



JESSICA COSBY
HIV/AIDS Nurse in
Zimbabwe

WORKING WITH



“MSF offers assistance to populations in distress, to victims of natural or man-made disasters and to victims of armed conflict, without discrimination and irrespective of race, religion, creed or political affiliation”

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NOTES from ZIMBABWE

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Arriving

It's early afternoon and I'm sitting outside my new home in Gweru, Zimbabwe. It's a beautifully warm day and the greenery around me is humming with colour and bird song and insect life.

I'm enjoying this sudden peace that has followed a flurry of activity-preparing, packing, saying goodbyes. Predictably, I went from a long, finger-tapping, staring-into-the-middle-distance wait for paperwork to briefings and flights in the matter of a few hectic days!

Since my arrival, I've spent a little time in Harare, meeting the friendly MSF team, receiving more briefings and becoming familiar with a city of broad green avenues and poverty stricken suburbs. On Tuesday, I took the four hour drive south to Gweru, and have started to get to know the place that will be my home and the project that will be my work for the next year. More of that later. First, some background...

Zimbabwe and MSF

“Once home to an infrastructure seen as a model for the whole Southern Africa region, Zimbabwe today is characterised by an enormous political and economic crisis with dramatic consequences for its population.” (MSF, 2008) Although not at war, these consequences include many of the problems associated with a society in violent conflict, such as economic disintegration, food insecurity, political violence, social trauma, displacement and a poorly functioning health care system.



MSF have been present in Zimbabwe since 2002, responding to the crisis through a variety of projects. One of the issues that MSF are acting on is the massive burden of death and disease associated with HIV/AIDS. In 2006, they started a comprehensive HIV programme in the area of Gweru, offering counselling and testing, a scheme to help prevent mother-to-child transmission and a clinic to treat illness and provide anti-retroviral drugs.

MSF supply medication, laboratory and medical equipment and provide technical assistance and training to local staff.

“If I could snap my fingers and make one of Zimbabwe’s problems disappear, it would be the AIDS crisis. Not hyperinflation. Not political stalemate. Not the gutted agricultural production, brutal human rights violations or brain drain. Not even the sum total of the politico-economic crisis. None of these truly compare to the devastation of AIDS. 3200 deaths per week. The actual number could be higher or lower. At such an extreme, does it really matter?”

Marc Dubois, 2007

My task will be to supervise the MSF-run HIV/Aids clinic in Lower Gweru, a rural area forty minutes away from the town of Gweru itself. I will also be supporting the process of ‘decentralisation’, which involves transferring the care away from the main clinic to six smaller, more remote clinics run by the Ministry of Health. The aim of this action is to improve access to services for those living rurally, and increase programme sustainability.

IF YOU’RE THE PRAYING KIND....

Please pray-

- For peace and security for the people of Zimbabwe
- For wisdom as I get to know my work here and meet my new colleagues

And praise, because..

- Despite the busy departure, I had a safe journey and have arrived well
- The team of international and national staff are great

As always, a huge thank you for all your encouragement and support. I’ll do my best to dodge power cuts and potholes and politics to keep you updated during my time here in Zimbabwe.

My sister, Kirstie Coppock (kirstieannie@tiscali.co.uk), is my prayer co-ordinator. She’ll pass on my prayer letters to you as they arrive. Please inform her of any change in name/address/email, or if you don’t wish to receive newsletters (I won’t be offended!)

CONTACT INFO

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Mobile: +44 (0)1503 571154 (Unpredictable!) **Blog:** Coming soon....

Post: MSF-OCA, 44, Main Street, Gweru, Zimbabwe (All post gratefully received! I’m told it’s pretty reliable and takes about three weeks from Europe. If sending parcels (No obligation!) please keep them small and low in value as I get taxed on value and cost of postage.

I think that’s enough options! Failing this, I can suggest South African Airways ;o)

Lots of love to you, Jess xxx