

# Oasis Zimbabwe

## General information on Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe was colonised by the British in the late 1800s, and became known as Rhodesia, after Cecil John Rhodes who was the main player in encouraging white settlement of the land. By the 1930s, legislation excluded black Africans from ownership of the best farmland and from skilled trades and professions. The effect was to force Africans to work on white farms and in mines and factories. Poor wages and conditions led to rebellion and the emergence of African political parties, resulting in civil war during the 1970s. Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980 under Robert Mugabe, who has remained in power ever since. His government has seen Zimbabwe decline from a prosperous nation to one of the world's poorest, with hyper-inflation resulting in a breakdown of state education and healthcare systems.

After a number of elections marred by vote-rigging and intimidation, a power-sharing agreement between Mugabe's Zanu-PF party and the opposition MDC party was finalized in 2009. Zimbabwe is

## Fast Facts

now looking to rebuild its shattered economy and re-engage with the international community.

<b>Capital:</b>	Harare
<b>Currency:</b>	The Zimbabwean dollar is now considered worthless, US dollars are accepted as legal tender
<b>Population:</b>	11.3 million (2009 estimate)
<b>Language:</b>	English, Shona, Sindebele, other dialects
<b>Religion</b>	Syncretic (part Christian, part indigenous beliefs) 50%, Christian 25%, indigenous beliefs 24%, Muslim and other
<b>Life Expectancy:</b>	45 years
<b>Infant mortality:</b>	32 deaths/1,000 live births



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**Living with HIV/AIDS:** 1.3million (2007 estimate)

**Tanaka**—meaning '*wholeness*', is a residential programme providing a home for street girls, aged between 13 and 21 years and provides education and training with the longer term aim of resettling girls with their families.

The core of the programme is a residential care home where the girls receive a one-year programme of support, counseling and reintegration into the school system.

**PsP**—The Pre-School Programme was established in response to the economic instability and the ongoing HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe, which has led to a dramatic increase in the number of orphans and vulnerable children over the last few years. Oasis provides the training and technical support for churches to establish pre-schools for the orphans and vulnerable children in their communities. Currently there are 13 pre-schools run in partnership with 11 churches.

**Vocational Training**— The Oasis Skills Training Academy (OSTA) at Kambazuma is based in a high density suburb of Harare. The project teaches computer skills and a range of other vocational courses. There is a shortage of skilled IT workers in Zimbabwe, so it is hoped that this project will give disadvantaged young people sufficient skills to find employment in this area. Other courses offered currently include: small-scale agriculture, tailoring and carpentry. Students are also offered a place on an entrepreneurial course that teaches business skills and basic bookkeeping and provides successful applicants with start-up loans.

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## Practical Arrangements

Gap year Teams to Zimbabwe are placed at one of several partner churches in Harare, focusing on childrens' and youth work. Teams also help at Oasis Zimbabwe projects for part of their timetable.

Teams live with host families from partner churches. Teams may find themselves living in a fairly high standard of accommodation, which will typically include a maid and a gardener. If you are living with a family from the church, you will have your meals provided.

Internet access is intermittent due to the unreliability of electricity, but where possible teams can use the internet at their churches or the Oasis office.

Most people in Zimbabwe speak some English, but you will learn some Shona (the local language) as well.

Zimbabwe has had well-documented periods of instability and political violence, but with the new

## Safety & Security

power-sharing government in place, Oasis Zimbabwe is now happy to host Teams again.

*Generally, Zimbabwe is a safe place except for the high-density suburbs, which is where the political parties tend to clash.*

We have no safety concerns about teams going to OSTA in Kambazuma at present, even though this is in a high-density area. Teams will always travel there with an Oasis Zim driver and with their co-ordinator, and the compound itself is secure. There is an increased police presence in the area and an unofficial curfew of 9pm, but as teams will be going there in the mornings, they are very unlikely to encounter any trouble.

*Teams are expected to co-operate FULLY with the Oasis Zimbabwe office and adhere to all security instructions given to them at orientation.*

Oasis Teams will be able to drink water from boreholes, rather than from municipal supplies, so will not be in danger of contracting cholera as a result of the recent outbreak. Also US dollars are now accepted as local currency, so foodstuffs are more widely available in supermarkets.

Despite this, Zimbabwe is not for the faint-hearted, so you must be prepared to be flexible and to do without home comforts. You will certainly be inspired by the warmth and faith of the people you work alongside!

## For more information

- <http://www.oasiszw.org/>