

ZIMBABWE VICTIMS' SUPPORT FUND

(Registered Charity Number 1145569)



END-OF-YEAR REPORT 2014

www.zimbabwevictimssupportfund.org

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Ebenezer : students enjoy a lunch break

The Kingdom of God under siege

Imagine if you will a flourishing agricultural training centre with an annual intake of 75 apprentices drawn from a vast pool of unemployed young people. Imagine that over the years of its successful operation this project has trained a few thousand aspiring farmers in poultry production, drip irrigation, and tomato and vegetable production so that, at the end of their two year training, they are able to set up viable and sustainable small scale farms near their rural homes. Think of the hope this would bring to the region as thousands see the potential of small scale organic farming. Then add to this that during their training the



Learning together on Ebenezer Farm

young farmers are introduced to the Christian faith as a way of life, their training being with the avowed aim of “equipping young people for life in Christ.”

Now take this imaginary, inspirational project, turn the dream into reality and plant it in a remote and deprived area called Matobo in southern Zimbabwe. This, by the way, is an arid region noted for poverty, food scarcity and high unemployment. What sort of reception would you expect such a project to receive? An ecstatic welcome, surely.

And so it was. I am referring of course to the **Ebenezer Agricultural Training Centre**. It was warmly welcomed by the local community and their traditional leaders, the chiefs. Ebenezer became so popular that there was soon a long waiting list of would-be trainees. Plans were afoot to expand the intake. The land on which Ebenezer stands was donated by a lovely Christian family, along with access to a dam and

improved road access. Tearfund and other major Christian Charities contributed to the running costs. I have visited the project myself a number of times, and each time have found fresh inspiration.

I should mention too that alongside Ebenezer there has existed since 1958 an ecumenical Christian campsite called **Shalom**. Run on a non-profit basis to make it accessible to all, Shalom has been a centre of Christian youth ministry for all this time. Another inspirational project.

Unbelievably however both Ebenezer and Shalom are now in imminent danger of closure. The owners have been given notice to stop all farming operations and prepare to hand the land over to a new owner – a powerful politician from the ruling party. Ominously an inventory has been taken of all the farm equipment and the owners notified that if anything is removed they will be charged with theft. It beggars belief. As I write, the local community is rallying strongly in support, but in these uncertain times who can say what the outcome will be. (If you do a Google search on “Ebenezer Agricultural Training Centre” you can go straight to the website and view the latest news and prayer updates on the situation.)

I am anxious that our supporters should be aware of this in order to understand the context in which all developmental and relief work is being carried out in Zimbabwe today. You should be aware also of the spiritual dimension of the struggle for justice and peace in that troubled land. Zimbabwe is not in a good place today. As the near absolute powers of an aging dictator are slowly and quietly being taken over by the small power-hungry circle around him, so ruthless politicians are striking out for personal gain wherever they see an opportunity.



Sharing the vision with visitors to Ebenezer

It is within such an uncertain and dangerous environment that our courageous team in Zimbabwe continue their faithful stewardship of the resources we make available to them through your amazing generosity. We can be profoundly grateful to them for their courage and perseverance -“not growing weary in doing good”. Grateful also to “the Father of compassion and God of all comfort” who has given us this means to bless some of those for whom their own delinquent rulers show scant regard.

Please pray discernment, wisdom and a godly patience for those struggling to maintain the Christian witness of Ebenezer and Shalom, and encouragement also for our own small team of intrepid volunteers.

God bless,

Graham

Fundraising news

We have been blessed to have organisations partner with us – Methodist Women in Britain (Beds, Essex and Herts District) and Priory Church in Bedford last year, and St Michael’s Church PCC in Highgate this year.

Derrick and Pam Copeland organised a coffee morning at their church in Warminster to raise funds for ZVSF. The full text of the local paper write up, including this picture of Derrick and supporter Karen Wollard, can be accessed by a link on our website



Treasurer's Report

Thank you so much for your donations which amounted to nearly £65,000 in 2014. This enabled us to send \$85,000 to our Bulawayo partners which was used predominately to buy maize meal for Pastor Albert's food distribution (95 tonnes), Hillside Methodist Church's feeding programme (16 tonnes) and lunches for students at Lupane schools during the school terms (39 tonnes).

Although it's hard to know exactly how many people this helps we know that, typically, one 10kg bag is given to a family each month. Your generosity has funded the purchase and distribution of 1250 bags each month.

Following the death of Simon Tshabangu in February we have had no reliable channel to distribute funds to Siabuwa. Sadly, but with the agreement of the Bulawayo team, we felt we had to suspend payments to them.

Christine

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