

The Beatrice Project: Zimbabwe

restoring dignity and opportunity

March 2020

As I write this, we are all in new and challenging days. Who could have predicted that something like the Corona Virus was going to happen - and to the entire world? We are very mindful of our friends in Zimbabwe, where information is sparse, rumour is rife and people are very afraid. Already in economic and political turmoil, and suffering soaring prices in all areas of life, our girls on The Beatrice Project are beginning to experience increased difficulties and, for many, crippling hunger.



But our partners, Ntombi Nto, are bravely resisting despair and remain positive and hopeful....and the work goes on! I mentioned in the Christmas letter that we'd been unable to visit Zimbabwe in 2019 but were planning to go this year. Our tickets and accommodation for the trip at the very end of May are booked but, as we all know, there is no guarantee we'll be able to go.

As a charity we are facing some very real financial challenges, but we do also have exciting news!

- The second sewing machine bought by TBP is being used by the girls alongside one of the schools which is now helping to teach Fashion and Fabrics
- The team has conducted an introductory workshop for the boys in the rural communities and Joy reports that 95 young men, the cultural village head, the Sister-in-charge of the local clinic, several male and female teachers as well as the Headmaster attended and took part with interest, enthusiasm and commitment!
- Health teachers report a steady decline in adolescent pregnancy, school attendance figures for girls during menstruation remain raised and the girls are now confidently acknowledging the significance of them completing their education.
- The initially cautious response from the young women and their local leaders to the menstrual cups has become increasingly one of acceptance.
- We have been given a grant by the Bright Future Trust to purchase a field vehicle for the project. This will transform what Joy and her team are able to do, so we are excited and hugely grateful! They are currently looking for the right vehicle.

So, despite the fact that major challenges remain, both here and in Zimbabwe, all this is very encouraging.

Last Saturday, 14th March, we were very relieved to be able to carry on with our planned 'Come and Sing' fundraiser. Thirty singers attended, Jamie W Hall stepped in at the last minute to cover for Jackie fox who was unwell (not with Covid-19!) and Cherith Kingsley Smith added her piano skills and great good humour to her role as accompanist! All sensible health and safety measures were in place for the day and everyone had a wonderful time singing together. We were grateful to everyone who helped us to raise over £800 to support the project.



Figure 1: Sue, Karen, Cherith and Jamie

Most of you knew we were aiming to broaden the board of trustees as Adrian steps down. He has been incredibly wise and long-suffering and has helped us enormously with our finances and with our registration as a charity. We are immensely grateful for all the help and support he has given us, and wish him all the best as he moves on. We have now had offers of help for the role of trustee and are in the process of appointing two new people. We have also been encouraged by other offers of support and are making our way through these! We look forward to cooperating together to continue the work of The Beatrice Project.

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As we all know, the current situation is changing all the time and the challenge for us now is, of course, that we are no longer able to run any fundraising activities. Over the years, we have relied heavily on these gatherings to boost our funds, so we're asking all our supporters to get creative! There are things we can do, while we're 'in isolation' in our homes, and we'd love to hear if you have any ideas or suggestions you may have to help us. While you are at home could you, for example, declutter your lives and unearth things you no longer want or need? We have a supporter who will oversee the selling of goods on ebay to raise funds for us: if you can contribute to this, please contact me suebeatricep23@gmail.com and I will put you in touch.

We are also keen to find some more seamstresses to make drawstring bags for our beneficiary girls. There is currently a small but stalwart team who have been making the bags, which the girls love, and we are very grateful to them. We already have dozens ready for our next trip but we'd like to take three hundred if we can. If you or anyone you know could help email Karen at karentrewinnard@doctors.org.uk

If anyone finds themselves in the position to begin giving a monthly donation to the project, however small, we would, of course, be delighted to hear from you!

In these difficult and uncertain days, let's keep connected, keep being wise and keep being kind.

If you would like to give, please visit www.give.net/20237532 or, if you prefer, you may give a cheque or cash to me, Sue Hutchinson, or either of the other trustees, Karen Trewinnard or Adrian Thomas.