



Zoe Empowers began in 2004, as a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Zimbabwe. Initially, our work consisted of feeding programs, medical services, and other relief activities for orphaned children through schools and churches.

In 2007, Zoe was introduced to a radically new way of empowering orphaned children and youth led families to become self-sufficient. This approach was designed by Epiphanie Mujawimana with a group of Rwandan social workers responding to the 800,000 orphaned children created over 100 days during the 1994 genocide. Epiphanie and her colleagues had grown frustrated with the endless cycles of relief and dependency upon that relief. Instead of asking “what can we do to help these vulnerable children?” Epiphanie and her team asked, “What would these young people need in order to help themselves?” And with that question in mind they designed a three-year, community-based, indigenous led empowerment program, where the participants take the lead in their own journey out of poverty. And it worked beyond belief!

Seeing the effectiveness of Epiphanie’s program, Zoe transitioned out of relief work, and supported Epiphanie in bringing this approach to Kenya in addition to Rwanda, and then to Zimbabwe.

Since 2007, Zoe Empowers has translated the empowerment model across cultures and contexts, impacting more than 150,000 vulnerable children, across eight countries: Kenya, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Liberia, Tanzania, Mozambique, and India. Each program within the Zoe network is locally-owned and operated, with support from a nimble U.S.-based team.