

ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

THE STRIFE OF LIVING THROUGH A WATERLESS PANDEMIC – by artist Christine.

Running water is a basic human right but that right was taken from us long ago. We pass by our new president's pre-election banners stating water for all yet, in our time of crisis, nothing has flowed for a month. Our wells are running dry and muddy. The queues at the community boreholes are unbearable with temperatures reaching 38°C. Our veggie gardens are wilted, and aphids are merciless in this weather. The crisis of **cholera** and **typhoid** has arrived again with a vengeance and people are dying. A lack of refuse collection has seen a mass of litter dumped on vacant pieces of land and sewage is a big problem. Water only flows to a few households in Tafara and the last time it came, those with good drainage only collected about 25 litres per household which literally dripped into containers overnight. The government promised us bowsers of water for which we are still waiting. We fear they will be politicised like other public facilities now where priority of use is given to the ruling party card holders. We have to sink a 5 litre tin about three times to collect half a bucket of muddy water. Our hearts go out to the elderly often widowed without children to fetch water, or whose children have died, left home or are too busy getting high on drugs to ease the pain of unemployment. We have learnt to bath with two litres of water per person per day, which often feels like a luxury. We watch children like beasts of burden carrying vast loads of water. Well water is muddy and only good for flushing the toilet. We are frequently told to use a chemical called 'Waterguard' but that same chemical is running scarce in supermarkets and pharmacies. Then we are told to use bleach. The leading and most trusted brand for years was manufactured by a company that left Zimbabwe as the environment was not economically and politically viable meaning the product is imported at a much higher cost. Most families survive on a dollar or less a day. A bottle of bleach will cost two or so dollars whilst 'Waterguard costs 85c. These figures are small, but to a family



whose vegetables are dried out in the garden and needs to spend 40c on rape, 10 cents per onion, 25c on tomatoes and other cumulative amounts on cooking oil, 85c is a king's ransom because it means forgoing the day's sustenance. Millers' fees to grind their maize, salt and flour (now mostly imported) for home fire baked bread have also to be paid.



The bulk of women are vendors. For years they have provided for their families by vending fresh food and other wares in town in the central business district. Now there is nothing as tensions mount in town with vendors being chased away from the only livelihood they have known since childhood. Honestly, some in our community have not seen running water for years. Now a debate rages whether children should continue going to school or if all schools should be shut until the crisis is contained.' Photo left: Shows stream of raw sewage near artist Lovemore's home and the quality of water from the borehole he shares with many suitable only for flushing toilets.

STATEMENT FROM ARTPEACE: *'We as ArtPeace stand in solidarity with the suffering masses. We are dead smack in the middle of it all. One way or another this crisis has scourged us. While the political circus strums on we need responsible governance and accountability. Our needs cannot wait for them to resolve their petty issues because our lives are hanging in the balance right now. Zimbabwe needs true and lasting change not loud bickering and cheap talk amounting to nothing. It is time to honour promises made to preserve what little dignity we have left.'*



FOOD HAND OUTS: Artist Fortune said: *'My wife Norah took this photo of children lining up for food at a school in Chinhoyi. An overseas donor offered food at school to encourage children to attend. The problem was a lack of food at home and most children did not have the strength to walk the 10-mile round trip to and from school owing to weakness from hunger. So, this donor came up with a plan for the children to come to school and learn so they can have a bright future and not waste time at home learning nothing. This is why politicians take advantage when they grow up coz they are not educated. The donor wants to stop that by making sure every rural child is educated.'*

BERMONDSEY STREET FESTIVAL: Southwark Cathedral's retail manager Jon Dollin manned a stall (right) at this recent popular street festival in London. ArtPeace were well represented!



BOOST FROM TOLLER: Toller URC, Kettering yet again rose to the occasion and raised £105 for ArtPeace - proceeds from a coffee morning. This, plus a few donations from good friends plus Southwark Cathedral shop sales, put a big smile on ArtPeace faces early September!

TRAVELLERS: ArtPeace are indebted to recent couriers. This is no mean task considering the weight, distance and sheer hassle involved in taking their work to the UK so special thanks to Verity and Teresa who made a superhuman effort! Below: some of their deliveries! The Rev.



Wilbert Sayimani at Poole URC (Peter and Jill Haslett's church) is also lending a helping hand as his family are currently in Zimbabwe. Twenty-eight people to date have died from this cholera outbreak and there are 3000 cases alone in Harare. Some artists fill containers with clean water from a borehole at Silveira House and carry them miles home which helps a little. Our friends need all the help they can get as they are at the end of their tether - again! **Johnston Simpson**