



Registered UK Charity 1143214



Supporting St Marcellin's Children's Village Trust to provide Education, Nutrition and Healthcare for Orphans and Vulnerable Children

Friends of St Marcellin's Children

The Friends of St Marcellin's Children is a UK based organisation supporting St Marcellin's Children's Village in Harare, Zimbabwe. Over recent years Zimbabwe has suffered greatly from political turmoil, hyperinflation and drought, leading to a massive increase in the number of homeless, as well as hunger and poverty on a huge scale. With the nationwide impact of HIV, whereby many families have already been reduced to severe poverty and countless children orphaned, the additional crises have led to the incapacity of the extended families to take in orphaned or unwanted children. This has resulted in thousands of children being abandoned and left to fend for

themselves. Previously, whilst the hospitals were still able to offer a functional service, children's wards could be found full of sick and homeless children. The hospitals are now rarely functional and the local social welfare services struggle to find enough places in existing orphanages and children homes to house these forgotten children. In 2005 St Marcellin's Children's Village had 20 children to care for; they now have 74.

About the Children's Village

St Marcellin's Children's Village set up as a registered private voluntary organisation in Hatfield, Harare, in 2002. There are currently 74 children ranging from 1-15 years of age. All the children have been orphaned, abandoned or taken into the care of social services for their own safety. At St Marcellin's Children's Village they are given education, nutrition and the necessary healthcare required for their individual circumstances. Poverty and widespread HIV have left many orphans and children without the traditional safety nets of the extended family and the Village has had to grow beyond expectations to accommodate the massive influx of children in need from the current political and economic environment in Zimbabwe.

The Village is run by Mr and Mrs Norman Macdonald, affectionately known by all the children as 'mummy and daddy'. It is divided into 4 houses for living accommodation: St Marcellin house; St Michael's; St Gabriel's and St Raphael's. Each house is run by a house 'mother' and an assistant who cook, clean and care for the children allocated to their house in a family environment. There are approximately 20 children per house. The mothers work rotas and return to their own households and families off-site for 5 days at a time. Other dedicated staff members assist the house mothers with the overall running of the village to ensure the wellbeing and happiness of the children.

Education

Education is an essential factor for the future of these children, who will only remain protected for their younger years. Whilst the Village endeavors to keep all the children until they are 18 years of age, what

happens once they leave will inevitably depend on the education and life skills they have learned whilst at St Marcellin's.

All children over 2 years old attend some form of education. There is a pre-school and nursery on site with a qualified teacher and assistant to prepare the children for their full time education. Of the children with special needs, including the blind or those with other physical or learning disabilities, one attends a specialist school for Down's Syndrome and the others are given home schooling or stimulation and attention from the pre-school set up on site.



Only three children have completed primary school (Grade 7) and funds have been found for them to start secondary school. This number is set to grow significantly as the children progress in their education. Whilst all children have been encouraged into mainstream education, there are unfortunately numerous children who are struggling due to their unfortunate and disadvantaged start in life. These children need specialist psychological support and one to one attention for schooling, hence many of the older children who came to St Marcellin's without any previous education, are still completing primary school grades.

Until February 2010, once the children had progressed to a satisfactory standard they were sent to Hatfield Primary School, the local school which educates children up to Grade 7. Due to increased demands for payments and levies, coupled with the special educational needs that many of the children have, they were forced to leave school in February 2010. Apart

from the educational impact this also had a harsh psychological impact on some of the children and emergency arrangements had to be made to educate the children at home. In March 2010 St Marcellin's were visited by three Education Officers who were very impressed with the nursery and pre-school and happy with the current arrangements for schooling Grades 1-7 at home. Norman and Sybil have long wanted to build a primary school on site in true following of the work of St Marcellin who dedicated his life to education of the poor and vulnerable. This was discussed with the education officers and they have advised to continue teaching the children at home until such time as a school can be registered and built. Norman has extensive experience of working with the blind and the pre-schoolteacher is also very experienced in working with children with special needs. They are determined to establish an educational environment which can support the individual development of all the children. Registration is now in progress and in addition to the pre-school teacher there are now three more teachers employed; one teacher for Grades 1, 2, 3; one for Grades 4 and 5 and one teacher for Grades 6 and 7. The children have settled happily and are already showing the benefits of smaller classes and more personalised tuition suited to their individual needs.



Nutrition

The challenges of feeding and caring for 74 vulnerable children are numerous. No funding is received from the social services or other government sources and St Marcellin's relies on the good will and kind donations

of well wishers. All children are nutritionally cared for by the mothers of their house. They all receive 3 meals per day plus a mid morning snack. Currently donations of basic food stuffs have been received from the World Food Program (WFP) and this is supplemented by local donations and vegetables from the garden.



None of the donations are regular and there are frequent breaks in supply. Many of the children got off to a bad start in life and suffer from severe stunting and are underweight. Good nutrition is therefore more essential than ever for their growth and cognitive development.

Of particular attention is the need for formula milk and full cream milk for the infants and young children. Current resources are severely lacking in fat content and calorific content for sick and the young. Whilst the Village is extremely grateful for the fact that the children have food in such hard times they are also painfully aware that certain nutrient requirements are missing and need to be sourced.

Move towards Self sustainability

Given the current context in Zimbabwe, St Marcellin's was awarded a grant in 2007 from the European Union to help the Village in an attempt towards self sustainability through an environmental project which is helping with water harvesting and home gardening. In addition, they are breeding rabbits for meat and have small fish ponds for breeding bream. Unfortunately they were not given permission to keep goats in a residential area so milk remains largely inaccessible, posing a huge problem for the young growing children.

St Marcellin's is serious about attaining self

sustainability in a time of extreme hardship and need in Zimbabwe and the European Union project has started that momentum but help is needed to continue that lead and help realise the dream. At present the main moves are towards collection of rain water and permaculture. This will hopefully lead to a series of underground tanks that with the help of solar power will provide treated water to enable washing and watering of the gardens as a minimum provision. The solar power will enable the heating of water and solar lighting to save on electricity and give essential back up in times of main electricity power cuts. The permaculture gives rise to organic gardening with the avoidance of chemicals and fertilisers, whilst providing vitamins and minerals essential to the children's diet. Boreholes have been renovated to be powered by solar energy, providing the main house with tap water. The fish ponds are fed partially by the droppings of the geese that are kept and frequent the ponds.

The breeding of rabbits provides some protein in the diets of the children and a chicken project is just getting under way, funded by the Dutch Embassy.

There are two beehives for pollination and honey, and a couple of turkeys are kept for special occasions.



Health

There are currently 10 children on anti-retroviral treatment (ART) for the treatment of HIV plus 4 other children with severe learning difficulties due to physiological disabilities.

All the children need to be monitored with regard to their growth and health; general illnesses must be treated efficiently and appropriately. To do this using

an external clinic proves a severe drain on funds and a resident/or regular visiting nursing sister is needed to screen and care for those who are sick. At present house mothers see to the administration of medications and screen children for illness but with the vulnerability of the existing children more attention is needed. Ideally the village would have a full time registered nurse who would be able to screen and treat children appropriately at the earliest opportunity. There is a clinic room which needs to be equipped with basic essential materials to monitor and screen all children for basic growth, health and emergencies.

The village is fortunate to have connections enabling access to prophylactic cotrimoxazole and ART for all HIV positive children. This needs to be supported with basic healthcare essentials.



For further and updated information about St Marcellin's please visit the website www.stmarcellins.org.

Friends of St Marcellin's Children

The Friends of St Marcellin's Children have formed a UK based organisation with the general objective of advancing the health, education and social well being of the orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) at St Marcellin's Children's Village. The Village is open to referrals from social services for any child in need, taking them off the streets or away from situations of harm. The Village offers them a place of safety where they can be cared for and educated, returning to society as healthy, productive adults.

The specific objectives of The Friends of St Marcellin's Children are as follows:

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1

To support the provision of education through:

- Educational resources including specialised resources for children with disabilities and special educational needs
- Qualified teaching staff including those with specialist skills appropriate to the needs of the children
- Educational visits and experiences outside of the village environment
- Support of secondary school pupils with regards to school fees and associated expenses

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2

To support the provision of health and nutrition care through:

- Resources for emergency medical care and specialist therapies
- Support for health screening and nursing care
- Maintenance support for on-site vegetable garden and other agricultural activities to encourage sustainability incorporating a healthy diet
- Resources for essential food stuffs and nutrients not met by on-site activities
- Maintenance of equipment essential to the safety and wellbeing of the children

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3

To promote social and psychological development for the OVCs in the care of St Marcellin's Children's Village. For example:

- Provision of leisure equipment
- Leisure trips
- Support for sufficient housemothers and carers
- Promotion of UK 'pen pals'

Whilst the priorities and needs of St Marcellin's Children's Village are forever changing with the

unstable environment faced in Zimbabwe at this time, 'The Friends' endeavor to support wherever the need is most to ensure the health, education and safety of the children at all times.

If you would like to help

There are many ways you can help the children of St Marcellin's. You can volunteer time or skills to help us with fundraising events, or make a one off or regular donation. At this time donations are particularly required for setting up the new primary school (desks and chairs, books and life skills workshops), and to pay for teaching staff.

All donations (with the exception of bank transfer charges) go 100% to the children's village to support the children. Standing orders or cheques made directly to the Friends of St Marcellin's Children have no charges attached and donations will be received in full. It is also possible to make donations via Pay Pal on the St Marcellin's website – these will incur a 3% charge. All trustees work on a voluntary basis and self-fund any visits to Zimbabwe.

If you would like to make a donation please email the Treasurer directly at stmarcellins@gmail.com or write to us at the address below. We will send you details about making a one-off donation or for arranging a standing order to our UK bank account.

Alternatively you can make a cheque payable to Friends of St Marcellin's Children and post it to:

***Friends of St Marcellin's Children,
61 Tudor Court,
King Henrys Walk,
London, N1 4NU***

We have been given tax exemption by HMRC, so can claim Gift Aid on donations received. Please complete a Gift Aid form and return it to us to enable us to claim an extra 25% on any donations you make.



If there is any other way that you would like to offer support to St Marcellin's Children's Village we would love to talk to you. Please contact us on the email address below.

UK

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