

HIV/AIDS Club at the Nyachuru Secondary School, Howard, Howard Mission, Zimbabwe



ZimArt first heard about the HIV/AIDS Club at the Nyachuru Secondary School through Peterborough Collegiate in Peterborough, Ontario. Students from the Collegiate have been involved in a letter exchange program with students at the Nyachuru Secondary School for the past several years.

ZimArt first visited Nyachuru in November 2006 to deliver letters from the Peterborough students. We were able to find out more about the HIV/AIDS Club and the excellent work they have accomplished. The school was built in 2001 to serve the local rural community, who could not afford to attend the private school at Howard Mission. Of the 312 registered students 56 have lost both parents, 87 have lost one parent and a further 34 come from single-parent homes. The Club, which produced its first newsletter in 2006, has been chosen, by its peers, as the HIV/AIDS information centre for 23 other schools in the region.

The school keeps meticulous records which they share openly with interested visitors. Both the school and the nearby Howard Mission Hospital have many Canadian well-wishers, thanks in large part to Dr. Paul Thistle, a Canadian doctor who has worked at the hospital for many years.

Since 2006 we have provided agricultural inputs for school's 35 hectares of land. The students, teachers and parents provided all the labour. In 2008, during a period of hyperinflation and food shortages, the school produced enough food to feed all the students and staff for five days a week during the entire school year. Unlike most government run schools Nyachuru remained open for the full school year.

In 2008 ZimArt-in-Trust provided all the materials to repair an existing chicken run and purchased 2,000 chicks, feed and medication. The chickens were slaughtered and sold to outlets in Harare with some being kept back for the orphan feeding program. We purchased a freezer so that the birds could be stored safely and transported frozen. Unfortunately inflation eroded income to the point where it could not be sustained. With the recent dollarization



of the economy we would now like to restart this project, particularly since all capital improvements have been made.

In 2009 we installed a drip irrigation system so that the school could start a vegetable garden for year-round produce. All of these activities are integrated into the curriculum. The long-term goal is to provide the resources needed for full scale vermicomposting so that they are no longer dependent on chemical fertilizer.

Nyachuru has a great need for educational resources – textbooks and library books are in very short supply. However we feel our first priority is to address the children's nutritional needs.

In addition ZimArt-in-Trust pays school fees and uniforms for five orphans, who were selected by the community as motivated students who were most in need of support. Our commitment is to continue to pay for school fees and uniforms for the remainder of their schooling. The students' commitment is to take full advantage of their schooling.