

## The Need to Remove the Distance between Access to Health and Staying in Sickness

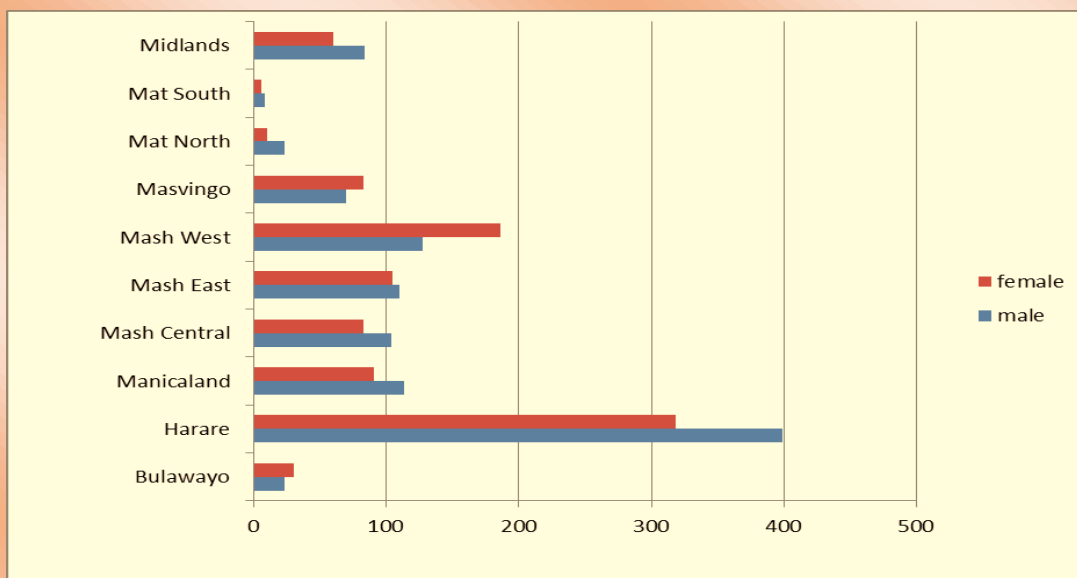
Almost 16 years later, Kidzcan is still the only Humanitarian Child-Centred Non-Governmental Organisation focusing on providing comprehensive services for children with cancer. Childhood cancer services are very limited in Zimbabwe. The major barrier is **the policy**, which Kidzcan is managing to address through advocacy, **the distance**, which remains the most challenge, **the cost** (which Kidzcan has managed to minimise through providing bus fares), **the myth around cancer causes and management** (which is also being addresses through community education). **Centralisation of services** which is caused by limited resources, including chemotherapy medicines, opioid analgesics and cancer control, skilled manpower further compromise patient care in the country is a major determinant of treatment outcomes.

According to the National Cancer Prevention and Control Strategy (2014-2018), there is lack of standardised cancer management guidelines, lack of NCDs/Cancer Policy and Action plans resulting in non-standardised service provision, late in the diagnosis or delay in taking prompt appropriate action particularly at peripheral health facility level. The National Cancer Strategy acknowledges the following challenges within the cancer Programming System in Zimbabwe:

- **Lack of programme coordination;** Absence of a fully functional referral systems; and No integration of cancer control services.
- **Funding Constraints:** In Zimbabwe where competition for limited funds is high, cancer has remained low on the agenda. Cancer Prevention and Control Programmes are grossly underfunded with few partnerships in existence to support the programmes.
- **Standard Treatment Guidelines for Cancer:** The guidelines for cancer management “Oncology in Zimbabwe” is long outdated having been formulated and published in 1992, therefore management of cancer is not standardized with differing management protocols and guidelines at different levels of the service delivery system.

The Number of Children that have been assisted by Kidzcan is affected by proximity, with those communities closer to Harare benefiting the most, compared to those in Matabeleland North and Matabeleland South (which are more than 800 km) benefitting less. The provinces with high numbers are within a 250 km radius from Harare, as shown in the diagram below:

### Provinces



The number of Children assisted with cancer management services

The aforementioned challenges among many, impact on the treatment outcomes of children with cancer. The late detection, late referral, lack of transport services, cost associated with transport has created a huge barrier to the access to services. Only children that are not critically ill can use public transport to and fro. However, the very critically ill children, either do not come for services and they die at home with poor or no pain management or control.

Kidzcan has therefore, made a commitment that every child has a right to health, a right to life and a right to choice of treatment. Therefore, Kidzcan will see to it that, ***the children with cancer know that they matter to the last moment of their life, and we will do all that we can, not to let the die peacefully but to make sure they live until they die.***



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