

CRS' WORK IN ZIMBABWE

CRS started its Zimbabwe country program in 1989 at the invitation of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference. The Conference was concerned about the grave impact of HIV and AIDS on its communities. CRS Zimbabwe's early efforts were aimed at reducing this impact. Years later, CRS Zimbabwe's programming developed to be broader and more complex, but the organization's concentration on improving the lives of people affected and infected by HIV and AIDS remains the same.



Since 1943, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) has held the privilege of serving the poor and disadvantaged overseas. Without regard to race, creed or nationality, CRS provides emergency relief in the wake of natural and man-made disasters. Through development projects in fields such as education, peace and justice, agriculture, microfinance, health, HIV and AIDS, CRS works to uphold human dignity and promote better standards of living. CRS also works throughout the United States to expand the knowledge and action of Catholics and others interested in issues of international peace and justice. Our programs and resources respond to the U.S. Bishops' call to live in solidarity — as one human family — across borders, over oceans, and through differences in language, culture and economic condition.

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CRS OVC PROGRAMMING

Making an Impact in Zimbabwe





HOW IS CRS HELPING OVC IN ZIMBABWE?

The Children Living with HIV and AIDS (CLHA) program, funded by CRS, is implemented in the community by the Million Memories Project Trust of Zimbabwe. CRS started the CLHA program with the goal of improving the quality of life for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in Zimbabwe. CRS uses psychosocial tools, such as *The Hero Book*, written by OVC on HIV and AIDS, to help children cope with HIV and its social impact.

Zimbabwe has one of the world's highest HIV and AIDS infection rates and approximately one in five Zimbabweans are HIV-positive. As a result of the pandemic's impact, there are a growing number of orphans and vulnerable children in the country. Currently, more than 1 million Zimbabwean children have lost one or both of their parents.



As a result of the high prevalence of HIV, more than 200,000 children lose at least one parent to AIDS each year in Zimbabwe. CRS, with local partners, is helping improve the lives of 20,000 orphans and vulnerable children through services including antiretroviral therapy (ART), general health care, home care, school assistance, education, food security, and psychosocial treatments. While these services are helping individuals living with HIV, they are also helping communities and individuals fight the spread of the AIDS pandemic.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Children Living with HIV and AIDS (CLHA) project goal is to reduce the impact of HIV and AIDS among OVC in Zimbabwe. Community volunteers have been trained to help identify children affected by HIV and to provide referrals, and are an important part of reducing the impact of HIV and AIDS among OVC. CRS also conducts support group trainings. Fifteen groups have been formed so far. In the support groups parents and guardians learn about disclosure, stigma, discrimination and nutrition, and children learn about the importance of medication adherence.



TICH: A CRS SUCCESS STORY

INTRODUCTION

Tich is a 20-year-old beneficiary of the CLHA project funded by CRS in Zimbabwe. Although he was born with HIV, he did not learn about his status until he was 15-years-old. Tich received ART and psychosocial support from the CLHA project. Tich developed art and drawing skills that gave him a way to express his emotions and ease his daily pain.

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT

OVC like Tich often lack community structures to help them go through normal human development stages, and often experience stigma, loneliness and mental distress. After Tich learned of his HIV status, CRS and CLHA provided him with support services. He is now an ambitious young man who strives to fulfill his dreams of attending art school and further develop his artistic skills.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

In recognition of what was given to him, Tich is giving back to society. He assists younger OVC by working with them in support groups. OVC in communities around Tich benefit from messages portrayed in his art creations. His aspirations of pursuing a college degree and opening an art school are an inspiration to younger OVC.



TICH'S ASSURANCE

"I know I am and will be somebody in life and am very confident of this."