

St. Marcellin Children's Village, in Hatfield, Harare, Zimbabwe



St. Marcellin Children's Village in Zimbabwe's capitol, Harare, provides a home for 70 + orphans who literally have no place to go. Some arrive as infants, abandoned in public places and brought to the Village by strangers. Most of the children have been orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and some are themselves HIV positive.

The original seven acre property and house was purchased with donated funds in 2002. Through the tireless fundraising efforts of a board of trustees three other "houses" have since been built to provide living space for 20 children each. A Gogo (grandmother) lives in each home with two other staff. There is plenty of room for the children to play outside and some playground equipment.

In 2005 a nursery school was built on the property with enough space to accommodate a clinic so that children can receive their medical care in the Village. The 19 children who attend local schools have their fees and uniforms paid for by the Village.

St. Marcellin is registered as an Institution under the Children's Protection and Adoption Act and is also registered as a Charitable Organization. The Village is overseen

by a volunteer board of trustees and managed by a dedicated team of professionals. A number of volunteers from Europe - teachers nurses and other professionals - visit the Village annually to share their time and expertise in assisting with children who have special needs.

ZimArt-in-Trust has supported St. Marcellin since 2006 and we have very impressed by the nurturing and positive environment. The staff, led by Norman and Sybil Macdonald, is extremely resourceful and forward thinking. The Village relies solely on income generating projects and donations from well wishers. They get no government funding, even though children are sometimes referred to the Village by government agencies.

To date we have purchased and installed one drip irrigation system and secured funding from the Harbinger Foundation to install a second system, for which we also oversaw the installation. We have also provided seed, fertilizer, garden tools paid for gardening staff when needed. Our goal is to ensure that the Village is able to grow all its own food and potentially, in the long term, provide surplus which can generate income to cover other expenses. With the generous support of donors

we have built rabbit hutches and constructed fish breeding ponds.

In 2009, when inflation and shortages were at their peak, ZimArt-in-Trust responded to urgent requests from St Marcellin to provide basics such as diaper cream, formula and soap – all of which had to be bought in South Africa. We also purchased and delivered food supplies on an emergency response basis.

In 2009 we engaged the services of an expert to create a sustainable agricultural plan for St Marcellin. This plan, which involves clearing an additional section of land, hiring a garden supervisor, building on-site lodging for the supervisor and providing all the materials and training for full scale vermicomposting is now underway.

It is a year-long project but the hope is that it will become a model both for other organizations supported by ZimArt-in-Trust and other similar groups.

