

The pressing business of caring for orphans.

Mavis puts her ironing skills to work in the battle against AIDS

FOR years Mavis Buwa worked tirelessly in her native Zimbabwe the country, Mavis to provide shelter and education for children orphaned by AIDS. But when she was forced to flee the country, Mavis was determined those left behind. Lucy Crossley finds out how Mavis is continuing to help Zimbabwe's orphans with the aid of a trusty iron and a feather duster.

What does FAHPA do?



Helping hand: Mavis Buwa

MAVIS Is raising money for the Faith and Health Promotion Association (FAHPA) which help fight HIV and AIDS in Africa and Europe.

As well as supplying food and school fees for orphans, FAHPA provides support and advice for those living with or affected by HIV and AIDS.

The charity works with communities in Zimbabwe on sustainable projects to provide food and help alleviate poverty.

FAHPA depends on fundraising and donations.

Mavis, who founded the organisation, said: "I wish people could help us reach our target of building a proper home for the children and help support them within their own communities."

For details or to contact Ms Buwa visit www.fahpa.org.uk

For many people ironing is one of those pesky chores that we try and avoid at all costs. But one "ironing angel" is using her skills with crumpled laundry to help provide education, food and shelter for orphans in Zimbabwe. Since she arrived in Britain in 2001, Mavis Buwa has been spending her spare time cleaning homes and ironing clothes to help raise money

for her charity Faith and Health Pro-motion Association (FAHPA), which funds an orphanage in the village of Chiveso in Bindura, Zimbabwe. Mavis, 49, said: "I had a job as a support worker, and I found it difficult to say, 'I'm looking for money for school fees for the orphans'.

"I started saying to people 'If you have cleaning or ironing, I can do it if you donate'. I can provide a service for people and all the money I make goes towards the project in Zimbabwe."

Along with other women in her village, in 1996 Mavis started helping orphans who had lost their parents to AIDS. The women clubbed together, taking jobs to pay for food, education and homes for the children and their grandparents.

Mavis, of Holland Road, Oxted, said: "There had been many deaths in the village, and I said to the other women 'we need to support each other'. "My husband had died and I had no one to support me.

"Life was hard for us but we helped each other. Whatever we had we would put together; we could talk to each other and we decided we had to do whatever we could to support the children."

Using 80,000 handmade bricks, basic tools and no machinery, Mavis preschool for children in the village and soon attracted the attention of charitable organisations who wanted to help with the project. But in 2000,

because of her work with white charity workers, Mavis was forced to leave the orphanage and her own four children to escape persecution by the Zimbabwean government. "It was so hard for me to leave my children, but I had no choice."

Mavis now balances her job and her cleaning and ironing duties with studying for a degree in social enterprise at the University of East London, which she is due to complete in May. She also, almost single-handedly, runs the charity from the UK and is constantly in touch with the orphanage, which has helped about 500 children.

Mavis said: "I don't find it too hard to fit everything in. "Cleaning is not difficult for me, I used to walk 25km with a bucket of water on my head to get food before coming back and cooking for the children.

"Now I do not feel like I am busy. I have to do it so these children can live like any other children."



Support: Just a few of the 500 orphans who have been helped by Mavis Buwa and FAHPA.