Tackling HIV and AIDS stigma in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe is one of the countries hardest hit by HIV and AIDS globally. Those living with HIV are often excluded from local functions, health facilities, schools, and even churches and their families. USPG’s partner, the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe, is determined to help change this.

Working across the country (including Rochester’s link diocese of Harare), the church is committed to meeting three aims: that 90% of the population know their status, that 90% of those who are HIV positive are on treatment and, that this 90% have their viral load suppressed.

The church works with those living with HIV and AIDS to prevent new infections, improve treatment access, and facilitate nutrition gardens and savings groups. Together this helps to reduce stigma and transform lives.

Deborah’s story*

Deborah used to lock herself in her house and cry because she had HIV. But now, with help from the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe who are partnering with USPG, life for Deborah and her children has changed for the better.

Deborah has joined a local support and savings group, giving her access to financial and emotional support should she need it. She also became the owner of a nutritional garden, providing her with fresh food that helps her live more healthily with her condition.

In the past Deborah was very shy, but now she is confident and can manage her condition well. She no longer feels excluded and says: ‘The church has helped us to get our dignity back.’

Work to tackle the stigma, experienced by people living with HIV like Deborah, is crucial if we want to prevent new infections and ensure all those in need of treatment can access it. Your support helps to do this and improve people’s lives.

*Real name has been changed.

Prayer points

Political and economic environment in Zimbabwe

- Pray for the political situation in Zimbabwe which remains tense following the Presidential elections in July 2018. The opposition continues to call for a transitional government to resolve the worsening economic and political crisis that has hit Zimbabwe.

- Pray for the current economic situation which has seen prices skyrocket and supplies of fuel, food and pharmaceuticals begin to dry up. Pray for God’s provision and blessing upon work like this programme.

Anglican Church in Zimbabwe

- Pray for the Very Rev Dr Farai Mutamiri (former Dean of St Mary and All Saints’ Cathedral, Harare, in Zimbabwe) who is the new Bishop of Harare.

- Give thanks for the former Bishop of Harare, the Right Rev Chad Gandiya and all the work he has done.

- Pray for all of the churches and communities in Zimbabwe (which include Rochester’s companion diocese of Harare).

- Give thanks for the workers and volunteers of the Anglican Church in Zimbabwe and pray for the vital work they are undertaking.

- Give thanks for Deborah* and her children, and all those living in Zimbabwe and around the world with HIV.
Nevedita Jeevabalan manages the child protection unit of LEADS, a community development organisation in Sri Lanka. She is responsible for a programme of advocacy, intervention and rehabilitation for children who have been traumatised through experiences of abuse and exploitation. Set up in 1995, the programme is still one of the few Christian initiatives of its kind in South Asia.

A clinical psychologist by profession, Nevedita describes her calling to LEADS:

‘My mission is to show God’s love to children who have been through trauma and abuse. Most children who are referred for assistance to LEADS have been abused, abandoned at a young age and been through various traumatic situations.

‘All through their lives they may never have had a loving, trustworthy adult. Being an ambassador of God’s love for such children is the greatest difference I would like to make in their lives.’

Nevedita is passionately committed to service in her own country, and is all too aware of the extent of the need. It is only in the last two decades, as taboos have begun to disintegrate, that the prevalence of child exploitation in Sri Lanka, and across the world, has come to light.

A conservative estimate given by LEADS would indicate that approximately 100 children in Sri Lanka are physically exploited or abused in a single day. In the capital city, Colombo, alone, it is estimated that one in three children live in a violent and abusive home.

And the problem seeps far beyond the borders of Sri Lanka. It is believed that the country has become the principal source of child pornography for the market in the United States and Europe.

Although the government in Sri Lanka is increasingly aware of the extent of child abuse and is putting laws in place to combat the problem, there is still a lack of capacity to provide sufficient safe houses for affected children and families.

LEADS provides one of very few residential counselling centres in the country. Most of the children referred to Nevedita and her team have been abused by someone they know. Many have been placed in institutions, away from parental custody and are referred for psychological intervention because of behavioural problems due to trauma and separation. Unfortunately, if children are not referred to LEADS for counselling and shelter, the only alternative is admission to a psychiatric ward.

**Kedella**

Kedella is LEADS’ therapeutic rehabilitation centre for traumatised children and young people, located on the outskirts of Colombo.

The centre has space for up to eight girls and eight boys. Survivors live in community, usually for about three months, and during that time they receive the equivalent of home schooling as well as intensive counselling and psychotherapy. The children are cared for by two sets of house parents, one for the girls and another for the boys. Other staff, including a teacher and therapists, will join as required through the day, although the team are careful to keep the numbers of additional people to a minimum so that the privacy of the children can be guaranteed.

Kedella is government registered and is open to children from all backgrounds and beliefs, but the team are conscious of their Christian values and will encourage children to express their own spirituality.

Nevedita's vision is to have at least one safe home for children and families in every province in the country (of which there are nine) to help ensure that an institution always remains the last resort.

The counselling team’s work is demanding and emotional, but their core mission is to be there for a child who is hurting and support them and their family through that painful time.

**Please pray:**

- Pray for the girls and boys who come to LEADS for counselling and support on a daily basis – that they would find help and healing.
- Pray for God’s wisdom to lead the team and provide the needed support for the staff.
- Pray for favour in the eyes of government officers.

Photos: Church Mission Society UK
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Poverty and Hope Appeal 2019

No Lost Generation
Bringing hope to young people in Syria

Over the next three years Poverty and Hope is supporting an ambitious Christian Aid project providing education, training and support for young people whose lives have been affected by the conflict in Syria.

Before the war, almost all of Syria’s children were enrolled in primary school, but today the country’s school enrolment rates are among the lowest in the world. Young people are also disproportionately affected by catastrophic unemployment rates, which are at 90% in some areas, compounding the trauma, isolation and poverty they are experiencing.

Humanitarian experts are increasingly calling for more humanitarian aid to ensure children and young people living in conflict zones can stay in education.

Irina Bokova, former UNESCO Director General, noted: ‘Returning to school may be the only flicker of hope and normality for many children in countries engulfed in crises (...) Education must be seen as part of the first response when crisis hits.’

Working together with their local partner in Syria, Christian Aid is running a project to ensure young people affected by conflict can access education and training. This will help to transform young people’s lives, protect them from joining armed groups, and support peaceful, cohesive communities.

Through the project, over 5,500 children and young people in Syria will be provided with education, psychological support, vocational training, and community initiatives.

Key activities include:

- Rehabilitation and upgrading of schools, colleges and youth clubs which have been damaged in the conflict. This work will also provide the opportunity for 90 young men to gain experience in basic construction skills, enhancing their future employability and potential to earn a living.
- Remedial secondary school education and literacy courses in line with the national curriculum.
- Vocational training in nursing for young people to support youth employment while also addressing the chronic shortage of nurses.
- Access to formal educational qualifications through scholarships with online education providers.
- Psychosocial support through youth-friendly spaces, sports activities and referral mechanisms, enhancing community engagement and giving young people a voice and tools to solve problems.
- Opportunities for young people to volunteer in disaster response, first aid and community services with the Civil Defence/White Helmets, and to form their own local disaster response committees, increasing the capacity to respond to emergencies such as aerial bombardments.

Guaranteed EU match funding means all donations are worth TEN TIMES as much!
Sowing seeds of hope
Horticultural training for marginalised groups in Burundi

Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world. Average life expectancy is 50 years and GDP per capita is just $900. One of the most pressing issues facing Burundi’s rural population is food security. For many people here, the reality of living in poverty means not knowing if they will have enough food to feed their family. Yet Burundi is rich in natural resources; there is fertile soil in abundance, people needn’t be hungry.

In partnership with the University of Ngozi, Christian Aid is funding a project providing horticultural training, good seed, and access to land for three vulnerable groups. Your donation will support widows, young people, and the Batwa – a marginalised minority ethnic group. The research labs at the university will select the strongest seeds to allow people to reap a plentiful harvest, bringing them nutritious food and an income.

Desire is 20 years old. His family could not afford for him to complete his schooling, so he dropped-out early. At risk of falling further into poverty, Desire was given the opportunity to participate in this project. Through his training he has grown aubergines, peppers, maize and beans. He recently got married and hopes to have children soon. He’s also a keen football fan!

Desire says: ‘Now I am in the association, I have a lot of hope for the future.’

Esperance Gakobwa is a 30-year-old Batwa widow, and mum of six. The Batwa have faced prejudice and discrimination; with no access to land, they have previously relied on selling clay pots for an income. Government restrictions on the extraction of clay have meant their lives have become more precarious. But through the horticulture project, Esperance’s community now have access to land for the first time.

Esperance says: ‘I am so thankful for this project, it has helped me so much. We have never been trained in modern farming before, we are very excited about it. Before, my children were not able to eat vegetables but now they have an improved diet.’

Through your support more Batwa communities will be given opportunities such as this.

Please pray with Esperance:

‘I pray that God will hold me, that he will not let me fall, but will welcome me into heaven. I pray that my children won’t get involved in crime and will become good members of their community.’

This project will also give young people like Desire training in entrepreneurial skills. They will be given the opportunity to use the seeds that they grow to start a small business, selling seed to other farmers.

Please pray with Desire:

‘I pray that God will hold me, that he will not let me fall, but will welcome me into heaven. I pray that my children won’t get involved in crime and will become good members of their community.’
Inspiring young people in Kent to be global citizens

Bore Place organic dairy farm in Edenbridge, Kent, is home to the Commonwork Trust – a charity founded over 40 years ago with Christian values at its core. Those founding values continue to guide the team at Bore Place in their work today as they educate, empower and inspire visitors to be global citizens.

They work with schools, teachers and young people to understand how the world and those living in it are all interconnected and interdependent, offering experiential learning programmes which explore global issues such as injustice, poverty, peacebuilding and sustainability.

Activities in their programmes are designed to promote confidence, critical thinking, independence and practical skills. Visiting schoolchildren get a chance to experience a working organic farm while learning about where food comes from, purchasing power and how what we eat and buy is connected to global issues.

Hands-on, work-related and therapeutic sessions are offered to vulnerable young people aged 16 and over with personal and mental health issues. The aim is to give them a real opportunity to engage in education and develop skills so they can transition more confidently to the next stage of their lives.

The work with young people with disabilities and learning difficulties continues to grow and Bore Place offers weekend and holiday clubs for young people with additional needs. Their specialist teams work with the children and young people to help develop important skills, confidence and self-esteem in fun and engaging ways, while parents can have some much-needed respite.

The education team has recently been working with schools and families in high deprivation areas in Kent to help tackle the rise in childhood obesity. For example, they have been supporting teachers with tailored classroom resources, and encouraging all pupils and their families to take on the healthy eating and keeping active challenge. They have also offered fantastic opportunities to visit the farm and prepare delicious healthy meals with fresh local produce.

Photos: Commonwork Trust. UK registered charity number 1160725 Company number 09254227 J105510