

translated by community leaders or volunteers who will explain your letter and help the child compose his/her response.

Here are a few phrases in Shona to share with your sponsored child:

- ☀️ **Kaziwai**
Greetings
- ☀️ **Mangwanani**
Good morning
- ☀️ **Amai**
Mother
- ☀️ **Baba**
Father

Holidays

Celebrations are very important to your sponsored child and his/her family. The most important ones have religious and political significance:

- ☀️ **January 1**
New Year's Day
- ☀️ **March/April***
Easter
- ☀️ **May 1**
Worker's Day
- ☀️ **August 11**
Heroes Day
- ☀️ **December 25**
Christmas

*date varies

Religion in Zimbabwe

Roughly half of the population of Zimbabwe follow syncretic religions. Another 25 percent are Christian and 24 percent hold indigenous beliefs. The most popular form of syncretic religion in Zimbabwe is a blend of Christianity and indigenous beliefs.

Christians are followers of Jesus, a carpenter and a Jew from the city of Nazareth in present-day Israel. Christians believe that Jesus is the only son of God, born of a virgin woman (Mary) in a stable in Bethlehem. His story is told in the New Testament of the Christian holy book, the Bible.

Animism is the term used to categorize the plethora of localized indigenous religions throughout the world. Animists live in a world dominated by a complex interplay of spiritual powers—those of the creator or creators (gods), the destroyers (demons), the forces of nature, the deceased (ancestors), and the living (healers or witches). Animists believe that when people die their life force (soul) leaves the body, joining the invisible world of ancestors. The invisible world is also populated by nature spirits of the wind, rain, forest, animals, and earth.

Additional sources include the CIA World Factbook and State Department websites.



Population	13.7 million
Capital City	Harare
Official Language	English
Per Capita Income	US\$680/year
Youth Literacy Rate	98% male/99% female
Access to Safe Water	97% urban/69% rural
Under 5 Mortality Rate	90/1,000 live births

Source: The State of the World's Children 2014 (UNICEF)

The **Republic of Zimbabwe** is a landlocked country in the southern part of Africa. Its total surface area of 150,873 square miles lies between the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers. The country shares its borders with Mozambique to the east, South Africa to the south, Botswana to the west, and Zambia to the north and northwest. Topographically, Zimbabwe is divided into two broad natural environments: the high veld (a significant plateau that rises to an altitude of 5,566 feet) and the low veld. Seventy percent of the country's surface area is covered in granite and rocks that form the basis of Zimbabwe's mineral resources. Beira in Mozambique, located 348 miles from Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, is the nearest outlet to the sea. Because of its elevation and inland position, Zimbabwe enjoys a temperate climate, so it is drier and cooler than most countries situated in the tropics.



Plan International USA
155 Plan Way • Warwick, RI 02886
1-800-556-7918 • planusa.org

ZIMBABWE

A Brief History

The largest ethnic group in Zimbabwe, the Shona, is believed to have migrated from North Africa between 200 BC and 300 AD, replacing Zimbabwe's predominantly hunter/gatherer population with a more agricultural, sedentary way of life. They brought with them more modern implements such as iron tools; an economy based on livestock production and metalwork in iron, gold, and copper; and the concept of living in clustered villages and homesteads. The second-largest ethnic group, the Ndebele, traces its ancestry to part of the Zulu Nation of South Africa. British colonial rule over the region began in 1895. However, unhappiness with the unequal rights of the African population as compared to those of the white settlers (such as land segregation based on racial lines) resulted in protests and guerrilla warfare. Zimbabwe gained total independence on April 18, 1980. Today, Zimbabwe has a multiparty democracy, with national presidential and parliamentary elections taking place every five years.

Plan's work in Zimbabwe focuses on promoting child rights and lifting children out of poverty. Our response to these issues is reflected in our four holistic programmatic interventions:

- ☀ Making the health of every mother and child count
- ☀ Fulfilling the right to quality education for all children
- ☀ Producing and earning enough for children and the family
- ☀ Keeping children safe and fully involved in development

Making the health of every mother and child count

We work to support maternal, neonatal, and child health improvement; malaria prevention and control;

and water and sanitation. We help to raise awareness of HIV and support behavioral change and care, as well as provide counseling and support to HIV-affected households.

Fulfilling the right to quality education for all children

We facilitate and build the capacity of school development committees to renovate and construct classrooms; source learning materials for teachers, schools, and pupils; and identify children for scholarships.

Producing and earning enough for children and the family

We support families and communities to increase food production by promoting good farming methods and income generation projects, such as livestock and market gardening. We also support non-agricultural initiatives to raise income, such as training courses in sewing and carpentry for young people and adults.

Keeping children safe and fully involved in development

Child rights are at the center of all of our activities, and we facilitate training of children and youth to appreciate their rights. We also work closely with the responsible government departments to provide child protection in child-friendly environments.

Diet and Nutrition

The staple food for most of the rural population is sadza, a thick porridge composed of corn meal and boiled water. This is usually eaten in the evening with cooked vegetables and/or meat when available. The only other meal of the day is breakfast, which normally consists of hot tea and corn porridge. The diet is supplemented by



fresh fruits and dairy products when available.

Economic Security

Although agriculture accounts for less than 20 percent of the gross domestic product, it is by far the most important economic activity in Zimbabwe. More than 70 percent of the population is directly dependent on agricultural activities for their livelihood. Less than half of Zimbabwe's total surface area is considered arable. In the drier parts of the country, the land is only suitable for cattle ranching. Droughts occur in a regular cycle, and in many parts of the country farmers rely heavily on rainwater to irrigate their crops, making it difficult to earn a steady income. Maize (corn) is the most common food crop grown, but drought-resistant crops such as sorghum and millet are also grown in the drier areas. Other cash crops include cotton, sugar, coffee, and tea. The country's largest foreign exchange earnings come from the export of tobacco.

Family Structure

Family is very important. Children in particular are great sources of pride and are the focal point of much attention and affection. In Zimbabwe, as in many developing countries, large families are viewed as signs of wealth. In rural areas, the average number of children in a family is 13. Families live in large, extended

groups, and many relatives live and work together in village compounds. Men are often forced, for economic reasons, to migrate from their rural family homes to search for employment in the mining areas. Even though these men are absent, they are expected to send a large portion of their earnings home, not only for their wives and children but also for members of their extended families.

Naming Traditions

Zimbabwean children are most often named after an older relative, friend, or popular person from the community. The firstborn usually inherits the name of either one of the parents or grandparents. Children often have two names: one tribal and the other derived from a common Western name such as John. All children bear the surname of the father. The majority of rural children do not celebrate birthdays.

Language

English is the official language in Zimbabwe and is spoken by the majority of the population. However, it is likely that you will encounter a language barrier in communicating with your sponsored child, as the majority of children do not understand enough English to write a letter. If your sponsored child speaks Shona or another local language, his/her letters will be