

**The Salvation Army
International Headquarters
Statement regarding Howard Hospital, Zimbabwe with an updated Q&A**

Press Statement released on 26 October

Over recent weeks a number of allegations have been made concerning the administration of donated funds and goods at Howard Hospital, Zimbabwe. In response, Salvation Army leaders sent a fact-finding team to Zimbabwe with a remit to examine the processing and use of donations to the hospital and to report to the Chief of the Staff as soon as was practicable.

The team (comprising three qualified officers – two from International Headquarters, London and one from Canada) have presented their findings. The Salvation Army is able to report that

- there is no sign that donated funds have been diverted from their original purpose
- donated goods, falsely reported to have gone missing, are all accounted for

At the same time, International Health Services Co-ordinator, Major (Dr) Eirwen Pallant, conducted a clinical review reporting that while some services had declined basic medical services were still available. The former Chief Medical Officer at the hospital, Captain (Dr) Paul Thistle is in the process of receiving a new appointment in his home territory of Canada.

Speaking on behalf of International Headquarters Commissioner Amos Makina, himself a Zimbabwean, states that ‘any allegations of wrongdoing on the part of Territorial Commander Vinece Chigariro are proven to be unfounded. The Commissioner has not used donated funds for personal use or for the day to day running of Zimbabwe Territorial Headquarters.’

The Salvation Army is pleased to confirm that the decision to appoint the present head of the Salvation Army in Zimbabwe, Commissioner Vinece Chigariro, as leader in the Kenya East Territory, was taken some months before any concerns about the Howard Hospital were raised. These matters are not related. Commissioner Barry C. Swanson, Chief of the Staff, said: “Commissioner Chigariro has the background and experience to be the leader of one of the largest territories in the Salvation Army, Kenya East, and we are praying for God’s blessing on her ministry there”.

Howard Hospital is highly valued by the Salvation Army which remains committed to the continuing development of health services in that community.

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Transcript of the press conference in Harare by Major Dean Pallant, Under Secretary for Programme Resources and International Health Services Coordinator on 26 October 2012

Who will be taking over from Commissioner Chigariro and also Dr Thistle?

Commissioner Henry Nyagah is taking over from Commissioner Chigariro. He is a Kenyan and he is currently in Malawi. I think it would help if I explain that on the day when Commissioner Chigariro’s appointment was announced, the General of The Salvation Army moved about 25 of the senior leaders around the world. So the leader from Uganda is coming to Malawi, the leader from Malawi is coming to Zimbabwe and the leader from Zimbabwe is going to Kenya East. The leaders in UK, New York, Norway and Finland have all changed so this was a big change of leaders.

So the changes do not affect Commissioner Chigariro only?

Absolutely!

And Dr Thistle's successor?

We are in the process of the appointment of a new Chief Medical Officer at Howard Hospital. At the moment we have an acting Chief Medical Officer who is a very well qualified Zimbabwean doctor, Dr Aaron Museka. We have full confidence in the two Zimbabwean doctors who are there but we realise they need some support as well. The person we have in mind is very well qualified but I am not in a position to release the name just yet because we are in the process of his registration and visa. But we hope he will be in place very soon.

What were the reasons for Dr Thistle leaving?

Dr Thistle is a Salvation Army officer so his title is Captain (Dr) Paul Thistle. Salvation Army officers are regularly transferred. It is rare to stay more than five years especially in your first appointment. The Thistles have only known Howard Hospital – they have been there for 17 years so the desire is to broaden their experience. They have done an extraordinary job at an extraordinary time and we wanted to give them the opportunity to develop their skills in other places. It is also an opportunity for Howard Hospital to receive some new leadership and that is the way our appointment systems work – we move people.

But Dr Thistle has such commitment from the people at Howard. Could you not stop the transfer?

We understand the level of support and we appreciate that Dr Thistle has been a much loved doctor. But the Salvation Army system is to move officers around so it was a normal process. We understand the concern of the community because they do not know what is happening next but we can assure them that The Salvation Army has been in Chiweshe right back to the 1920s. We are there and we will be improving our services at Howard Hospital. So we can give these assurances to the community at Chiweshe.

So you can assure the people of Chiweshe that Howard Hospital will be the same even after Dr Thistle's departure?

That is our strong desire. There is strong support for Howard Hospital around the world and we will be doing everything we can. In fact the purpose for our visit is to work on the completion of the new Howard Hospital and we are strongly hoping that the new hospital will be finished by the end of 2013.

Can you please comment on allegations that Dr Thistle's leaving might have been politically motivated?

It is not true. The move of Dr Thistle has been discussed at Salvation Army International Headquarters for more than two years. We are always looking at our personnel – how to develop them, how to give them a wider experience. I can assure you that there has been no political interference in this matter. This is an internal Salvation Army matter. We regret all the speculation but the allegations were made and we had to investigate them. There has been this time while we have been doing our investigations but now we are able to report back to you today that there is no indication of political interference; no indication of financial misappropriation.

We also understand there were a number of projects that Dr Thistle was undertaking at Howard – the Tauriro Clinic particularly on HIV/AIDS. Whoever is coming will he take up and continue these projects?

Yes, The Salvation Army is very committed community projects. Our international strategy is for primary health care so the commitment to the Tauriro Clinic and the ARV programme is absolutely there. We can report that the clinical review showed that we have all the drugs for ARV; that patients can receive those and there will be a continuity of care. We encourage everyone who has

been registered with HH for their ARVs to continue to come because it is very important that they maintain their clinical regime.

On other projects in the community, we are aware that we have had funding from USAID for children at school and every indication is that this is continuing. Projects were not really with Dr Thistle. The projects were with The Salvation Army. I think that is a very important distinction to make. The projects are with The Salvation Army and The Salvation Army is committed to the people of Chiweshi like we have been since the 1920s.

We hear there was also this issue about a breakdown of an X-ray at Howard and people were being ferried to Concession?

Running hospitals is complicated. I have done it for 4 years. Often we struggle with the breakdown of equipment and Howard Hospital does need funding. It is not in a good financial position. Long before Dr Thistle left we have some large bills that we are managing but what I can tell you is the reason we have been coming here on this visit particularly is that we have a large project to complete the new hospital, bring in some equipment. I was discussing just yesterday with some donors about bringing new equipment for HH. There will be breakdowns and problems – that is normal in hospitals but we want better quality. (At the end of the news conference, Major (Dr) Eirwen Pallant confirmed that the x-ray machine has been fixed and that there are films on site so everything is now in order in respect of x-ray machines)

I understand the allegations of donated goods were unearthed by Dr Thistle, now that your audit reports have proved otherwise are you going to take any disciplinary action against Dr Thistle over meddling and falsehood?

To be fair to Captain Thistle, he has been very careful not to say very much since his move and we have respected his discipline there in not speaking to the media. There have been many others talking – especially from outside of Zimbabwe and much of that information has not been accurate and that has distressed us but because we wanted to investigate this we remained silent, we did our investigation and now we can make our report.

Don't you think The Salvation Army took too long to address this problem since it first came out? Do you think this is why you were not working well with the community there because it took too long? We are supposed to inform the people – perhaps a press conference could have been done locally just to address this issue. You took too long and then it takes a man from outside to come and address it.

It is difficult because the allegations were made against the leader of The Salvation Army in Zimbabwe and it is difficult for her to defend herself. Normally a territory runs itself. The territory will speak itself but because these were very personal allegations against Commissioner Chigariro it was difficult for her. I refer you to the statement and the comments by Commissioner Makina that 'any allegations of wrongdoing on the part of Territorial Commander Vinece Chigariro are proven to be unfounded.' So, yes it has taken time but we had to do a proper audit and it took time to piece all of this together. We wanted to be sure of our facts before we came to report to you.

If the audit report had shown that donated goods were being diverted, what were you going to do? Was Paul Thistle going to remain at Howard Hospital?

Well the facts are that we have discovered there is no sign that the donated funds have been diverted and no misuse of donated goods so that is the situation that we are dealing with. Captain Thistle will not be returning back to Howard Hospital. His appointment is back in Canada and he is under the Canadian Territory. They are Canadian officers. The Thistles are Canadian officers and so they are now reporting to the THQ in Toronto and they are in discussion about their future and we hope they have a very good future with The Salvation Army.

When is he returning?

I am not aware of that information. That is between the Thistles and The Salvation Army in Canada

But he is still in Zimbabwe?

That is my understanding.

The auditors came from The Salvation Army. Some people might say the audit is biased in favour of The Salvation Army. Why did you not use external auditors?

The team was a fact finding team so their task was to find the facts rather than a specifically audited. The Salvation Army is externally audited every year all around the world. We have external audits – so those audit reports are always done. This team was tasked to investigate particular allegations made that we had diverted Canadian funds and goods so that team had to investigate those particular allegations and that is what we are reporting today.

Would you also tell how many senior officers have been moved from Zimbabwe?

The Salvation Army is an international organisation we work in 124 countries around the world so there is often movement of officers. In fact because Zimbabwe is now one of our largest territories with a large number of officers we at International Headquarters are looking for good people all around the world so we have many Zimbabweans serving. We have a Zimbabwean on our international audit team. We have Zimbabweans at our International College for Officers in London training officers from all around the world so we naturally have a movement of officers and we look to Zimbabwe because Zimbabwe produces some excellent Salvation Army officers.

The following question was not asked in the press conference but is being asked by a number of people: Is The Salvation Army claiming there are no problems at Howard Hospital and the financial systems are perfect?

The fact finding team have identified areas where improvements need to be made in our financial systems. There is some evidence of improper accounting at Howard Hospital. However, the critics claimed – with little evidence presented – that international donations for Howard Hospital have been misappropriated. No evidence was identified to support these allegations.

The Salvation Army is not pretending there are no challenges or difficulties at Howard Hospital. These are being faced and Howard Hospital needs every friend at this difficult time. However, we can assure donors that donations sent through official Salvation Army channels are properly managed. Most importantly, we assure the people of the Chiweshe community that The Salvation Army is committed to working with them to improve their quality of life and health.

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