

## God is not a God who stands back and watches

**'P**ray and act now – Zimbabwe is bleeding.' This was last November's cry for help from CMF Zimbabwe. They are in the midst of the worst cholera epidemic Africa has seen for 15 years, with over 89,000 cases reported, the death toll over 4,000. Cholera is a visible manifestation of the collapse of the entire health system. Water and sanitation systems have broken down, most hospitals and clinics are closed, and government doctors are paid the equivalent of 22 pence per month.

Doctors and medical students from CMF Zimbabwe are working with Celebration Health, a church-based organisation which is now running three cholera treatment centres as well as supporting clinics in two hospitals. Over 7,000 patients have been treated. One of the doctors writes about the night the work began in December:

*We started last Friday in response to an urgent cry for help from the Ministry of Health as huge numbers of patients were flooding in from a high density suburb of Chegutu – one night 250 patients came like a tidal wave to the clinic and overwhelmed the three sisters on duty. They saw huge mortality. The outbreak was caused by sewage being sucked into the area's water supply due to low water pressure and vandalised pipes. We arrived and started work at midnight and we gave 1,200 litres of fluid in seven hours to the 150-200 patients on site at Chegutu Polyclinic. We saw the mortality come down from 15 people a day to one per day.*

### CMF Appeal

We launched an appeal ([www.cmf.org.uk/appeal/zimbabwe](http://www.cmf.org.uk/appeal/zimbabwe)) in December to provide supplies for this work. There has been an amazing response and we have raised almost £30,000, which has provided treatment for almost 5,000 patients. It is a privilege to be part of what these brave teams are doing in a desperate situation, enabling them to fulfil their calling as doctors. It was soul-destroying for them to see enormous needs and be powerless to help – but now they are able to use their skills and make a difference. One leader writes:



*Doctors and nurses who had lost vision are now gaining vision as they serve on the front line – and their faces are shining as they save many lives! Health care workers' and students' lives are being transformed and reformation in the medical sphere is happening before our eyes.*

### CMF's ambassador

FY2 doctor John Greenall went out to visit in January. Having seen the appeal on our website, he felt moved not just to give money but to go and stand with the workers on the ground, to encourage them, and to raise awareness here of what is happening. He writes:

*It's the early hours of the morning and I'm standing in a cholera camp looking at the scene around me. There are people everywhere – on beds, on benches, on the floor, even lying in wheelbarrows. Sunken eyes look up at me as I look at the line of IV drips and giving sets attached to patients, the stench of chlorine lingering in my nose. The number of people is overwhelming – there are around 700 patients in a camp with a capacity for 200.*



Water and sanitation systems have broken down

*Walking amongst them in the hastily erected tents is a team of nurses, doctors and medical students who are tending to the sick, cleaning up the vomit and diarrhoea, setting up IV drips for some and giving oral rehydration to others. One student is praying for a particularly sick elderly man. As I turn around a 7-year-old is carried in – he looks about four, malnourished, barely breathing. A cannula is sited and we pray he might live.*

*The team are also sharing the gospel and seeing many come to Christ. The work is tough and they are obviously tired. But one of the students said to me:*

*'God is not a God who stands back and watches...Jesus is in this cholera camp, amongst the vomit and the diarrhoea, full of compassion for these people. I asked myself where Jesus would be at Christmas and I knew he would be here, so I wanted to be here too.'*

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