

## *field report #2*

*March 23rd 2026*



~~~ *INSIDE* ~~~

### **NHIMBE FOR PROGRESS PRESCHOOL**

The Nhimbe for Progress preschool was one of our first efforts to reach the six village communities, along with sponsoring the older children to attend school. We began in 2002 with the building, and everything grew from there.

[It remains a strong and vital piece of Nhimbe with regular attendance normally above 70 children \(2025 in the 80's\).](#)

They are saying, “vana, vana, vana, (children, children, children), and the students are responding “teacher, teacher, teacher”.

There are also residents in other nearby villages who want to begin a preschool. I can attest to what a large undertaking this is: to comply with District regulations, to fund buildings and hygienic facilities, and to provide ongoing support for personnel, food, and supplies. Keeping the children healthy is critical, particularly with so many. We can't quite figure out how residents will be able to do it (maybe donors?), but I think if they can truly manage it, it's a good thing to make education and a good meal available everywhere to these young ones.

At our preschool, it's often their best meal of the day. In the above video they were being served rice and minced meat. Aren't they just absolutely adorable? I love the purple!

- ◆ *Ambuya Comforter Project*
- ◆ *MMC Teacher Training*
- ◆ *Rural Living*



## **AMBUYA COMFORTER PROJECT**



It has been a real joy to distribute these beautiful pieced comforters to our rural elderly. We travel in the normal Zimbabwean way, with people packed into the vehicle at each door, usually the skinniest people in the back seat. Here, Muda and Kuda (the eldest son of Winfilda, our MMC seamstress) ride in the back of the car practicing mbira. The books that Cosmas wrote with Paul Berliner are dog-eared, being used by all. Cosmas Jr. too, was working on writing the mbira score in the fashion they had developed...quite amazing!

Once again, the travel has been intense and was scheduled for a 2-day period to reach 6 women. Due to the repeated heavy rains last week, one of the roads was completely impassable, so hopefully, after a drier spell, we can reach the 6<sup>th</sup> woman in the Gore village. We often pass people who are related (Chikonamombe) and other acquaintances. Some of these places are literally being "field reported," as the grass is higher than the car.

All of the women were so grateful, not only for the special needlework done on their behalf, but also to be chosen and recognized for their life contributions to the community. Here, Loice

Mhike, from the Muriritirwa village, is sharing her enthusiasm for this incredible gift. Loice is a healer and uses traditional herbs, to which we attribute her longevity. (Note the black and white beads around her neck.) It's hard to believe that she is 94. We saw her Zimbabwean ID, which stated she was born in 1932!

The women are a variety of ages. Here we arrive at the home of a member of the Magaya Village, Senalani Zengayi. Senalani is 96 according to her Zimbabwean ID. Her late son, Simon, played mbira regularly with Jenny Muchumi.

Her granddaughter is here gifting us some bananas. Senalani is offering a sweet prayer.



## **AMBUYA COMFORTER PROJECT—continued**

And then, [there is the walk-in](#) to Edna Muchenje's home. [Edna is 73 years old](#) and from the Muchiri village. [Viola Jiya is 78 years old](#) and is part of Zinyengere. All of the blanket recipients are part of our 6 villages, to make this a reasonable undertaking.

My sister in Albany, Oregon does the exquisite piecing. She buys all the fabrics and picks these incredibly beautiful colors. She donates these to not only us, but also to hospice and the veterans. We also are very grateful for the especially gifted team of women who tie and sew on the backing in their living room setting outside of Lebanon. Any [donations to the Ambuya Comforter project](#) go to buying the inside batting (\$10) and the postage (\$30). Everything else is donated. It's a very small amount of money for the largeness of the gift. And, for the Shona culture, where the elders are given a place of honor, we are able to support those life-giving traditions.

## **Mhandara Monthly Care (MMC) TEACHER TRAINING**

We are fulfilling a very long vision to bring together our teachers from the *hombe* schools (those 10 schools outside of Nhimbe). Wow...I've really been waiting a long time to implement this idea! We partnered with the [Vasikana Project](#), who managed to get the [Menstrupedia comic translated from Hindi](#) into Shona, since its such a great resource. Unfortunately, the government here won't include it in the school curriculum because it doesn't have all the possible dialects, etc. We purchased 55 copies of this comic so that the schools and Nhimbe each receive 5 copies. If you don't have an English copy (available on Amazon), you should...really particularly great for girls 8 to 14.

We worked with Girl Child Zimbabwe last year, and the manager developed an outline for the teachers to follow. We took Saturday, the 21<sup>st</sup>, to instruct our teachers in the finer points of using the comic as an outline for our MMC program. I've been so excited I can hardly contain myself. Why? Because I know that our Nhimbe leaders know what they are doing, but without much structure, I've not been confident in the outlying schools...so this is a super solution.

The teachers took 5 copies of the book back to their schools, and now they really have something concrete to follow! We provided juice and biscuits for a meeting snack. We are so hopeful that the children will benefit from the time and energy invested in our gathering.

We got into some intimate conversations about boys, teen pregnancy, stds, and the rest. The goal is to help them reach more girls, more directly. The word is that corporal punishment used to be the way they were instructed to deal with the girls, and now they are told to help the girls open up and talk...miracle of miracles. The world is shifting!



## **RURAL LIVING**

Our travel in the car demands a lot of this vehicle. The driver in this segment is Standrek “Tichaona” Musarurwa, for those who have met him. He was working in S. Africa and then was in an accident at work, losing his leg. We are grateful that on this trip he is often our chauffer. The accident was a fairly brutal situation since he was such an exquisite dancer.

Regularly, the suspension in the car needs checking, and it was making too many noises. Muda took it to town, and it took most of the day to repair a bearing. Then today, the tire being low needed tending, so we could go to a meeting. The roads here are fairly demanding, and that requires continual auto maintenance.

Most people don’t have cars in the rural area. Hours go by without a car on the road. Today Matilda is going to attend a ‘green show’ at someone’s home who just won an award for best farmer in the area. She is being picked up by a friend who is willing to help her get there. I’m looking forward to my ride in the scotch cart (not sure where that name comes from), but I know it can actually be dangerous. Matilda expressed a little reservation but really wants to attend the event.



Here is Cosmas Jr., Muda’s first-born son, chillin’ with his soccer ball. Self-entertainment is a great quality out here in the rural area. Cosmas Jr. has been super helpful since I arrived with all kinds of computer and techy tasks. We have multiple survey and enrollment data files of several pages to update and get ready to print, either at a local store (Mubayira, 27 kilometers away) or in Harare. Fortunately, Cosmas Jr. is skilled in computer work, and then too, he can be equipped with more google sheets experience, since I’m quite nerdy that way. Also, anything to do with the wifi and transferring of files, he has stepped up. Kuda also has been super helpful. I’m quite grateful for all the help.

Cosmas Jr. is going on 20 this December. (The children always announce what age they are going to be, like hurry up and grow up.) He has completed his A Level, which is similar to our US community college, and is ready to go to university. Of course, he plays mbira and works with his grandpa’s mbira books. He has an interest in mining at this point. As an avid rock hound, I’m picking up the carnelian on the ground, and we discuss the various depths and shades of color. He says when he was a little boy, he would always pick up stones and ask his grandpa, Cosmas, about their value.

***Again, thank you for all of your prayers and kind thoughts. We are feeling the support!***



**RURAL LIVING—continued**

Instead of going to the salon, one just needs a good sister to plait her hair. These are Cosmas' other two children that you may not have heard much about. (Many of you know Tsitsi, the middle one.) Matilda, in blue, is the oldest, and Rutendo (getting plaited) is the youngest. They are stepping up and helping Nhimbe. Cosmas emphasized many times before passing, that the whole family should do whatever is possible to protect and sustain Nhimbe, as it's the first-born of his projects. The teamwork is truly a God-send and an amazing, unexpected blessing.

We also spent time visiting one of the elders in the family, where everyone is so familiar, laughing and exchanging stories...of course almost all in Shona. So I just ride the wave, with little understanding of what is being said.



**Who Are We? And, How Do We Work?**

*Ancient Ways was founded in 1993 by Jaiaen Beck in Lacomb OR, established as a non-profit in 1994, receiving charitable tax status in 1996. Over the last 32 years we have worked to preserve the life-giving traditions of indigenous peoples, with a focus on their music, art and healing practices, giving attention to music lessons and performances.*

*Nhimbe for Progress was started in 1999 by Jaiaen and Cosmas Magaya, established as a Trust in 2010, currently awaiting NGO status. Over the last 26 years, overcoming all obstacles presented by economic hardships and volatile political policies, we have developed an infrastructure for success, continuity, and permanence. Nhimbe focuses on uplifting the rural residents' sub-standard living conditions to better assure preservation of Shona heritage. In 2020, when Cosmas Magaya passed on, Mudavanhu, his son, and Febby Shava, began a shared co-director partnership for Nhimbe. In 2026, we now expand to include Matilda Magaya's collaboration for the three (Muda, Febby, Jaiaen) director's executive assistant.*

*The focus continues to be finding the best succession planning approach in Zimbabwe and the US... interested in getting involved? Do you love humanity and desire to serve? Welcome! Mauya!*

***A CHILD'S LIFE IS THE PATH***

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