



The Joining Forces Coalition in Zimbabwe (JFCZ) joins the Government of Zimbabwe, fellow Zimbabweans, partners and most importantly, children across the continent in commemorating the 2026 Day of the African Child.

This year's theme *'Ensuring universal access to water, sanitation, and hygiene for every child in Africa!* speaks directly to the daily lived realities of millions of children across Zimbabwe. Safe water and sanitation are not luxuries; they are the foundation for a child's survival, health, education and dignity. When children are denied these fundamental rights, the consequences are profound: adolescent girls miss school during menstruation, children and young people walk long and dangerous distances to collect water, whilst preventable illnesses claim lives.

JFCZ recognises and celebrates the significant progress Zimbabwe has made. According to the Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey (ZDHS 2023–2024), 72% of households have access to at least basic drinking water, 75% safely manage excreta, and 46% have access to at least basic sanitation services. This progress reflects commitment and investment that deserves acknowledgement.

However, gaps that require continued collective action are still visible. For instance, the same survey shows that open defecation is still practised by 17% of the population; access to adequate sanitation in rural areas stands at 61%, compared to 96% in urban areas; and children in Matabeleland North face some of the lowest sanitation coverage in the country at 36%. These disparities fall heaviest on children, particularly those in rural and marginalised communities.

## Our Call to Action

On this Day of the African Child, children working with the JFCZ, respectfully call on the Government of Zimbabwe, local authorities, development partners and all stakeholders to:

1. **Prioritise children's voices** by ensuring that children and communities are meaningfully consulted in planning and decision-making regarding water and sanitation and hygiene services.
2. **Direct investment to those left behind** through expanding WASH access in rural and marginalised areas with a particular focus on children and adolescent girls.
3. **Treat WASH as a children's rights and development priority** through investing in integrated, climate-resilient and equitable WASH systems, recognising that this is not merely an infrastructure issue but a matter of child survival and wellbeing.

As we mark this important day, JFCZ reaffirms our collective commitment to working alongside the Government of Zimbabwe, children, communities, and development partners toward a Zimbabwe where every child, regardless of where they live, enjoys their right to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, and where no child is left behind.