



Rural Infrastructure Development Agency (RIDA) setting up for borehole rehabilitation in Buhera district. Photo by Caritas Mutare for CRS

Margaret A. Cargill Foundation partners with CRS to respond to Cholera

IT is early in the morning in Makeuve Village Buhera district, Mirirai Muriwo, 49 yrs old, picks up a washing basin with laundry and carefully places it on her head whilst picking up an empty 20-litre bucket. She heads towards the community borehole just a few meters from her household, thinking about when she used to walk six kilometres to fetch water and do laundry in Zvakavapano, a neighboring village.

Mirirai must make the trip to the borehole twice daily, early in the morning and as the sun sets. She carries the heavy 20-litre bucket of water on her head even under the scorching sun or heavy rains. With the current cholera outbreak, she has to keep her family safe.

A disaster looming

Zimbabwe has been facing a cholera outbreak that started in February 2023

in Chegutu town, Mashonaland West Province. Since then, the cholera outbreak has spread significantly to other provinces across the country including Manicaland Province, Buhera district which is now one of the cholera hotspots.

Poor sanitation and lack of safe water in Buhera has exacerbated the cholera outbreak especially in wards where communities gather water from the perennial Mwerahari river that flows across most districts.

Most boreholes in the community were broken down and this contributed to the scarcity of safe water sources. For community members like Mirirai, walking six kilometres to fetch water at the closest safe water source became the normal routine.

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Mirirai is a village health worker and the secretary for the Water Point Committee (WPC) which was formed through the support of development partners and government. The WPC comprises of seven members, and they manage and develop the water points within their villages. They are a key resource in maintaining water infrastructure as well as collaborating with RIDA for repairs. This ensures project sustainability and promotes social cohesion.

Is history repeating itself?

The work Mirarai and other village health workers like her do is critically important because, in recent years, there have been serious outbreaks of cholera, typhoid, and other waterborne diseases in Zimbabwe. From 2008 to 2009, the country also suffered a serious cholera outbreak with over 90,000 cases reported nationwide, resulting in about 4,300 deaths. According to a recent study published in the US National Institute of Health (2023) most cholera deaths were linked to a lack of safe water, poor access to basic sanitation, and poor hygiene practices. Yet, almost 15 years later, many communities, including Buhera where Mirirai lives, are still facing water challenges.

“When the cholera outbreak started last year, I tried my level best to tell people to wash their hands and drink water from safe sources but most of them kept asking me “which safe water sources I was referring to” Because the borehole was broken down. We sat down as the WPC to discuss the water challenges so that villagers contribute money towards repairing the long broken-down community borehole. We later realized that we needed a lot of money to fix the borehole which we



Mirirai fetching water at the recently rehabilitated borehole. Photo by Caritas Mutare for CRS

couldn't raise. We were now stuck between a rock and a hard place,” said Mirirai.

Timely intervention

In a bid to improve access to water, sanitation, and hygiene in Buhera, the Margaret A. Cargill Foundation supported CRS Zimbabwe and its implementing partner, Caritas Diocese of Mutare, to respond to the current cholera outbreak. Through the Buhera Emergency Cholera Response (BECR) Project, CRS and Caritas successfully restored access to safe water by repairing 53 boreholes in cholera hotspots, training 50 Environmental Health Technicians (EHTs) and nurses on cholera case surveillance, contact tracing, case management and risk communication.

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Apart from improving access to safe water, CRS also distributed 316 WASH Non-Food Items (NFI) kits to 316 households under the Case Area

Targeted Intervention (CATI) approach as well as 368 dignity kits to vulnerable girls of school-going ages. CRS also handed over medical supplies and equipment (Ringer Lactate, ciprofloxacin, Oral Rehydration Salts, cholera beds, and cannulas) to the Ministry of Health and Childcare in Buhera district to support in the cholera case management.

Water is life!

“The project came at the right time, and we are so grateful that our community borehole was fixed. Others were fetching water in shallow unprotected wells which put us all at risk of contracting cholera. We recorded six cholera cases that I am aware of here in Makuve village which are mostly linked to the use of unsafe water from shallow unprotected wells and rivers. Luckily, no one passed away due to cholera. Also, women and girls no longer travel long distances, which puts them at risk in search of water. Ever since the borehole has been repaired, we have not had new cholera cases in our village. I also hear that even in our neighboring villages the cholera cases have declined” said Mirirai.



WATER AT LAST: Community members testing washing their hands after borehole rehabilitation. Photo by Caritas Mutare for CRS.



CRS Zimbabwe commemorates World Water Day in Hurungwe

CRS Zimbabwe and Caritas Diocese of Chinhoyi, the implementing partner for the Zimbabwe Ecosystem Services Project, partnered with Hurungwe Rural District Council to host the District World Water Day Commemorations at St Boniface Mission in Magunje.



Government stakeholders touring St Boniface Dam. Photo by Tariro Mhute/CRS

The commemorations were held in collaboration with the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, Hurungwe Rural District Council (RDC), local leadership, and the community. The event kicked off Zim Ecosystem Services Project.

Local leadership and community members have been actively contributing to the project by contributing to the community visioning process which led to follow on activities like gathering locally available materials and volunteering time and labour towards dam

rehabilitation. They had the opportunity to showcase their progress to the RDC, representatives from the Ministry of Lands, and Magunje constituency MP Hon Super Madiro.

In his speech, CRS Zimbabwe WASH Specialist, Edson Nyashanu had this to say, “Water has the potential to be a stabilizing factor for peace and a catalyst for sustainable development if people cooperate to balance each other’s human rights and needs. This community-led effort has the potential

to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6 “Water and sanitation for all by 2030”. The project will accomplish this goal by supporting irrigation projects, climate-smart agriculture, and supplying the community with potable water for domestic use.

Hurungwe Rural District Council Social Services Development Officer, Remigio Makuwerere said, the project is in line with the local authority’s drive towards the attainment of Vision 2030.

“St Boniface Dam is one of the life changing projects and speaks to National Development Strategy 1 through infrastructure development for vision 2030 to be attained, he said.



Project Spotlight!

CRS improves access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene services in Murehwa

Accelerating Water Improvement, Sanitation, and Hygiene Promotion in small towns (AWISH) is a two-year initiative funded by CRS and implemented by Caritas Harare in Murehwa district, Mashonaland East province. The project aims to improve the health and well-being of 318 households by providing them with access to safe water, basic sanitation, and positive hygiene practices. The project also supports the economic empowerment of the project participants by facilitating their access to finance through Savings Internal and Lending Communities and enabling them to invest in WASH and alternative livelihood options.



Anna Mawire from Mavhurume Village in Murehwa fetching water at the recently commissioned solarized piped water scheme constructed with support from CRS. Photo by Tariro Mhute/CRS

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