

# ARTPEACE AND FRIENDS

**OVER THE YEARS**, some readers must have wondered whether supporting ArtPeace is like pouring money into a bottomless pit as their hardship continues. The artists would reply that we have managed to keep their families alive through covering seed, fertilisers, rents, medical and school fees and hope! Many live in poor rented homes which creates a big problem each month as they live on a knife edge trying to avoid



eviction through rent arrears. However, thanks to our big UK exhibitions in 2010, two artists managed to put money aside and buy a stand –



a piece of rough land but it took **Coster Balakasi** over 10 years of scrimping to buy building materials. He makes his own bricks from mud and fires them (photo above). All this, whilst trying to support an extended family through sculpting, growing his own maize plus any odd job earning a pittance. Photo: Coster, third from left with his partly built home in background said: 'It has taken years of graft to get to this stage and I am so grateful for St Andrew's and other URC churches' support. This kindness helps support my extended family and my old mother in law living in a rural home in Mtoko.

**MIKE MASEDZA (55)** who read the lesson last week, is in a similar position but is now desperate. After struggling for many years to build a home (with earthen floor), he has reached roof level but



the bare timbers have been exposed to the elements for a year. There is no tap water or sewerage at this location. He said: 'I am having sleepless nights and praying constantly. I don't want to reach the next rainy season in June without a roof otherwise the timbers will rot. I need 900US\$ (£800) and am at the point of no return.' Mike lives in two rented rooms costing 70\$ a month – pushing him to the limit. His new home would accommodate seven with wife, son and four orphans, currently being cared for by his sister in a rural area, but she can no longer cope as her husband deserted her. Mike wants to help. He is a decent man who has helped so many others despite his own problems and is the

glue and peacemaker who has kept ArtPeace together for years. He so deserves a break! Should anyone like to view a video of his unfinished building and plea for support please contact me.

**13 YEAR OLD HEAD OF FAMILY:** Story from artist **Godwin Nasho:** 'These two children are named Talent (13 years) and Munashe (11 years) who stay at Eastview in Harare. They face a harsh reality as they live alone. Their father suddenly left for Namibia in 2020 chasing a better life but he has never communicated.



Sadly, their mother - their pillar, passed away unexpectedly in 2021 and life has become even tougher. Talent took on the responsibility for their survival but had no money for food, clothing or school fees with no one willing to help them. So Talent had the idea of looking for old mattresses abandoned in the undergrowth to



repair and sell to raise money to survive in Zimbabwe's hard economy. He walks miles looking for these old mattresses. Note their bathing area (below left) but the toilet doesn't have a flushing system so they either have to use their neighbour's or visit a nearby bush. When Talent is out looking for old mattresses, Munashe will be at home cooking whilst doing his homework. Below



middle photo shows Munashe cooking a meal of rice only as they cannot afford to buy tomatoes. They eat just enough to survive, sometimes only Sadza with peanuts – not enough for growing kids'. **Godwin** (above with Talent), like many of our artists, tries to help poor children like these.

**POVERTY:** At least 63% percent of all households in Zimbabwe now live in poverty, according to the US Agency for International Development, and 16% live in extreme poverty.

**SALE OF NEW ARRIVALS!** This cute hippo in cobalt by Phillip Musonza (one of many talented new artists offering work via ArtPeace), will be for sale in **The Gateway on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May**, along with a rather large splendid rabbit and other stunning pieces thanks to a 17 kgs load kindly taken over by Verity of CAFOD. Remember, first come first served! **Johnston Simpson**

