

Zimbabwe



International Medical Corps helped to address the 2008-2009 cholera epidemic in Zimbabwe by implementing a comprehensive package of health, water and sanitation interventions.

Since our operations began in Zimbabwe in May 2009, we have worked to improve access to quality health services and reduce the spread of cholera and other water-borne diseases by increasing access to clean water and improving personal hygiene practices for more than 150,000 people in Mashonaland Central Province.



Largely due to deteriorating public water and sanitation facilities and a decaying health care system, a large-scale cholera epidemic crippled Zimbabwe in August 2008.

The worst outbreak in the country since 1992, the highly-contagious disease killed more than 4,200 people and infected over 97,000. International Medical Corps responded to the cholera outbreak by providing much-needed medical supplies to local partners and working with the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare to conduct health sector assessments. We also launched long-term interventions including clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) promotion, as well as training programs for community-based health workers in cholera prevention and case management.

To enable health workers in Zimbabwe to provide the best medical care possible, International Medical Corps repairs and renovates clinics and draws on its strong network of private sector support to provide health centers with donations of essential medical supplies. We also work with the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare to build clinics' capacity to respond to emergencies by training health workers in disease surveillance and creating a functional emergency response communication network across five districts in Mashonaland Central. By engaging the community, our health and hygiene activities work to foster local ownership and enable self-reliance.



EMERGENCY RESPONSE CHOLERA OUTBREAK

Drawing on our extensive global experience in WASH programming and overall health interventions, International Medical Corps immediately focused on containment of the disease in 2009, while simultaneously supporting the existing treatment infrastructure by:

- Distributing hygiene kits and increasing hygiene awareness among schools and communities by International Medical Corps-supported Village Health Workers (VHWs);
- Increasing access to clean water by rehabilitating bore holes and water points, establishing water point management committees, and piloting a bio-sand filter project;
- Constructing latrines to improve sanitation;
- Improving health workers' skills in hygiene practices, water storage methods, and cholera prevention, control, and case management (detection, reporting and treatment);
- Working with health centers on case identification to trace and eliminate the sources of infection.

TRAINING HEALTHCARE WORKERS

International Medical Corps provides intensive, on-the-job training to health professionals and VHWs on the management of basic medical emergencies, such as trauma and mass casualty management, epidemic outbreaks, and treatment of mother and child delivery-related complications, as well as training to health support staff on hospital services, resource management, and other topics requested by local health officials. To create a more comprehensive emergency response network, International Medical Corps also trains district health staff (primary and secondary level) on basic emergency case management, appropriate referral systems, and establishing effective coordination among the different health structures within the district.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

International Medical Corps combines the distribution of hygiene items such as soap, water containers, purification tablets, and oral rehydration salts with community-level hygiene education to equip households with the necessary tools to prevent and treat cholera at home. To date, we have reached more than 200,000 people with messages on communicable disease prevention and instructions on how to access health services.

EMPOWERING GIRLS

From evidence gathered by a local Zimbabwean NGO, Integrated Sustainable Livelihoods (ISL), it has been reported that 70% of girls in Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland West provinces do not attend school when they are menstruating due to lack of affordable sanitary pads. As part of International Medical Corps' hygiene and sanitation activities, we are pilot testing reusable sanitary pads developed by ISL and UNIFEM for school girls, who are often forced to use unhygienic materials, causing health problems.

HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING

To increase and expand the capacity of health institutions in Mashonaland Central Province, International Medical Corps is directly supporting 30 health facilities in five districts, including four district hospitals, one provincial hospital, and 25 rural health clinics, serving more than 635,980 people. We plan to gradually extend our support to the entire province as the appropriate resources are secured. International Medical Corps staff will expand the capacity of communities and clinics to proactively monitor, respond to, and contain outbreaks. Additionally, we will focus on developing health facilities' capacity to implement an effective drugs management and reporting system and increase their ability to provide basic emergency maternal and neonatal services.

International Medical Corps in Zimbabwe is part of the Health cluster coordinated by WHO and active member of the strategic working group inside the cluster.

International Medical Corps is a leading member of Zimbabwe HERU (Health emergency response unit) and focal point in Mashonaland Central Province. In this role, International Medical Corps assists MoH personnel in assessing and responding to any health related emergency which may arise in the territory of competence. International Medical Corps' WASH expertise is an added value for an integrated Health/Wash approach in emergency response.

WATER AND SANITATION

Working with the local Ministry of Health and Child Welfare structures, International Medical Corps initially identified three districts as priority target zones in Mashonaland Central Province in northeastern Zimbabwe based on the population's inadequate access to clean water, limited per capita coverage of latrines, poor hygiene practices and a lack of environmental health education. In some villages in Mashonaland Central, a single bore hole serviced over 300 people, and in others less than a third of the community had access to a functional latrine.

International Medical Corps carried out an innovative pilot scheme to provide drinking water to 600 households. Using local materials, we constructed bio-sand filters filled with layers of gravel and sand onto which water is poured for filtration. Each filter can produce up to 240 liters per day of clean water that is 95% free of bacteria and 100% free



of parasites. These filters function for up to 10 years before the filtration material needs to be replaced, which can be accomplished with local materials at minimal cost.

Since January 2011, International Medical Corps has been implementing a new Water and Sanitation (WASH) program. The program uses the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach to catalyze positive behavior change and strengthen capacity in five districts of Mashonaland Central Province, including Bindura, Mbire, Mt. Darwin, Shamva, and Rushinga. The program focuses on developing buy-in and promoting WASH curricula in schools, clinics, and communities, ensuring proper use and maintenance of latrines, and strengthening community hygiene promotion.



INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL CORPS ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

For 30 years, International Medical Corps has demonstrated the ability to deliver major relief and development programs to improve lives and strengthen national capacity through health, education, and social programming. International Medical Corps has responded to complex emergencies and implemented transitional development programs in more than 70 countries worldwide.

CAPACITY IN ZIMBABWE

In Zimbabwe, International Medical Corps' staff is composed of WASH experts, as well as experienced public health and health education officers who work with community members and government counterparts to strengthen local systems. Additionally, an International Medical Corps surgeon is available to provide critical on-the-job training to doctors and nurses working in district hospitals to improve the capacity of Zimbabwe's secondary health services.



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Since its inception 30 years ago, International Medical Corps' mission has been consistent: relieve the suffering of those impacted by war, natural disaster and disease, by delivering vital health care services that focus on training. This approach of helping people help themselves is critical to returning devastated populations to self-reliance.

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