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# EMERGENCY **CHOLERA** RESPONSE

HWANGE DISTRICT

# 2024



Building a better tomorrow for Zimbabwean communities

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### Contributors

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Story writing, text design and photography by:

Maxine Kundishora.

Support photography by: Lincoln Mutambara.



# Introduction

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Access to safe drinking water, sanitation and good hygiene is of fundamental importance to human health. Water is life, so as a good and healthy environment. This has been Africa AHEADs' goal: to enable communities in both rural and urban areas of Zimbabwe to have access to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services.

In 2024, Africa AHEAD embarked on various WASH projects across Zimbabwe to empower local communities in the fight against cholera—a diarrheal disease that had affected many districts in the country, dating back to early 2023 when the first index case was recorded in Mashonaland West of Zimbabwe. Funded by UNICEF and partnered with various stakeholders, including the Government of Zimbabwe, Africa AHEAD aimed to rapidly respond to areas under Hwange District affected by the devastating ripple effects of cholera.

With funding from UNICEF, the partnership launched an emergency response targeting cholera hotspots and areas within proximity to hotspots. The project addressed risk factors identified through research and surveillance by environmental health personnel, focusing on WASH provision, health care system preparedness and social and behavior change communication. Key interventions included improving access to clean water, enhancing health care facilities, strengthening clinical care workers' capacity and promoting health and hygiene education.

The WASH intervention in the district through rehabilitation of ablution facilities, provision of NFI's, water quality consumables and foot operated hand washing stations was profitable in the implementation of the cholera response. Trainings of different cadres on nutrition emergencies helped in the integration of nutrition and cholera, promoting behaviour change in communities.

This publication acknowledges the efforts of individuals, groups, private organizations and government bodies in the project's ultimate success, which yielded profound results. The effort was commendable and will be remembered for years. The publication details the impact of the WASH program, illustrating the effectiveness of the unique emergency response strategies in enabling communities to achieve behaviour change and ownership of their health.

Furthermore, these stories aim not to harm or demean any concerned party but to demonstrate the power of collaborative efforts in increasing access to safe water, sanitation services and improved hygiene, thus strengthening communities. The stories also show the impact of empowering communities to take full ownership of their health by utilizing available resources to mitigate diseases like cholera and other diarrheal diseases.

Africa AHEAD is grateful for funding from UNICEF and acknowledges the collaborative efforts of the following: the Government of Zimbabwe, through its line ministries (Ministry of Health and Child Care, Ministry of Women Affairs) Rural Infrastructure Development Agency (RIDA), Hwange Local Board (HLB), Hwange Rural District Council, Hwange District Water and Sanitation Sub Committee (DWSSC), Hwange Colliery Company Limited (HCCL), the community and the unwavering efforts of Africa AHEAD's staff.

This publication aims to ensure that dignity and respect are observed, with the best interests of every individual concerned.

# Background

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At the beginning of 2024, Hwange District, located in the northwestern part of Zimbabwe in Matabeleland North Province, experienced the severe effects of a cholera outbreak. Hwange, known for its rich mining history dating back to the 1890s, has been the heart of Zimbabwe's coal mining industry. The district's proximity to the international borders of Zambia, where cross-border activities are common, is assumed to have also been another contributing factor to the spread of cholera.

The outbreak affected all three administrative areas of the district: the urban settlements under the HCCL, peri urban under the HLB and several rural villages under the HRDC. According to the National Sitrep, a total of 299 cumulative cholera cases were recorded in Hwange District with 7 deaths after receiving the first index case on the 14th of January 2024. Most cases came from Hwange high density suburbs: number 3 (Makwika Village) and number 1 North (Cinderella) which were affected more; however, some cases also came from other villages: number 1, 2 and 5. To aid the strained local healthcare systems, Africa AHEAD launched a cholera preparedness and emergency response program, complementing existing efforts of other partners and local authorities.

The outbreak exposed critical issues faced by communities in Hwange, highlighting the need for a comprehensive WASH intervention to combat the disease. The key drivers included limited access to clean water, 18-hour water rationing schedules, unsafe drinking sources, burst sewer and water infrastructure, shared defunct sanitation facilities as Hwange has 36% sanitation coverage (ZIMLAC report 2023) and a general knowledge gap about cholera. On average each communal toilet in some of the urban settlements is shared by over 200 people, ranging from minors to adults. The situation resulted in practices of defecating in open spaces, posing a health hazard to the communities.

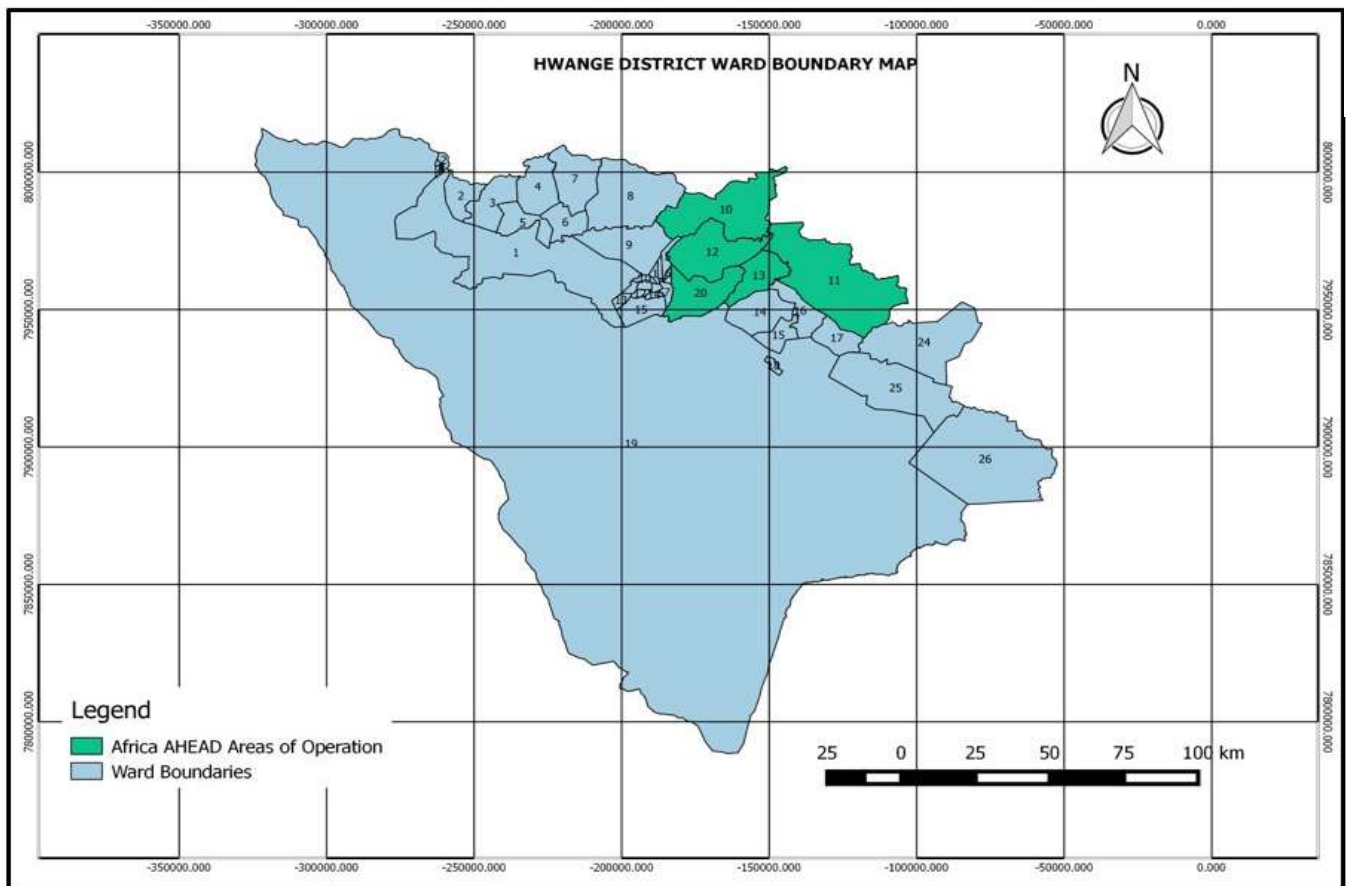
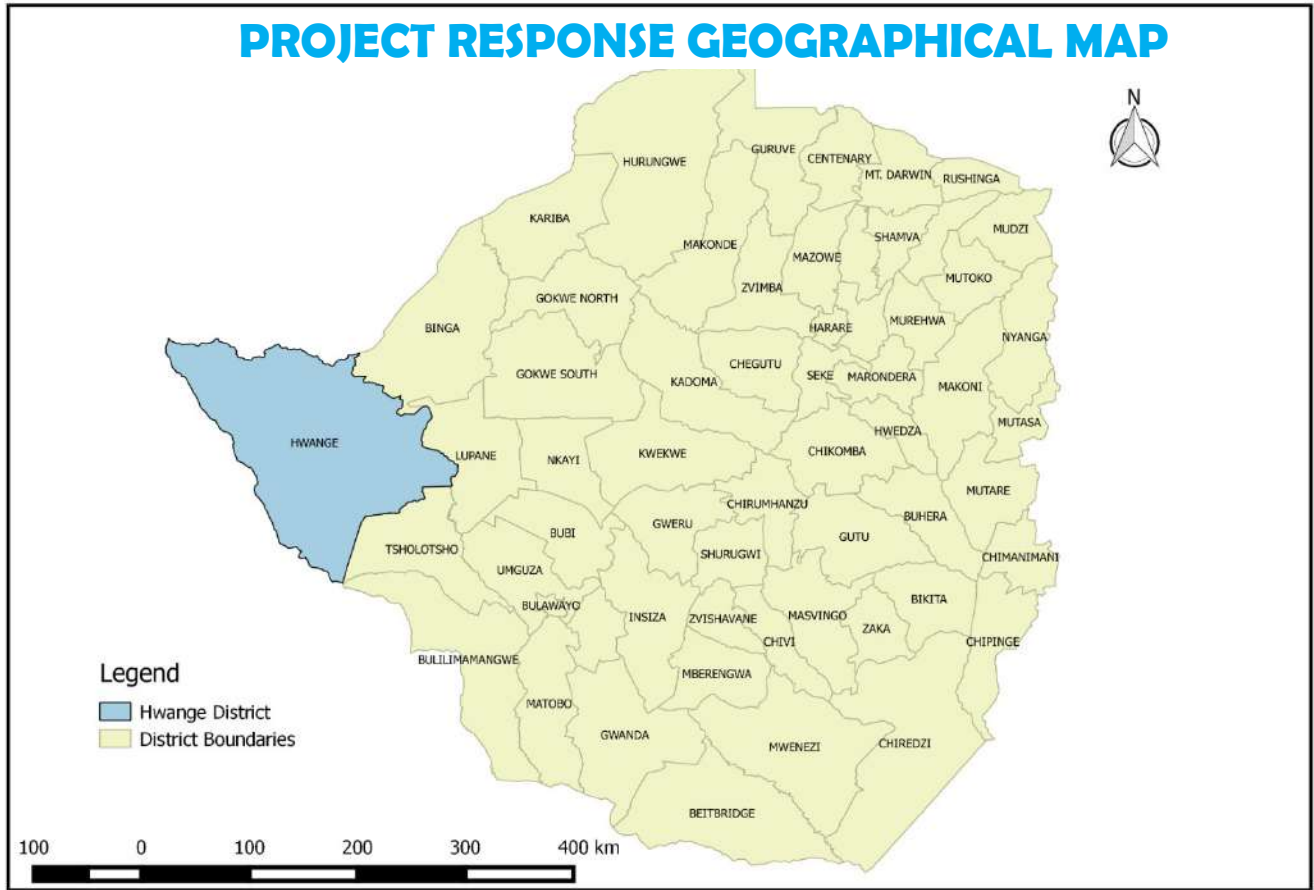
Through funding from UNICEF, strategic partnerships and community engagement, Africa AHEAD mobilized resources and expertise to implement sustainable WASH solutions to rapidly curb the outbreak and build long-term resilience against future health threats. The project rehabilitated five boreholes in Hwange District. These were mechanically rehabilitated and headworks were constructed.

Additionally, significant work was done in urban and peri-urban settlements of Hwange, including health promotion, community capacity building, sensitizing community leaders, forming health clubs, supplying non-food items, conducting various health and nutrition trainings, risk communication and community engagement, repairs on health worker motorbikes and rehabilitation of ablution facilities.

The emergency preparedness and response alleviated concerns about safe drinking water, reduced long travel distances and decreased dependency on contaminated water sources. The project addressed sanitation concerns, reducing open defecation and lowering the risk of cholera and other diseases, particularly among children. UNICEF through Africa AHEAD, in conjunction with other partners, successfully equipped communities with the necessary education and training to take ownership of their health. Fostering of positive behaviour change was done through dissemination of key cholera messages by use of radio sessions, roadshows, door to door visitations aided with distributions of NFIs.

Despite challenges such as poor highway traveling roads, delays in supply deliveries and resistance from hard-to-reach communities, Africa AHEAD overcame these obstacles and contributed to Hwange being declared cholera-free on the 18th of June 2024. The cholera situation faced by Hwange was not unique, but the emergency response to it was.

# PROJECT RESPONSE GEOGRAPHICAL MAP



# Project achievements

MAY - JULY  
2024

## HWANGE DISTRICT



## Capacity building and trainings



# Stakeholder testimonies

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## **Hwange Local Board**

### **Assistant District Development Coordinator (DDC): Nyaradzo Masoja**

"Africa AHEAD, you have to COME BACK! There is a lot of intervention work that needs to be done in Hwange. We are happy and sad at the same time—you left this big impact in the district and we really appreciate it. The time may have been short, but the impact was great. The relationship with Africa AHEAD was excellent and the work was diligently done. WE NEED AFRICA AHEAD BACK! Thank you to UNICEF."

## **District Water Supply and Sanitation Committee (DWSSC) Chairperson:**

### **Fidelia Mtema**

"Africa AHEAD, through funding from UNICEF, did a lot of short timed but impactful work in the affected communities through trainings, NFI distributions and infrastructure rehabilitations. There was a lot of collaboration between the committee and partner. When the Africa AHEAD team was conducting inception assessments, they paid attention to our leads and managed to address these areas. We want to thank AA for coming in where the emergency was concerned. We are so grateful. Africa AHEADs' software intervention was very robust and the Participatory Health and Hygiene Education (PHHE) was incredibly helpful."

## **Hwange Colliery Company Limited**

### **Health Officer: Mr. Medicine M. Shonai**

"We appreciate UNICEF and the exceptional work done by Africa AHEAD (AA) in Hwange District. Thank you for the time we spent with you. We learnt a lot and the community has too. We collaborated well with Africa AHEAD officers and we did not have any problems working together, which I credit to the great leadership of the humble Exec. Director Mr. Regis Matimati.

Our collaboration with Africa AHEAD was superb; they conducted themselves very professionally and we never received any negative reports from the communities. There was no evidence of nepotism, favoritism, or abuse of authority.

We hope to have another opportunity to work with Africa AHEAD again. We will speak highly of Africa AHEAD for a long time as they have unified the concession through collaborative work with people from various sectors. Now, some departments want to build on the structures that Africa AHEAD introduced.

AA did a great job on our infrastructure, particularly on the communal toilets which needed significant attention. However, there is still a huge gap in ablution facilities and we hope for more funding as AA did an exceptional job. We are eager for other future collaborations to revamp these facilities further and address some of the low-hanging fruits."

## A NEW DAWN IN THE RURAL VILLAGES OF WARD 20: HOW CLEAN WATER TRANSFORMED THE COMMUNITY



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*In the rural villages of Ward 20 (Change), a cholera scare of 9 positive cases swept through the community comprised of 9 villages: Gamba, Change, Mpongola, Lubweludile, Bhani-Chilanga, Shangano, Dick and Bhangale. Cholera cases were also reported in the adjacent Wards 12 (Nekabandaba), with 6 positive cases, of a combined population of 7,161 for both wards. In response, Africa AHEAD swiftly intervened by rehabilitating three defunct manual bush pump boreholes in strategic villages within Ward 20, aiming to curb the outbreak and provide safe drinking water to the affected communities.*

**T**he fear of cholera spreading to Bhani-Chilanga village due to water challenges caused great concern. A humble community of about 35 households and approximately 400 community members faced a risk of contracting cholera which had already affected neighboring villages. For years, the community relied on a manual bush pump borehole stationed at the center of the village.

This 75-metre borehole was the lifeblood of the community, sustaining families, livestock and small-scale crops. However, with daily multi-purpose use and many families depending on this single source, the borehole fell into disrepair, leaving the community in a state of uncertainty and hardship. The apron and run-off channel were damaged while some pipes fell inside the borehole, ceasing its functionality.

The community was forced to trek 4-5 kilometers to neighboring villages to fetch water at the Nkonde dip tank, a taxing task that consumed time and energy. With the borehole inoperable, the community's vulnerability to waterborne diseases, including cholera increased, leaving families desperate for a solution.

Recognizing the critical need for intervention, Africa AHEAD, through funding from UNICEF, with assistance from the Rural Infrastructure Development Agency (RIDA), stepped in to rehabilitate the Bhani-Chilanga borehole. Emergency mechanical repairs and headworks were carried out with old pipes, rods and a cylinder replaced. The community's relief was hard to miss as water once again flowed from the water source, a new dawn of hope and health for the community.



Within Ward 20, the project rehabilitated two other non-functional boreholes, Gamba and Mpongola, to curb the spread of cholera. Both communities relied on nearly dry, unsafe streams. In Gamba, two cholera cases were reported at the start of the project, highlighting the timely intervention.

"Water is life," echoed through the village as the rehabilitated borehole began to serve its purpose. The relief among the community was profound. Agnes Ncube, a resident of Bhani-Chilanga, shared her joy: "This water helps us to drink, to wash and provides for our goats. We also use it for our nutritional gardens to get vegetables for our meals. I have five children I take care of and they all benefit from this water."

'Africa AHEAD, Africa AHEAD, Africa AHEAD!' were all the praises sung by the grateful community.

Maria Ngwenya, another community member, recalled the hardships they faced before the intervention: "We would walk kilometers to get water. We would put our buckets onto scotch carts to go and fetch water from far distances. It was not ideal considering I have a family that relies on daily use of water."

The rehabilitation of the borehole not only addressed the immediate threat of cholera but also brought long-term benefits to the community. To complete the rehabilitation, Africa AHEAD facilitated training of a waterpoint committee as a method for community-based management of the water source. With a reliable source of clean water, the possible incidence of diarrheal diseases dropped. Families no longer had to worry about the health risks associated with contaminated water.



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The availability of clean water also enabled the community to engage in nutritional activities, such as gardening, which improved their diet and overall health.

The restored borehole represents more than just access to clean water; it reflects a healthier, more resilient community. Children danced under the

rejuvenating splashes, while women exchanged joyful praises and humor, their faces speaking volumes of gratitude.

The community's spirit of solidarity was further strengthened as they took ownership of the borehole, contributing money to fence the area and protect it from goats and other animals.

A water retaining trough was strategically constructed at the end of the headwork beyond the fence for animals to drink and prevent them from drinking at the pump spout, which could contribute to the spread of cholera.

Yenzani Ndlovu, the water point committee secretary, emphasized the importance of the intervention: “We were really helped with this water. Before the intervention, the borehole had been defunct for almost 2-3 months. Africa AHEAD managed to rehabilitate the borehole, and now it functions fully, providing safe water for drinking and reducing the risk of diarrheal diseases.”

The impact of clean water extends beyond health. It has provided security for livestock, supported domestic chores and boosted agricultural activities, thereby enhancing the community's

overall well-being. The community of Bhani-Chilanga now looks forward to the future with hope, dreaming of further improvements such as irrigation systems to sustain their crops year-round.

While the success in Chilanga is a beacon of hope, the broader region still faces challenges. Many areas such as Dick rely on erratic council water supplies or water from the Kalope river which is contaminated with sewer discharge. The community's plea is clear, new boreholes are needed to cover wider populations and reduce dependency on single water points.

For the community of Bhani-Chilanga, the rehabilitated borehole is not just a source of water; it remains an unforgettable memory engraved in their minds, a promise of a better tomorrow.



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## MEET KERRESIAH NYONI: A BENEFICIARY OF SAMBAUSALALE'S WATER REVOLUTION

*At the hub of Hwange's Simangani Village, Ward 10, lies a vibrant community with a story of resilience and transformation. This community, comprising Sambausalale and Gamba sub-villages with a total of 43 households, has faced numerous challenges, especially regarding access to clean water. However, the tide changed for the better when Africa AHEAD intervened, rehabilitating Sambausalale and Mwebe—critical boreholes and training water point committees to safeguard against waterborne diseases.*



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**M**eeet Kerresiah Nyoni, the treasurer of the Sambausalale water point committee. Kerresiah narrated how the intervention played a pivotal role for her and her grandchild, a Form 3 student. "The rehabilitated borehole you see now was once in despair. It had rusty pipes which we could taste from the water,' she said.

The village is reported to have had frequent diarrheal cases associated with lack of adequate clean water.

Sadly, the community's borehole, their primary water source, often fell into disrepair. "We used to spend money on the village pump minder to

service the borehole, but it always broke down again," Kerresiah explains. "We needed to replace the pipes, but we couldn't afford it."

The intervention by Africa AHEAD, partners and funding from UNICEF was a game-changer. The project not only rehabilitated the boreholes but also trained the community on maintaining and cleaning their water points to prevent diarrheal diseases. "We no longer go to the polluted Deka River for water," Kerresiah says, a smile spreading across her face. "Our borehole now provides clean water for drinking and washing."

"I remember the days when we would drink the rusty water as it was," Kerresiah narrated, her voice filled with the weight of past struggles. "The water was discolored due to pollution from nearby mining activities."

With renewed hope, the community dreams of starting nutrition gardens to alleviate poverty. "We plan to plant beans and other vegetables," Kerresiah shared enthusiastically. "With the income from our gardens, we can fix future mechanical issues with the borehole once Africa AHEAD is gone, without financial strain."

The once neglected borehole site is now a clean, appealing area, secured with fencing to keep goats away—a measure to prevent the spread of cholera. "We are proud of the water source we now have," Kerresiah says. Kerresiah's eyes lit up with hope as she envisions the future. "We would be happy to have solar-powered pumps to ensure a consistent and easy water supply. That way we may grow and sell our produce along the highway and generate income for our community." she says, determined.

Sambausalale is a community where hope has been revived again through the water intervention. Through Africa AHEAD's efforts and determined people like Kerresiah, Sambausalale is on a path to a brighter, healthier future.



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## OVERCOMING WATER CHALLENGES IN MWEBE VILLAGE, SIMANGANI WARD 10

**M**webe Village of Simangani Ward 10 in Hwange District, is a community made up of 38 households, which once struggled daily with access to clean and safe drinking water. Villagers depended on open wells, which are 1.5 kilometers away, often shared with animals and contaminated. The situation was dire, with the village at risk of a cholera outbreak, worsened by cases emerging from the neighboring village of Makwa.

The Mwebe borehole pump was a challenge. It was difficult to use, the pipes leaked, and water barely trickled out. Fetching water was a task requiring manpower; women had to come in groups to manage the stubborn pump, often waiting in long lines just to gather enough water for their households. The site was also frequented by dogs, goats and other livestock, increasing the risk of diarrheal diseases.

Africa AHEAD, through funding from UNICEF and partnership with the Rural Infrastructure Development Agency rehabilitated the borehole, fixed the pump and ensured the pipes were no longer leaking. Essentially, the repairs mean everyone including young children can now safely fetch water and the risk of harm from depending on unprotected water sources is minimized.

Silvia Muzamba, a member of the community said, "This is beautiful work done for the community. We feel honored to be remembered by Africa AHEAD and partners. When I heard about the intervention, I was overwhelmed with joy because before the repairs, the pump was hard to manage."

Keznet Ngwenya, a vibrant youth pumping out water (*picture above*) added, "The pump used

to be hard to use. Before the project, we had to come in threes because, on your own, it was difficult to get water. You needed manpower to pump out water and one had to come early to get a decent bucket for home use. Now, because of the intervention, anytime is teatime."

With the threatening cholera cases reported in and around Ward 10, the risk of the community of Mwebe having cases due to the water challenges was high. Fortunately, the emergency response helped lower the risk.

Through the UNICEF funded project, the community also received a protective fence erected around the borehole site, solving the problem of livestock contamination.

"We are grateful for the fence around the borehole because we previously faced a serious problem with open defecation due to low sanitation levels in our community. We were worried about our health being at high risk of cholera, as domestic animals like goats, pigs and dogs feed on human waste in defecated areas then come to drink from the same water source, potentially

spreading cholera and other diarrheal diseases." said Keznet.

The fence has helped prevent animals from accessing the borehole area, reducing the risk of disease transmission and keeping the water source clean, away from contamination.

The emergency response project managed to address the water needs of the community, improving their day-to-day lives. Despite the improvements, villagers still hope for a new borehole to reduce dependency on one and construction of water troughs for their livestock to lower animal interference at the same source. Nonetheless, the community is grateful for the significant strides made towards securing clean and safe water.

Mwebe village's journey from water scarcity and health risks to a sustainable water source is a testament to the impactful work of the project. The community's resilience and the organization's dedicated intervention have paved the way for a healthier and more hopeful future.



## A TIMELY INTERVENTION BY AFRICA AHEAD: RESTORING HOPE TO HEALTH STAFF DURING A CHOLERA OUTBREAK



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In most districts of Zimbabwe, motorbikes are more than just a means of transportation, they are lifelines for environmental health personnel navigating communities in their areas of coverage for a comprehensive health surveillance. In Hwange District, the Ministry of Health and Child Care faced a challenge with their fleet of motorbikes, which were in urgent need of servicing—an essential requirement for robust monitoring during a cholera outbreak.

The moving around of Environmental Health Technicians in affected communities proved to be a hurdle due to the deteriorating condition of the motorbikes. Africa AHEAD, following engagement with the Hwange health authorities, seized the moment to bridge this critical gap through an emergency intervention to service and repair 14 defunct motorbikes, through funding from UNICEF. The initiative aimed to dismantle any barriers in the fight against cholera and to transform the district's health outcomes.

"Before the intervention, only 13 out of our 43 motorcycles were functional," detailed Talikobila Mwembe, the District Environmental Health Officer of the local Government of Hwange district. "The general condition of the bikes was fair, but servicing was erratic. Most of the bikes needed major repairs, such as the replacement

of parts and engine overhauls."

The motorbikes are the backbone of the Environmental Health Technicians' (EHTs) field activities, serving as mobility transport for contact tracing, disease investigations, case follow-ups, water sampling and food outlet inspections. "These motorbikes are used daily and enable us to reach every corner of our operational zones, including the most remote and hard-to-reach areas." explained Mr Mwembe. This seamless mobility ensures that no stone is left unturned in the relentless efforts to monitor public health.

The impact of this intervention extends beyond logistics. As for communities in Hwange, the sight of an EHT arriving on a motorbike symbolizes hope and reassurance. It signifies that the health authorities are alert, that they are cared for and that their health and well-being are a priority.

The project's rapid response had a profound impact on controlling future cholera outbreaks. With motorbikes serviced and ready, EHTs have guaranteed mobility, ensuring swift reach to affected areas and prevent fatalities. "The availability of functional motorbikes will yield improved health in the district. The team will now be in constant touch with the community." noted the DEHO.

Mr Mwembe elaborated on the effectiveness of the intervention, stating, "It has brought positive changes in monitoring community programs and projects, such as the formation of Community Health Clubs in hard-to-reach areas, monitoring sanitation projects like the construction of Blair Ventilated Improved Pit latrines (BVIPs), and inspecting water points and trading premises."

The timely response to motorbike repairs by Africa AHEAD and partners was commendable as some were last serviced more than 15 years back. "The bikes were parked for a long time. After Africa AHEAD received the request, all targeted bikes were fixed within a short space of time, which was unexpected but highly commendable," said Mr Mwembe.

As a result, the repairs significantly improved operations. "The motorbike repairs have improved operations in areas of coverage and monitoring of community health programs has resumed. The repairs have also facilitated the integration of health services and field outreach activities at our health centers," Mr Mwembe explains.

Reflecting on the project, Mr Mwembe expressed

his gratitude, "Thumbs up to the partner for rescuing us regarding the mobility of EHTs. This has improved the execution of day-to-day duties and enhanced the overall effectiveness of EHTs' performance. Job well done to Africa AHEAD."

Looking ahead the DEHO manifested future funding from UNICEF and collaborations with Africa AHEAD "Possibly, some EHTs who were not trained may need basic motorcycle maintenance and riding skills to minimize accidents and injuries. Such assistance may help address frequent breakdowns and crashes," Mr Mwembe concluded.

The story of repairing motorbikes in Hwange underscores the importance of practical, on-the-ground support in emergency response efforts. It highlights how targeted interventions can enhance the capabilities of frontline health workers, ultimately leading to more resilient and healthier communities. Africa AHEAD together with its partners' commitment to addressing immediate challenges in Hwange's cholera response exemplifies the profound impact that strategic emergency responses can have in times of crisis.

## MOBILITY MATTERS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CHOLERA: FUELING HEALTH HEROES



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During capacity building initiatives, disease surveillance and case follow ups, the project ensured sustainable mobility by providing 20 liters of fuel for each of the 12 functioning MoHCC motorbikes.

This provision not only facilitated immediate response efforts but also ensured operational capacity of the EHTs. With functional and fueled motorbikes, EHTs were now equipped to integrate their day-to-day activities with emergency response tasks, ensuring a more comprehensive and effective approach to cholera prevention and control.

# AFRICA AHEAD STRIVES FOR IMPROVED SANITATION AND HEALTH: MELODY NCUBE'S STORY OF HOPE AND RESILIENCE



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**M**et Melody Ncube, a 41-year-old mother from Makwika Village Number 3 in Hwange urban settlements, an area once at the epicenter of a devastating cholera outbreak, reaching a total of 132 positive cases.

With three children aged 23, 18 and 5, Melody and her family faced immense challenges as their community was gripped by the disease.

"The cholera situation in our area was dire," Melody recalls. "We were fortunate not to contract cholera, but the fear and anxiety was overwhelming. Many of our neighbors fell seriously ill and some were even admitted at Number 1 North (Cinderella) Clinic. The illness began as simple diarrhea cases until we realized it was cholera. It was terrifying, especially when a 5-year-old child next door and a 19-year-old neighbor with epilepsy were affected. We also had a pregnant neighbor who tragically lost her baby after having fallen sick to cholera."

One of the greatest challenges in Makwika Village was the shared communal toilets. "We have an ablution block with eight chambers—four for males and four for females which cater for approximately 200 households, which is an average population of about 400 people," Melody explains. "Out of the four female toilets, only one

was fully functional. The other chambers were blocked and attempting to flush caused water and waste to overflow, making it impossible for our children to use the facilities. The situation was so bad that if one wore flat shoes, they would get drenched in water from the overflows."

The proximity of the houses to the communal toilet blocks increased the problem. "The sewer blockages would sometimes overflow and flow towards our houses, emitting an unpleasant smell," said a neighbor, Maria Muleya. "We had no choice but to resort to open defecation at a nearby bush, which became a health hazard for the community." The frequent trips to the bushes made the area waste-filled and the fear of wild animals kept people from going deeper into the bushes, leading to defecating closer to the households. The poor sanitation became a key driver to the spread of cholera within the village.

In the effort to curb cholera and improve the sanitation infrastructure, a 10000l water storage tank was installed next to the S4 block, all 8 chamber pans were replaced, plumbing system serviced, privacy doors erected, walls repainted and the lighting system improved.

Africa AHEAD, in collaboration with Hwange Colliery Health Department and the Ministry of Health provided much-needed education and resources. "Before the pandemic, we had little information about cholera," Melody admits. "Through health education, we learnt about boiling water, bucket chlorination, proper handwashing and other essential hygiene practices. Now, even my 5-year-old knows the importance of regular handwashing," says Maria.

The community grasped the concept of how to chlorinate water using aqua tabs, water guard and Jik, guaranteeing better domestic hygiene.

Furthermore, the intervention went beyond



education. Africa AHEAD complemented HCCL efforts with the existing ablution facilities by addressing all the concerns the community had about the poor sanitation conditions in Village 3.



*A demonstration of bucket chlorination session in progress in Number 3, Hwange District.*

Melody shared, "We are overwhelmed with the project, it has significantly improved our living conditions and helped prevent future outbreaks. The community now knows not to flush down sanitary wear, condoms, or hard paper down the toilet system, which used to cause blockages."

With such great changes the community is determined to maintain the facilities. "We will take ownership of our facilities and ensure they are kept clean, rather than relying on the Colliery staff for cleaning. My family is most affected due to our proximity to the toilet blocks, so we are committed to this change." said Melody.



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*Evercute Lunga depositing waste in the pit dug as a household waste management strategy*

While Melody narrated the sad ordeal, Evercute Lunga stepped in to appreciate the work by Africa AHEAD on Participatory Health and Hygiene Education to say "We were educated on digging pit holes as a waste management tactic and installing budget friendly tippy taps 'zvigubhugiya' outside our toilets to ensure we practice good hand hygiene after toilet use"

Melody remains hopeful. "Our community has come a long way, thanks to the combined efforts of Africa AHEAD and the health workers. We are now better equipped to protect ourselves from cholera and other diseases. The changes have brought us relief and hope for a healthier future." With continued support and vigilance, Makwika Village Number 3 is on a path to a brighter and healthier tomorrow.



**After rehabilitation work was done by Africa AHEAD**



## A NEW DAWN AT THE MARKET. CLEAN HANDS, CLEAN TOILETS: AFRICA AHEAD AIMS FOR IMPROVED SANITATION



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For 48-year-old Sincengani Ncube, the busy marketplace and bus terminus in Hwange's Number 1 Village has been her home away from home for the past 16 years. Selling vegetables and ready-to-eat fruits, she's seen the marketplace evolve, yet it remained a hotbed of challenges, particularly concerning hygiene and sanitation. Street vending soon became a key driver to the spread of cholera which was a constant battle for dependent vendors like Sincengani.

When the cholera outbreak hit Hwange hard, Africa AHEAD, in collaboration with the Health Department of the Hwange Colliery, took decisive action to improve the market area, offering public sanitation support services at the terminus which is heavily frequented by the greater population.

In a bid to enhance good sanitation and hygiene a water tank and stand were erected at the market for water access in the densely populated area. While on the other hand, Africa AHEAD, through

the HCCL Estates department, rehabilitated public ablution blocks by addressing plumbing issues, replacing water closets and attending to carpentry and electrical issues.

The ablution facilities serve thousands daily, ranging from vendors, bus service providers as well as the public that frequent the area for market supplies and transport.

To top it up, handwashing stations were strategically installed at the market and extensive health education on cholera prevention and water purification was conducted through collaborative efforts of the project partners.

Sincengani, whose stall is conveniently located near the newly rehabilitated ablution facilities, felt an immediate impact. "The support from the project partners has been incredible," she said. "Having these handwashing stations helps us maintain hygiene, which is crucial when selling fresh fruits and veggie produce.

"The marketplace, a hub for thousands daily, had always struggled with sanitation, especially in the communal toilets used by 80% of the high-density village population.

Fellow market seller, Tendai Mugobo, recalled the grim state of the facilities, especially the ladies' toilets. "It catered for bus passengers, market people, and the public. With water being rationed at an 18-hour schedule, maintaining hygiene was tough," she explained. The introduction of handwashing buckets and clear guidelines on water purification has made a significant difference. "We regularly wash our hands and fruits, thanks to these stations," she added.

Nomusa Sibanda, another market seller, emphasized the need for functional flushing systems in the communal toilets. "The poor

hygiene often came from people being lazy to fetch water from storage drums. Given the large number of people here, a working flushing system was essential," she said.

The intervention by Africa AHEAD and partners brought much-needed hope to the marketplace. With the handwashing stations and rehabilitated toilets, hygiene standards have improved, reducing the spread of cholera and other diseases. Sincengani and fellow vendors can now focus on their livelihoods, knowing they are supported in maintaining a healthier environment.

In this vibrant marketplace, the UNICEF funded project initiatives have not just improved hygiene but also restored a sense of health-risk awareness in such a busy and populated area.



# BREAKING BOUNDARIES: AFRICA AHEAD'S COMPREHENSIVE CHOLERA RESPONSE IN HWANGE DISTRICT



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Meet the dedicated Community Health Workers leading the charge against a severe cholera outbreak in Hwange District. In the face of this health crisis, Africa AHEAD has become a beacon of hope and resilience, orchestrating a robust health promotion campaign that has significantly curbed the spread of cholera. Their comprehensive efforts, supported by health facilitators from Hwange Colliery, Hwange Local Board, and Hwange Rural District Council, have swiftly addressed both infected and at-risk areas. Here are some notable successes from their impactful work.

Within the Hwange Colliery Concession, which encompasses a population of 35,002 people spread across Villages Number 1, 2, 3, and 5, Africa AHEAD focused on capacity building through targeted training sessions. These sessions included bucket chlorination, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), and Oral Rehydration Point (ORP) management. Additionally, health clubs were established to



address the cholera risk in these areas, some which were the epicenter of cholera cases in Hwange.

In the peri-urban areas governed by the Hwange Local Board, home to 12,766 people, Africa AHEAD trained village health workers in IPC management at Empumalanga Clinic, Chibondo Clinic, and St. Patrick's Clinic. One notable success story emerged near Don Bosco College, an area plagued by illegal brick molding activities and poor hygiene practices. This community faced severe challenges, including contaminated water sources and sewer leakages. Africa AHEAD's intervention, which included health education on cholera and IPC, led to remarkable behavioral changes. The community constructed a UBVIP toilet, significantly reducing open

defecation and the risk of cholera. Furthermore, the distribution of Non-Food Item (NFI) kits greatly supported these behavioral changes.

### **Hwange Rural District Council: Empowering Rural Communities**

In the rural communities under the Hwange Rural District Council, with a total population of 69,622, Africa AHEAD's impact was equally profound. Villages such as Simangani, Mwebe, and Sambusalele benefited from the establishment of school health clubs. A total of 13 school health clubs received training on Participatory Health and Hygiene Education (PHHE). The impact of these clubs was so

significant that one school, Matetsi Secondary School even performed a health education drama at the Day of the African Child commemoration, showcasing the power of peer education.

### **A Testament to Health Promotion**

Africa AHEAD's intervention in Hwange District is a testament to the power of comprehensive health promotion. Their efforts have not only mitigated the spread of cholera but also instilled lasting behavioral changes and strengthened community resilience. By breaking boundaries and daring the odds, Africa AHEAD has transformed the health landscape in Hwange, leaving a legacy of hope and empowerment.

## **EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES THROUGH DOOR-TO-DOOR CHOLERA AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS**

In the face of a cholera outbreak, Africa AHEAD launched a life-saving door-to-door campaign in Number 1,2,3,5 villages of Hwange Colliery. Spearheaded by 43 dedicated Community Health Volunteers, the initiative aimed to raise awareness about cholera prevention and equip households with essential skills to manage related health conditions like malnutrition and diarrhea.

Trained by Africa AHEAD in collaboration with the Hwange health and nutrition facilitators, voluntary health workers tirelessly visited homes, focusing on educating families about the importance of bucket chlorination, health, hygiene and proper nutrition. With a particular emphasis on children, they spread knowledge on the critical role of a balanced diet in combating cholera. They promoted a four-star diet consisting of carbohydrates, proteins, legumes, vegetables, and fruits to help children regain strength and recover more quickly.

This campaign was crucial as 25 cholera cases of children aged 0-9 years were recorded within the Hwange Colliery population.

The health workers, equipped with water guards and purification knowledge, ensured that every household understood how to purify their water and maintain hygiene practices to prevent the spread of cholera.

The impact of this initiative was profound. Not only did it significantly raise awareness about cholera prevention, but it also empowered families with the knowledge to maintain their health and manage conditions effectively during the outbreak. By focusing on practical solutions and essential nutrition.

The interventions door-to-door campaign had a positive impact on mitigating the spread of cholera and improving knowledge on the importance of a balanced nutrition where diarrheal issues are concerned.

# EMPOWERING HEALTH WORKERS TO COMBAT MALNUTRITION: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Cholera can be devastating, especially in communities where access to clean water, sanitation and healthcare is limited. The disease not only causes severe dehydration but also impacts the nutritional status of affected individuals, particularly children under the age of five years. Education on the link between the nutritional status of young children and cholera became urgent considering the outbreak in Hwange District.

Recognizing this urgent need to educate on the link between control of cholera and the nutritional needs of children affected by the disease, Africa AHEAD partnered with Ministry of Health and Child Care conducted training workshops for Health Care Workers (HCWs) in Hwange, equipping them with critical skills to manage and treat malnutrition and diarrheal diseases, particularly in young children.

Through comprehensive training workshops, Africa AHEAD equipped urban Community Health Workers (CHWs) in Hwange with the skills to screen for malnutrition and provide critical health education to pregnant women, lactating mothers, and caregivers of children under five.

This holistic approach aimed to improve the overall health and nutritional status of children most at risk from cholera and other diarrheal diseases.

Before the training, many healthcare workers in Hwange were unfamiliar with the relationship between nutrition and diarrheal diseases.

The trainings, attended by 17 health care workers (12 females and 5 males), addressed this need by providing practical demonstrations and interactive sessions, helping participants

grasp the definitions, causes and types of malnutrition.

The training workshops were a blend of theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Using photos, charts, and real-life case studies, the sessions covered critical aspects of malnutrition management, including identification, assessment, and treatment of moderate and severe acute malnutrition in children under five.

As a result of the training, CHWs actively screened children under five for malnutrition, resulting in the referral of three children to healthcare facilities for further treatment.

The impact of this intervention goes beyond the immediate results witnessed during the project. On the long term, the intervention has strengthened the capacity of healthcare workers to manage malnutrition and diarrheal diseases among vulnerable children.

By integrating health and nutrition into the fight against cholera, the intervention has significantly enhanced the skills of health workers, ensuring that the children of Hwange receive the care they need.

The intervention has also empowered caregivers with the knowledge to protect their children from cholera and malnutrition, reinforcing the community's resilience against future outbreaks. Health education sessions have reached numerous pregnant and lactating women, equipping them with essential information on nutrition and hygiene.

The knowledge imparted to health workers and caregivers continues to have a ripple effect, improving health outcomes for the community's most vulnerable members.

# Conclusion

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Africa AHEAD's intervention in Hwange District, through funding from UNICEF, during the 2024 cholera outbreak showcased the power of targeted, rapid response in a humanitarian crisis. By addressing critical WASH needs, the organization empowered communities to take ownership of their health, improving access to safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene practices. The rehabilitation of boreholes, restoration of sanitation facilities and comprehensive health promotion efforts transformed communities that were once overwhelmed by cholera. Despite logistical challenges, Africa AHEAD's unique approach, in partnership with local authorities and stakeholders, not only curbed the outbreak but laid a resilient foundation for future health emergencies. The impact of this collaborative effort stands as a testament to what is achievable when communities are empowered to safeguard their health.

