

Newsletter #3, July 2024

Caregivers: The Glue That Holds HCOC's Mission Together



Heather Chimhoga Orphan Care Center is not an orphanage. The orphans and other vulnerable children HCOC serves live in their own communities, spread throughout 21 villages and rural areas in a remote area of northeastern Zimbabwe. The children live with relatives or caregivers and sometimes just with their siblings or even alone. Each child has an HCOC caregiver who checks on him/her frequently. The 21 caregivers (one for each village) are not paid a salary but HCOC does give them extra food for themselves and their families. The caregivers are all women.

Besides delivering food, clothing, and blankets, the caregivers check on the children's general welfare during the visit. Their tasks vary according to the circumstances of the child:

1. If the child is HIV positive, the caregiver might bring extra nutrition packets and food. She will also check on the child's condition and alert Beauty, the HCOC nurse, if she feels the child's health has deteriorated.
2. If the child is a female teen, the caregiver will deliver female hygiene products. She will also make sure the girl feels safe in her environment.
3. If it is a child headed household and there are several siblings, the caregiver will make sure all of the children are attending school and also getting enough food.

A Day In the Life of An HCOC Caregiver

Let us introduce you to Faith. She is a wife and mother of 2 children. Besides mothering her own children, Faith is also a caregiver for HCOC in her village. She is responsible for a total of 15 orphans and she visits each of them as often as she can. She might walk several miles to see her charges as there is no transportation available in the area.

Another caregiver is Trudy Manuela in the Sadza Village. One of the children she looks after is Mercy, a female child attending Form 1 at Naymashato Secondary School. Mercy is the eldest of four siblings. Mercy's mother remarried and went to live with her new husband, abandoning the children.



When Trudy discovered them, there was no food or clothing in the home and none of the children had attended school in over a year. Trudy went to the school feeding center with news that they needed help and had not eaten in many days. HCOC added the children to their care and Trudy Manuela became their caregiver. Now Mercy and her siblings have the food and clothing that they need and are attending school regularly. They are currently living with their 86-year-old Grandmother.