



# Our Children Your Children In Zimbabwe

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## Special Points of Interest

- IT WAS HEARING THE SWEET MUSIC FROM ZIMBABWE that first captivated us in 1990. We continue with Shona music study, classes and performances. We also continue to reach into our depths to bridge the cultural diversity amongst us all, making building community the priority and final frontier.
- SIX VILLAGES, OVER 1,500 PEOPLE, comprise the Nhimbe for Progress core since 1999

## INSIDE

Encouraging Learning	2
Preschool Then and Now	3
Family Well Success in 2025	4
Join Us in Growing MMC in 2026	4
Reading and Life-long Empowerment	5
HeartWorks ElderCare and Eflda	5
Confessions from the Abyss	6
Oregon Bottle Drop	6
Listen in MwoyoChena CD	6
Recurring Donations	6
How Can You Help?	6
Employer Matching	6
The Marketplace	6

## ~ WE CONTINUE WITH SUPREME GRATITUDE! ~



**Beginning another year, I write you with so much gratitude for our collective Heart working together! Because of you, we are able to create opportunities and otherwise unimagined outcomes by seamlessly putting ourselves into one determined effort. Thank you! Tatenda Chaizvo!**

Our goal is to bring trailblazing progress while still honoring life-giving traditions. This is not a solo endeavor. It benefits greatly from the many committed hands and hearts.

This is a labor of love, much like cooking can be if one loves food. This global multicultural work is exceedingly complex, undesirable at times and challenging, but look at it differently, and its an amazing ride! This means, we have to change the way we look at things, and things change.

In 1999, Cosmas and I started with a laundry list of needs, which immediately began morphing on my first trip. We did not list anything about rebuilding collapsed huts, but between November, when we met after the Soul of Mbira tour, and when I visited in March 2000, there was a cyclone (Eline), so we added

huts to our list. Within the next year or so we rebuilt over 40 huts!

One of our superb achievements has been to build and operate the Nhimbe preschool. 2025 has seen us graduate 32 children, 15 boys and 17 girls, making another successful life-transforming year. The library was started immediately after my first trip, when I realized that books are an unusual commodity there...just a few packed in our suitcases on the next trip started this invaluable program.

Each year, building wells has become increasingly important as we have seen a multi-year drought, resulting in no water at the village residents' homes. This is just a basic for health. We have managed to reach all six villages twice with a Health Forum teaching simple, critical, lifesaving lifestyle changes.

In 2006, visiting teachers from Oklahoma were key to inspiring our Youth Well Being programs to really blossom. That, in turn, taught us that some girls didn't have underwear or monthly care supplies, paving the way to Mhandara Monthly Care, where we now manufacture and distribute our own supplies to hundreds of new girls each year, expanding well beyond Nhimbe for Progress villages.

Let's top this off, recalling that we have built a dozen toilets and over 40 *tsotso* (small) stoves plus provided HIV/AIDS courses, herbalism workshops as well as permaculture and drip irrigation undertakings,

which are multi-day and community wide events.

Looking back at our amazing history, even with all the chaos and political issues in the world, the future looks bright to continue to intercede on behalf of these particular Mhondoro residents, saying, "Everyone deserves the basics!"

Let's recognize all of the people who work on behalf of our successes! Blessings to all the musicians who donate their time, as well as people like Hakan and Renee who keep our records perfect. There are many volunteers who make things work! One person to give a shout-out to is Matilda Magaya, (Cosmas' eldest daughter) who gives us a hand from time to time. She streamlines project details, simplifies my life and keeps me sane.



**Please read on to learn more about these programs and this profound love for Zimbabwe!**  
[Click here to donate now and help us make 2026 an incredible year!](#)



~ NHIMBE FOR PROGRESS ENCOURAGING LEARNING! ~



Eflida Katena Retires after 23 years



**We are going into our 23rd year of developing the Nhimbe Preschool from the ground up.** We continue to operate with an impressive staff, track record and shoe-string budget. We remain enormously grateful for all of the support you offer these particular Zimbabwean neighbors. You don't know them, have never met them and likely won't, but you have held them in your heart for this time as if their lives matter. And, of course, they do! But, with all the distractions, chaos and financial challenges on the planet, you could have easily blinked and focused on so many other things, and missed us. **Life is just so loud.**

The Nhimbe Preschool gives such an incredible start to children. Their synapses and neural pathways are being expanded in ways we can only imagine. You can see in their eyes how they shine. Happiness doesn't come from lots of toys and fancy clothes ... it comes from gratitude ... both from the parents and the children.

**Many thanks to you for your part in this! You are an integral part of their God-given right to have the basics.**

Access to resources of all sorts is the key way we teach. The birthright to play is one of those, and we, as humanity, need to preserve it, paying particular attention to war-torn countries, whether it's an economic warzone like Zimbabwe, refugee camps or otherwise impoverished or violated home bases.

Let me share some pictures of our playground, which has really evolved over the years

We hold so much appreciation for you and yours who make these children's very real lives so much better. "Why?" you say, "It's just a child somewhere in the African bush." I would agree with you that each is just one of millions on the planet, but every child's life is a treasure, and your kindness ripples. Imagine being the parent of that child and knowing they are often getting the best meal of the day because they attend our preschool. What a relief! The child's life is improved as is the parent's.

And truly, they are receiving an educational stimulus that are like none other. The resources that

due to amazing support from NGO's. What a lovely, creative area! This slide show reminds us of how the simplest things can bring such joy and teach many things like coordination, cooperation and glee.



An added resource is food. And, personally, that is one of my "love languages." I feel it in my bones when I see how we are helping them in this way...nourishment, pleasure, relief.

The teaching tools we provide are another basic that everyone deserves. Fortunately, this generation is growing up to know them as normal through repeated routine. Our goal is to inspire a lifelong love of learning!

we pour into the children are much like a modern parent choosing a private or specialty school for their young ones. There is no half-way effort on this.

Our sister organization, Humwe, picks the brightest and best older children to train in mbira and then sponsors them to attend the local government schools. These very children got their start here at our Nhimbe Preschool. So, the circle is unbroken, and its flow has been profound in helping the children from our villages to be part of our cultural preservation of the area.

The alphabet board in this video is just one example of a donated resource. Plus, having a skilled and dedicated teacher and a plentiful library makes all the difference. Top left sidebar is Fortunata Takaendesa, who is much-loved and has been with our program for most of its life. Rumor has it that the children share a great zeal for learning, and we can see it in their faces!

Learning how to count in English helps pave the way for the children's future in this bilingual country's educational system.

Oh! And, let's not forget music! We all know this song ;\*)

Thank you for however you are able to help us help them.



~ PRESCHOOL THEN AND NOW ~

The government schools are a sorry example of nurturing or of providing early childhood education. The top right pictures capture an average local preschool, while the next are our Nhimbe for Progress preschool. And we aren't being extravagant in any way (supplies, food, wages, for instance). Just basics!



Traditionally, males and females alike serve meals and help with handwashing. After recess, this warm meal satisfies.

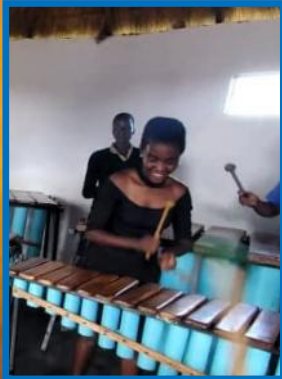
The library provides the preschool books and has been such a blessing. Thanks to all of you who have been part of its development.

If we can teach only one thing, it would be "to learn how to learn." What a huge gift!

Here, see the graduating children sharing their colors, months and shapes during the ceremony. [Click to see the proud parents, children and their siblings](#) celebrate the big day. We are enormously grateful for the gift of learning you offer these children and families!



MMC Marimba



Lessons on Fridays after school are genuinely a highlight of the girls' week.

Thank you for making that possible!



We are so grateful for the Vasikana Project who translated the Menstrupedia comic book to Shona! The girls love it!

~ FAMILY WELL SUCCESSES IN 2025 ~

**W.A.T.E.R! (Wells And Toilets Everyone's Right!)** remains a key part of our mission. In 2025, we spent over \$6,300 working with the community to improve the water availability. This included building 12 wells for the elderly, deepening 24 wells which had no water due to the ongoing drought and repairing 32 well lids. A *makorokoto* (congratulations) is in order!

Although we are happy about making these improvements because water is so basic to life, health and happiness, we feel compromised by the difficulties we face in getting pictures taken of all of the wells, since that is one of our main goals. Hopefully, you are able to be patient with our process if you have been waiting for your picture (maybe for years)!

Please check out [this slide show sharing a few of the wells that have been built](#). Residents are enormously happy about it all!

We have a video overview of the well building process [on the website](#) and hope you have the time to enjoy it. If you are able to donate any part of the well building cost, please feel free to do so, as we build a team of contributors to make sure everyone who needs a well gets considered. Our team makes a point to disburse the well funds among the six villages. [Click here to read more about wells](#), and we thank you very much!



~ JOIN US IN GROWING MMC IN 2026 ~

**MMC Mhandara Monthly Care** has been going strong for yet another year. We spent over \$5,100 on services. Besides weekly meetings, learning sewing and marimba and attending hygiene classes, the girls are able to participate in a camp up to three times a year during their month-long holiday from school. Zimbabwe has school sessions much like Europe with three month-long holidays placed during the year, rather than the way we have one three month-long break.

Here are some videos from the April 2025 Camp. I have to hand it to the women who run the camp because they do such a fantastic job...imagine organizing over 100 teens with such simple accommodations!

- [Here is a video of some of the cooking and serving efforts.](#)
- [The girls stay busy with marching, singing and visiting elders.](#) Here

they leave the Community Center singing and then once arrived at the elders home, they are acknowledging Bridge Zaranyika (head man of the Zaranyika village and 100 years old!). They are singing him a song saying "*tinotenda* (x3) *Chikonamombe*" meaning, we give thanks and are in gratitude, *Chikonamombe*, which is the name of the male impala totem (you may have heard Cosmas called that).

- The girls also get a chance to practice their public speaking. [Here is a girl practicing presenting to a group, and then a group of girls learning in a class with an elder about navigating the teenage terrain.](#)
- [The last video is of them leaving the camp as they hike home.](#)

If you would like to check out more about recent weekly meetings [please see this blog](#). Want to support our efforts? [Please join us however you can](#). The girls, the parents, and the entire community appreciate you and how you help!



## ~ READING AND LIFE-LONG EMPOWERMENT ~



***This book, One Child One Seed, is one of many that have been hand-picked for our library. Our librarian is checking in the shipment.***

When I was young, my family went to the library on Saturday morning, and I fondly recall listening while the librarian read us a book appropriate for our age. Somehow, I want to give that experience to these children. I know that the preschool teacher reads to the children, but once they leave and enter 1st grade, I'm not sure that anyone is reading to the children at that point.

Currently, the library is open on most Saturdays. The Community Center is open, and all ages come to visit. I love the idea that the local policeman stops by to get a book to read, or a teacher from the local school, as well as parents from our community. This library is serving everyone, although the impetus for me, originally, was to see if we could expand the horizons of the children.

**Check out this slide show!**

We have been successful in bringing books to the community. It's not just the preschool, or just English books. We also have Shona books to read as well as text books for the tests that are tak-

en...those important tests at grade 7 or form 4 have standardized exams that pave the future for advancement.

The one thing we are lacking is furnishings. For instance, we need tables and chairs to sit inside and peruse one's latest interest. The steps or grass outside also works, but getting some chairs seems basic, particularly after all of these years. We also need to build better book shelves. The original shelves are 6" deep—not deep enough for most books, and the distance between shelves (as you can see in the photo) is a bit too far, so they stack the books instead of a side-by-side arrangement. I'm pretty sure the design of these shelves comes from a desire to be frugal, with wood being scarce and expensive.

I would love to be able to come up with a slightly better organization. My last trip (2019 of all things!) was useful for putting age-related labels on the books, so at least we could classify them a bit. **If you are able to help us with our library, please click here! You could make the difference!**

## ~ HEART WORKS ELDER CARE & EFILDA ~



**Here, Eflida Katena, Cosmas' older sister, now 74 years old, is receiving one of the donated comforters from Febby Shava, the co-director of Nhimbe for Progress and also the head of the preschool and MMC.**

Six comforters were again shipped and distributed this year; many thanks to the local mid-Willamette team that donates their time, supplies and exquisite skills!

This team effort includes putting together fabrics, piecing the latest design inspiration, and then frame tying, all the way its been done for centuries.

Eflida has been part of Nhimbe since its inception. She has taken remarkable care of all inventory, meaning every pencil or bucket of grain is impeccably accounted for. We have been blessed by her contributions and are very sorry to say that retirement time has arrived.

She also has been seen participating with gusto at most of the MMC Camps, start-up kit distributions and other functions for the girls. Our heart is filled to the brim with gratitude for her and all of the time she has spent since 2000 giving, giving, giving!

**Please come along side of us with whatever you can offer!**

**As it turns out, you, all of those who are reading this, plus all of those that have made Nhimbe a reality, have become my muse.**

Your hearts motivate and encourage me to challenge myself to stick with the curriculum when it's tough, and I'm facing an embankment with drop-offs on all sides. Sometimes cracks in the hard soil turn into an abyss. Sometimes the bread crumbs I'm following disappear as a cloud covers the night's moonlight. Sometimes the intricacies of interceding on behalf of others becomes a foreign and complex mirage. So, thankfully, your minds and hearts yank me back to my senses and help me to recall why I'm doing this and how I got here.

There are many nefarious, let's say, energies that work to hijack great ideas. The paradox is that everything—all the contrast—serves to enlighten us all and bring disassociated fragments back onto a healthy path through loving-kindness. Our goal is to be part of that change—be the change we want to see. You may not agree with this ideology, but thank you anyway for listening.

After deliberating and cogitating, truly, the only answer for me is prayer. I remember the very beginning when I was quite clear that my ancestors asked me to “redress the balance.” I didn't know anything more than that, but heard that phrase in my head. The other piece of information I was given at that early date was that all of this is not up to me, but this is a job for many hands and hearts, and much of it is being done in the spiritual world...it's not just a human endeavor! I heard in my head that “they” (ancestors, angels, what-have-you) are behind it all, and what I have to do is stay the course and bring my energy and gifts to the table.

It's because you meet me half-way that we can make progress and see change. We can take boundless action and incredible strides because we are a team...it's like the music group...it's always about the resultant, not the individual.

So, thank you for your impactful participation, however you do that. Sometimes, it's just your friendship. Other times, it's the financial contribution/s made. All the time, it's the healing, it's the hope, it's the wellbeing from relational collaboration.

I mentioned in the November blog — it's taken thousands of years to get to this point in Zimbabwe, and it has finally dawned on me that my part is not to solve it. You are familiar with the serenity prayer? Loosely, change those things you can and make sure you know the difference between what you can and can't affect? Me and the serenity prayer have been in a tug-o-war.

Ancient Ways started in '94, so here I am, 30 plus years later, and am barely scratching the surface of accepting what is and profound allowing. Finally, there is a smidgen of understanding surfacing as well as floods of gratitude for it all.

Music has become the river. And the fun and play that it brings my heart to share with my community, both the ensemble and those enjoying what they hear, gives me a reason, gives me joy to jump through the musical intelligence portal together, and gives me partners with which to cultivate this particular kind of sharing as we all have been doing for generations. In the race toward hope, music is bringing us all home! As Cosmas was famous for saying after a long stressful day, “**We are winning!**”

### ~ OREGON BOTTLE DROP ~

Can BottleDrop be an easy way for you to **HELP WITH OUR PROGRAMS**? One bag of returnables buys three, (yes, **THREE**) girls monthly soap for 1 year! **CHOOSE** Ancient Ways as your charity...thank you! [BOTTLEDROPCENTER.com](http://BOTTLEDROPCENTER.com)



### ~ LISTEN IN ~

Our Online Shop helps you listen to the clips on the incredible [MWOYOCHENA kuZimbabwe CDs](#), all donated by the best musicians. If you don't have a copy, you should! The song selections are exquisite.

### ~ RECURRING DONATIONS ~

Please consider a recurring donation with a bank draft or credit card! We have a new link on the website. You can set it up without our assistance. [CHECK THIS OUT!](#) Set up monthly, quarterly, or annually for any amount! Thanks for considering!

### ~ HOW CAN YOU HELP? ~

Several ideas here: Become an Ancient Ways member! Share our story! Donate your time...any gesture of time you offer is greatly appreciated! We are always so grateful for administrative skills. Just reach out and let's talk! We thank you very much! *Tatenda Chaizvo!*

### ~ EMPLOYER MATCHING! ~

If your employer offers donation matching ([click for example](#)), your \$10 becomes \$20, your \$50 becomes \$100! Ask your employer if that is a program they support. Some employers also donate based upon your volunteer hours as well. **Thanks for checking it out!**

### ~ THE MARKET PLACE ~

Ancient Ways now has much of its inventory online! These items have been hand made by villagers who are excellent artists. They work to pay school fees and put food on their table, while bringing their art into the world. [Please check it out online!](#)