

January –  
February 2025

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# NEWSLETTER



**End poverty.  
Together.**

**ActionAid Zimbabwe**

**SCHOOL FEEDING  
PROGRAMME**



## THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR'S WELCOME REMARKS

Joy Mabenge,

ActionAid Zimbabwe Country Director.

The 2023/2024 El Niño event caused severe drought conditions across southern Africa, with Zimbabwe significantly affected. This phenomenon resulted in delayed rainfall, prolonged dry spells, and extreme temperatures, disrupting local weather patterns. According to the Zimbabwe Livelihoods Assessment Committee (ZimLAC) 2024 report, approximately 6 million people were anticipated to face food insecurity due to the widespread drought across the region.

In response to the challenges posed by the El Niño-induced drought, it became evident that building resilience within communities was essential. In April 2024, His Excellency President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa declared a state of disaster, which was later extended to December 2024. ActionAid Zimbabwe (AAZ) stepped forward to support the government's response during this crisis. In June 2024, AAZ conducted a needs assessment in the Makoni and Wedza districts to evaluate the drought's impact on local communities and schools. The findings of this assessment led to the launch of a School Feeding Programme (SFP) in these areas, focusing on schools within AAZ's Local Rights Programmes in Chiendambuya, Nyazura, and Wedza.

The SFP commenced in September 2024, initially supporting 8 schools. This initiative expanded to cover a total of 27 schools—16 in Makoni and 11 in Wedza—through both Lean Seasons until March 2025. The programme played a critical role in ensuring that students received the necessary nutrition to succeed in their academic pursuits. Through these efforts, AAZ aims to contribute to the broader goal of eradicating poverty and building a brighter future for all.

**Happy Reading!!**

## AAZ SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAMME BOOSTS ATTENDANCE AT SHARARA PRIMARY SCHOOL

The El Niño-induced drought affected many communities, leading to low harvests and significant water shortages. Families struggled to secure adequate meals, which impacted pupils' ability to attend school. At Sharara Primary School in Makoni district, the Teacher in Charge Mrs Muchuwa, noted that some parents reported their children were not coming to school because they didn't have food at home.

AAZ's SFP, supported by a solar-powered borehole and a community garden established by AAZ earlier, which provide water and vegetables for the feeding initiative, supplies mealie meal, cooking oil, and beans to the school.

Initially, the program aimed to feed pupils from Early Childhood Development (ECD) to Grade 2. However, after discussions with the school administration, it was decided that the food available was enough to feed all students. Mrs. Muchuwa stated, "After our meeting, we realized that we could feed every pupil at the school."

As a result, attendance at Sharara Primary School improved significantly. Students are now able to focus on their education without the distraction of hunger. This initiative also strengthened the community's resilience, demonstrating the positive impact of targeted support in addressing food insecurity among pupils.



# THE SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM'S ROLE IN STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES: BASELINE SURVEY REPORT RESULTS



The SFP emerged as a crucial support system for both children and their families in Makoni and Wedza district. The Baseline Survey Report highlighted the need for effective interventions that can enhance the well-being of families and promote educational engagement among children.

At schools in Makoni and Wedza district, the implementation of the School Feeding Program showed

remarkable results. With 99.08% of schools offering meals, the program gained widespread acceptance, highlighting its importance in addressing hunger and improving school attendance. The high meal uptake of 95.39% demonstrates the program's effectiveness, providing children with the nourishment necessary to focus on their studies rather than on empty stomachs.

## Frequency of taking the meal

VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
always	207	95.39
often	5	2.3
sometimes	3	1.38
rarely	1	0.46

Before the program, many students struggled with food insecurity, which contributed to absenteeism. Financial constraints and hunger were significant barriers to education. However, with the introduction of

regular meals, school attendance increased, allowing children to engage more fully in their education. This improvement was particularly vital in rural areas where access to food and healthcare can be limited.

## Cause of Absenteeism

VALUE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Tuition	53	24.42
Hunger	35	16.13
Possible Neglect	15	6.91
illness	6	2.76
Lack of interest	1	0.46
Long distance	1	0.46

The program not only addressed immediate nutritional needs but also fostered a healthier school environment. While 62.21% of children were reported to be in good health, the program emphasized the integration of nutritional education, teaching children about balanced diets and hygiene. This aspect is crucial for promoting long-term healthy habits among students, ensuring that they not only receive meals but also understand the value of good nutrition.

The impact of the SFP extended beyond individual pupils, it strengthened the community. By improving food security and educational outcomes, the program played a critical role in building resilience among families.



## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY TIES THROUGH SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM

AAZ implemented the SFP in Nyanga through its partnership with Simukai Child Protection Programme, at Maereka Primary School in Nyanga, Ward 17. This initiative yielded positive results, particularly in easing the burden on parents and guardians while strengthening the relationship between families and the school.

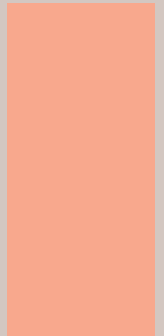


Mrs. Nyapimbi, the deputy headmaster, shared, “The school feeding program cut down one meal at home, as children now enjoy their meals at school. They no longer eat cold food from home but instead receive hot, nutritious meals.” This shift not only improved students’ nutrition but also alleviated financial pressures on families. “We have four boys who were always absent due to economic constraints and hunger,” Mrs. Nyapimbi noted. “Since the program started, the boys are now coming to school every day, and their parents have begun attending school meetings.

The involvement of parents in the programme when they come to cook fostered a sense of community and pride among students as they see their parents actively participating in their education.

The SFP also reduced stigma among pupils. Previously, some students brought luxurious foods from home, leading to mockery of those who couldn’t afford the same, but with everyone receiving the same meal at school, the program equalized the experience for all pupils at the school.

# FEEDING SCENES



# Testimonials

Many children were falling asleep during lessons due to hunger. However, since we began providing meals with the support of ActionAid Zimbabwe, the children are now more energetic and actively participating in their lessons.

*Mrs Tivafire*  
Mhandambiri Primary School  
Teacher In Charge

Our children were coming to school without eating because of food shortages at home. Thanks to ActionAid Zimbabwe's initiative, we now know that even when there is no food at home, our children will eat at school.

*Rudo Ndure*  
Parent

Children were no longer coming to school due to a lack of food at home. However, since we started providing sadza and beans through ActionAid Zimbabwe's support, the absenteeism rate has decreased.

*Mrs Gondo*  
Deputy Headmaster  
Sharara Primary School

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