month, and parents often struggle to buy food, pay school fees, or buy shoes or uniform for their children.

Climate Challenges The country experiences its rainy season along with relatively high temperatures from October to March, and dry seasons with low temperatures from June to August.

In March 2019, Tropical Cyclone Idai hit Zimbabwe, causing floods and heavy rains. It left households and individuals in need of various things like shelter, washing facilities etc. The effects were made worse by the 2020-2021 rainy season with unusually high rainfall. On 30 December 2020 Tropical Storm Chalane swept across much of Zimbabwe. Tropical Cyclone Eloise crossed into the south-eastern part of the country in January 2021.



Margaret Nsona was just one person among many, who lost all the crops she had planted, along with many of her possessions. But due to the support that she received from Christian Aid’s partner PROACT, she was able to get back on her feet again. She says, “We were trained to be courageous enough not to be shaken by the floods, but to move on and be strong.” Margaret explains that the rains are no longer consistent, and the area she lives in is often hit by both drought and flooding. She says “I’m a witness, climate has changed. Nowadays It’s not the way it used to be when we were children.”



Bible Link Joshua 1:9

“Remember that I commanded you to be strong and brave. So, don’t be afraid. The Lord your God will be with you everywhere you go.”

- I wonder if there’s been a time when God has helped you to be strong and brave
- I wonder where God is at work in Zimbabwe

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the beauty of your creation that surrounds us. Help us to take nothing for granted and to respect our homes, our food and access to clean water. We pray for people in Zimbabwe being greatly affected by changing weather patterns like cyclones, droughts or floods which cause destruction of crops, homes and livelihoods. Help them to be strong and brave as they work with organisations that can help them make a difference. Amen.

Active Prayer You will need a plant and wooden lolly sticks

A plant that produces food needs to get the right amount of water. Too much and it can drown or too little and it can dry out. Variations in rainfall around the world, caused by climate change, can lead to floods, droughts, and crop failure, which then has a knock-on effect to the community, causing poverty, poor health, lack of food etc. Take the lolly stick and write prayers on it for the community in Zimbabwe who are being affected by the changing weather patterns and rainfall.



Game Water Carrying Race

Often women have to carry water for their households long distances from a well, river or water pump by holding water containers on their heads. Have a team relay race where team members have to run carrying a full cup of water on their heads. Obviously, this is best played outside and you will need a towel and possibly a change of clothes available. If playing inside, team members could ‘run’ with a book balanced on their head instead, going back to the beginning if it drops.



Greta Wonders...

- What challenges do you face in your everyday life or have faced in the past? How did you cope with them?
- Of the challenges that children in Zimbabwe face, which do you think is the most important to change?
- Why might families want to send their children to school, even though it costs so much?

Activity

A cyclone is a storm that brings strong winds and rain. When warm ocean air rises it starts to cool and forms clouds: an area of high pressure. This then means there is less air closer to the ocean surface, an area of low pressure, so air moves in to fill the gap. As this air warms, it rises, and so a spinning reaction begins. The clouds formed spin with the rotation of the earth. You can see the effect by making your own cyclone jar. You need a jar or bottle with a tight lid. Put in four to five teaspoons of glitter to help make the effect clearer. Then fill the jar/bottle with water, leaving about five centimetres of air at the top. Add a few squirts of washing up liquid. Put the lid on firmly. Shake the bottle in your hand with a circular motion until it starts swirling. Keep spinning until your cyclone starts properly. Experiment with different sized bottles, different types of washing up liquid etc. Which creates the best effect?

Action Point

- We often take our food, shelter and ease of fresh drinking water and electricity for granted. Try sleeping in a tent for a night or two outside, without any electricity, or devices and only a few biscuits to eat and water to drink during the day. Talk about your experience and what it was like.
- Look up a project in Zimbabwe that you might be able to support either through fund raising or prayer. If you would like further information on how to help the Falcon Primary School, please contact Commitment for Life.

