

Tearfund is one of the UK's leading relief and development agencies, working in partnership with churches around the world to tackle the causes and effects of poverty. www.tearfund.org

Photograph Caption: (ZIM2007-30) Orphaned Thandolwenkosi (6). She is cared for by her grandmother, Margaret (74).

Credit: Marcus Perkins/Tearfund.

Pembrokeshire support urgently needed for Zimbabwe Emergency Appeal

Pembrokeshire support is urgently needed to help the poorest families affected by Zimbabwe's spiralling crisis, says UK Relief & Development Aid Agency, Tearfund.

Many people in Zimbabwe have gone without food for weeks, with basic items such as bread and milk unavailable in shops. Over three million people are at risk of severe food shortages, according to the United Nations.

Sharron Hardwick, Tearfund's Voluntary Media Officer for Pembrokeshire reports that, "People are living on nothing more than cups of tea with the last of their maize meal now gone. Tearfund's local church partners in Zimbabwe are working tirelessly to bridge the gap, meeting the desperate need. But they urgently need Pembrokeshire's help for this work to continue."

The crisis in Zimbabwe's second city Bulawayo has seen people scavenging for filthy water from hand dug pits and broken pipes. Tearfund's local partner in the city is managing 20 water distribution tanks but more are needed as the mains supply is cut to just a few hours a week.

"This is a desperate situation," says Mannymore, a church pastor in Bulawayo. "They need water. We have taken on the responsibility of the government, making sure there is enough food and water. But it's very difficult. We are thirsty for everything now. When people hear about maize meal the whole community will come to the place. The situation is terrible. There is no food - just no food."

Tearfund works with churches and Christian agencies in Zimbabwe, working through a strong network of volunteers at the grassroots. This enables food aid to get to people who desperately need help, often in remote areas, regardless of political, tribal or religious affiliations.

Margaret (74) lives in a sun-parched rural district about 70kms south of Bulawayo. The riverbeds are completely dry after the rains failed last year. She cares for four grandchildren, orphaned when her two sons died from Aids related illnesses. Says Margaret,

"I feel quite angry. I don't have any soap to wash the children before school and we don't even have any food. We have been surviving on melons for two months, we have nothing else."

One of Margaret's grandchildren, Thandolwenkosi (6), is sick showing signs of chronic malnutrition. "She was supposed to go to school today but she is too hungry to go," Margaret explains. "I feel that death is looming for us if we don't get food."

The economic crisis situation in Zimbabwe is affecting everyone with extreme inflation at over 7000% and unemployment exceeding 80%. Basic services such as public transport, medical care and education have become unaffordable. Lines of vehicles wait for days, in queues a mile long, for fuel tankers to cross the border from Botswana. Tearfund's local church partners remain an apolitical voice in civil society standing against the injustice, committed to fighting the poverty that is no longer affecting only the poorest in society.

"We in Pembrokeshire can support Tearfund's Emergency Appeal Partners in Zimbabwe. Our prayers and donations can make a real difference. £20 could provide essential food supplements for five children, £75 could provide two households with seeds and training to grow maize, £1,000 could provide clean, safe water for 500 people via tank or bore-hole access." Says Tearfund's Sharron Hardwick.

Donations can be made at www.tearfund.org/emergency or call 0845 355 8355

