**Report on the fire at Mary Ward Children’s Home**

Amaveni, 08 June 2012

**Dear Friends and Supporters,**

First we want to thank you from our hearts for the great love and support in your reactions on the devastating fire that destroyed the fourth house of our Children’s Home on Monday night (28th May 2012) and the loss of our dear 9 year-old boy Aaron and the injury of our 17 year-old Takudzwa. Thank you so much for all your prayers, your immediate help and your condolences. You give us hope and the security not to be alone in this disaster.

We want to share with you the happenings and inform you on the current state at Mary Ward Children’s Home.

It is not yet sure what exactly caused the fire, but it is likely to be an electrical fault in the ceiling/ upper part of the boy’s room in the fourth house. None of the boys witnessed the start of the fire which must have been after 10pm; they only woke up from the smoke. One of the boys immediately ran out of the room to wake up the mother who acted rapidly and smashed a window to lift out the babies. One of the big boys tried to extinguish the fire but the smoke and heat increased so quickly that he decided to save the other boys. Our disabled boy Takudzwa had problems to move and his clothing was already inflamed when he was rescued by the help of his brave elder brother who risked his life for the others.

When most of the children from fourth house were outside, the staff started counting them and realised that one boy was missing. The bigger boys tried to get inside the house and search for him, but the heat and smoke was already too much. At the same time people who had come from the location said that they had seen a boy from the home running in the streets of Amaveni. This gave us hope that Aaron was secure and not in the house. The police came and searched the whole location. Unfortunately the fire brigades from Kwekwe came so late that half the house was already burned. Their first attempt to extinguish the fire failed because they did not bring enough water. They went back to fetch more water and brought another private fire brigade. Together they finally managed to extinguish the fire. Concurrently people from the location were also trying to help by bringing water in buckets, but they could not do much. When the fire was finally extinguished, policemen went inside the house and sadly found the remains of Aaron. Takudzwa was brought to Kwekwe General Hospital. The upper layer of his skin on head, hands and shoulders was burnt and he has to suffer great pains. But he is improving and the hospital staff says he might have to stay for only two weeks.

The whole Mary Ward Children’s Home family is shocked and it is hard to understand what actually happened. After two nights of waking and praying for Aaron we had a beautiful funeral. So many people from the location and friends of the home as well as classmates came to mourn with us and to celebrate that Aaron is now in heaven.

Two emergency Advisory Board Meetings and the consultation of several builders brought the result that the structure of the house is still alright and it can be renovated. Thanks to the great help of some board members, the burnt roof and rubble were already removed and we got quotations for the probable cost of the repairs. Approximately US$ 40.000 will be required to reconstruct the house as it was. Please find the estimated figures attached. We will embark on the renovations as soon as possible and also further steps to ensure fire security for the whole place will be taken. The Social Services has started to offer counseling to the children and step by step we are trying to go back to normal.

Again, thank you for all your help, support and prayers! May the good Lord bless you abundantly!

**Sr. Mercy Shumbamhini CJ (Regional Leader) and Sr. Mary Chironga CJ (Director) with the whole Children’s Home Family**