



Emerald Hill Children's Home
P.O Box EH93
Emerald Hill
Harare
Zimbabwe

Christmas 2024

Be a rock of refuge for me Ps 31

Dear Nwala,

As the year comes to a close and we reflect on the hustle and bustle of the Children's Home, it occurred to us how the Home remains a rock in the midst of different lives through the hand of the Almighty who became one of us in all our battles. Since 1914, the physical appearance of this rock may have changed, but the love and care and support children get from Emerald Hill, through the help of so many people, remains constant. 2024 has not been different.

As you pass through the playground, little 7-year-old Alicia runs to hug you with much love and a beautiful smile. She hangs onto you and wants to maintain eye contact. Before much time lapses, you hear one of the mothers calling her and asking her to come and do her homework. If you ask her why she is playing before completing her work, she simply smiles and runs off. We discovered that Alicia finds it very difficult to settle down anywhere, whether in class, playing games or watching television. We continue embracing her and working with her. In between, she sees a child specialist and we hope she will become more settled in years to come.

Tanaka is 11 years old. At school, he works on the Grade 4 syllabus and his needs and behavior are like those of a five-year-old child's. We need a lot of patience to get him ready for school or for him to do his homework. He does love listening to engaging stories and is able to answer questions that follow afterwards. We see in him that glimmer of hope - a hope for a better tomorrow. The rock will eventually help him to do well in his life.

Childhood trauma shapes children and can cause their life to take on a different tangent. Because of the hurt that impacts them so deeply, they may in turn abuse other children. It may just start off as bad habit but sometimes develops into something much bigger. The children in our care are here due to being vulnerable. Whenever we can see that they are at risk or at risk of hurting others, we intervene and support them in any way we can. When possible, we ask for specialist support to break the pattern and repair some of the damage in their lives. Step by small step, we help prepare them for a better future.

Recently one of our former boys, now aged 28, was asked by a friend to give an account of his life story. He has allowed us to share it with friends we are in contact with. Here is his story:

"I am writing to share my story as someone who grew up in Emerald Hill Children's Home. Reflecting on my experience, I realise this is an opportunity to express my deepest gratitude for the immense impact Emerald Hill has had on my life.

As far back as I can remember, my life began at EHCH - I have no memories of anything before that. It wasn't until I was 21 that I read the EHCH file on me, which stated that I had been abandoned somewhere in Harare at the age of 4. I immediately googled, 'Can you remember memories from when you were 4?' Google says you can, but I don't. What I do remember, however, is everything about EHCH and I love reminiscing about my time there.

Words cannot truly capture the joyful atmosphere of the home. It wasn't just a shelter for me; it was a place where I was nurtured and supported beyond what I could ever imagine. Every meal was a blessing, and every day was filled with laughter shared among my many siblings.

Our 'mums and dads' (the staff) ensured that we were loved and cared for as if we were their own children. Running EHCH was, and continues to be, an enormous challenge. Despite Zimbabwe's economic hardships, the Home has never wavered in its commitment to our education and well-being.

What seemed to us like happy, carefree days were, in fact, the result of tireless work and sacrifice, especially from the people in charge. Now that I understand how much effort it takes to keep the light on, feed over a hundred children, and cover daily

expenses, my gratitude runs even deeper. I am immensely thankful to the community of volunteers and donors who continue to support us, even while facing their own personal challenges.

Perhaps the greatest challenge the Home faces is bringing meaning and purpose to the lives of children from diverse, often broken homes and difficult circumstances, all living together. Thanks to the love and care I received there, I am healthy, I have wonderful personal relationships, and I have a strong relationship with God.

After achieving 9As in O'level (Grade 10), I was awarded a high school scholarship through Makomborero Zimbabwe, a program that selects only 8 students from across the country and places them in top private schools with full funding. I went on to achieve 14 out of 15 points in A'level (Grade 12) and was awarded another scholarship through USAP/EdMatters Africa, a program that assists 30 high-achieving students from Zimbabwe in applying to top universities worldwide.

For college, I received a full scholarship to Lafayette College in the United States, where I graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science. I am now working as a software engineer for Deutsche Bank in North Carolina, USA.

To this day, my greatest blessing is EHCH and my mother, Sr G, who left her home in Germany to dedicate her life to us in Zimbabwe. I do not take the series of miracles in my life lightly. It all started with people like you who took a moment from the business of life to listen to our story.

Dear reader, dear volunteer, dear donor, I want you to know that without your support, my journey would have been profoundly different."

During the last months, this former child sent us the announcement and photos of his marriage to a Zimbabwean girl who he got to know at University in America. Both feel they cannot make full use of their education and training yet at home in Zimbabwe.

A couple of months earlier, one of our former girls, aged 28, also celebrated her wedding at our home. She and her husband are both secondary school teachers. Both fully accept the fact that she grew up in a children's home which comes with a lot of stigma in society.

2024 is coming to an end. The Rock of refuge has been our big family through different ways of support from so many good people. May the Almighty reward all your care for us and make your experience His refuge and help also in 2025. This is our prayer and wish for you and your dear ones with all our children.

With gratitude and best wishes from all of us.

Thank you for keeping us at heart and for all you do for us.

Sr Gabriel

Tinokuda

Laureen