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Gilda Alves explains to village communities how they should wash their hands to prevent the further spread of cholera in Mozambique. *rf*

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SolidarMed improves healthcare for more than 3 million people in rural Africa and in Hyderabad, India. We systematically improve medical services and enhance local expertise through basic and further training. Our projects are developed in close collaboration with local partners, and supported by our health experts on the ground. As a Swiss non-profit organisation with the Zewo seal, SolidarMed conducts true and fair financial reporting, provides transparent information and has appropriate controls in place. **SolidarMed is supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, which is part of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA.**



Community-borne solutions



Arturo Silva
Technical Director
Mozambique

Mozambique – in particular the Cabo Delgado province – has faced a series of critical events in recent years. They include economic crises, Cyclone Kenneth, droughts, and an ongoing conflict in the northern part of the province. This has resulted in significant movements of population from the north to the southern districts. In addition, the current rainy season coupled with a lack of hygiene has aggravated the spread of water-borne diseases, including cholera. This situation is placing a huge burden on the already weakened and overstretched health system in these rural areas. Since last December, several districts in the Cabo Delgado province in northern Mozambique where SolidarMed operates have been hit by a cholera outbreak. SolidarMed is making every effort to control this outbreak. Improved water and wastewater infrastructure, enhanced health literacy in the population, and access to rapid diagnosis and appropriate treatment are urgently needed.

In this critical situation, SolidarMed recognises that village communities are an integral part of the health system. The extent to which cholera spreads significantly depends on how people behave: handwashing, use of latrines, and the cleanliness of public waterholes. The importance of systematic involvement of the public as a key element in successfully controlling cholera cannot be emphasised highly enough.

This involves various aspects: by promoting equality of opportunity, we can improve health across the board and reduce inequalities. Village communities also play a key role in efficient resource allocation and in timely action. The trust

between volunteers and health authorities fosters effective collaboration. This is why SolidarMed is running a project based on activities in communities that seeks to get local people involved in the prevention of diarrhoeal diseases.

SolidarMed is bolstering the participation of village communities through the involvement of teams of volunteers and medically-trained professionals. To promote sustainability and resilience in the communities, it is important that these teams are made up of local people who work closely with local authorities. This cooperative approach increases acceptance, ensures that solutions are in keeping with the local setup, and that they come from communities themselves. The teams act as bridges between village communities and healthcare facilities. Their local knowledge and contacts allow them to design preventive and curative measures in a way that empowers local people. Through their work alongside community leaders and authorities, they promote trust and inclusion. Solutions are developed collaboratively, drawing on community resources. ■



▲ Rosalina Salimane (pink blouse) listens to trained volunteer André Paia (right) as he explains how people should wash their hands. *rf*

From the region, for the region

In Mozambique, trained volunteers build a bridge between the public and the health system. Because they enjoy greater trust and credibility, they are able to raise awareness about hygiene measures and help control the spread of cholera.

Mozambique “Today I learned how to wash my hands thoroughly with soap and water. If I don’t have any soap, I can use ash,” says Rosalina Salimane. The 60-year-old lives in Metoro, a town in the Cabo Delgado province in northeast Mozambique. Rosalina had a visit from one of the trained volunteers who as part of SolidarMed’s current cholera project go from door to door to educate people about hygiene measures to help contain the cholera outbreak which has

been raging since last December. She also knows that if people have diarrhoea, they should seek medical attention.

Casimiro Sanli was also visited by one of the volunteers: “Today they showed me how to treat water with Certeza, a disinfectant, and how to wash my hands properly with soap. They also showed me how to open the pit to dispose of rubbish and how to cover the latrine.”



Mozambique	
Population:	32.9 million
Poverty headcount rate (under 2.15 \$/day):	74.4%
Life expectancy:	59 years

Source: World Bank



▲ Casimiro Sanli studies the washing instructions. rf

He often attends the presentations by volunteers as he believes it is important that people are aware of how diarrhoeal diseases can be prevented. “Many people still don’t understand it very well,” he says. He adds that there have been cases of cholera in his neighbourhood where people have needed hospital treatment.

Twenty-six-year-old André Paia lives in the same neighbourhood as Rosalina Salimane and Casimiro Sanli and is one of the trained volunteers. In reference to his role as a trained volunteer, André Paia says: “The fact that I don’t work for a company actually motivated me to get involved. I’m fighting for the welfare of society.” The young man has been involved since January. “Thanks to the information I give people, they know they need to go to hospital to seek treatment,” he explains. André Paia gives talks on hygiene practices and hands out equipment such as hand sanitiser and water disinfectant. Even if not everyone he talks to wants to implement his tips, he is proud of his work: “I’m really happy that I can play a part in improving the community.”

Even in Switzerland, there is scepticism and sometimes mistrust towards the authorities, as became clear recently during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the current cholera outbreak in Mozambique, SolidarMed is working with the local organisation Wiwanana. They believe in the method of using

trained volunteers to raise public awareness. The volunteers act as bridge builders between village communities and the health authorities. Their local knowledge and contacts mean they can build trust and empower the local population. They are therefore a key part of the health system and play an important role in containing the cholera outbreak.

“In our projects, one of the things we aim to do is change people’s behaviour. This isn’t possible if you don’t engage with communities first. For example, people need to understand that a hospital is better equipped or offers

Cholera

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cholera is an acute diarrhoeal disease that can kill within hours if left untreated. The disease mainly affects people with inadequate access to safe water and basic sanitation as it is transmitted through food and water contaminated with the vibrio cholera bacterium. WHO estimates that up to four million people contract cholera every year, of whom 143,000 die. Mild cases can be treated with a rehydration solution, while severe cases need intravenous fluids and antibiotics.

Cholera originally came from the Ganges delta in India and spread throughout the world in the 19th century. The first six pandemics killed millions of people. The current seventh pandemic started in 1961. Switzerland was also affected by cholera in the 19th century. The disease was controlled through improved sanitation in cities in the late 19th century.



▲ André Paia is proud of his work as a volunteer. rf

In the spotlight

new services,” explains Ilse van Roy, head of programmes at SolidarMed. For example, villagers in the project regions in Lesotho and Tanzania are informed in advance about when the mobile clinic will be in the village so that they can take advantage of the

“We teach people to keep their homes clean and to thoroughly wash their dishes, their hands and fruit.”

Assane Marcelo,
trained volunteer

opportunity. “This is why our cooperation with Wiwanana in Mozambique is so important. The local population doesn’t trust the authorities. As the volunteers come from the same neighbourhood, understand the context and speak the same language, local people trust them,” explains van Roy.

Gilda Alves highlights the importance of the role played by trained volun-

teers. The 32-year-old has seen how things have improved in her own community: “We’ve changed a lot. Before, some people didn’t have a latrine, now they do. There are now waste disposal sites and handwashing stations and people use hand sanitiser.” She herself had cholera in 2019 and needed hospital treatment. Now she can help those affected. “I visited the mother of a sick child and advised her to go to a health centre,” she explains. But before setting off with her child, Gilda Alves advised the mother to boil water and add a spoonful of sugar and a pinch of salt and to give the mixture to her child if they got diarrhoea on the journey. “The child has now made a full recovery,” she says.

Assane Marcelo is pleased with the response from local people. “We teach people to keep their homes clean, and to wash dishes, their hands, and fruit,” explains the 30-year-old volunteer. He says he does the job because he wants to help people and that people understand that the information he



▲ Gilda Alves already had cholera herself, so she knows what she’s talking about. *rf*

gives them is important to their health. The fact that he himself had to be treated in hospital for cholera may help build trust when talking to local populations. Because, as volunteer André Paia explains, the main problem in communities is misinformation. “People can misunderstand and misinterpret information that they pass on to others. We therefore play a really important role in village communities,” he says. To continue to help people stay healthy in the future, he hopes that SolidarMed will always be able to provide sufficient hygiene equipment so that cholera and other diseases that spread through poor hygiene can be contained. ■ *ne*



▲ Assane Marcelo works as a volunteer to help people. *rf*

 solidarmed.ch/en/mozambique



Mozambique – the displaced are forced to flee again

The southern African country of Mozambique remains in turmoil. Conflicts have been rumbling on since 2017, escalating in mid-2020. At the time, more than half a million people were displaced. Following a period of calm, there were renewed attacks in 2022, which in turn caused thousands of people to flee their homes. Besides this and the Covid-19 pandemic, Mozambique was also hit by a cyclone, causing devastating destruction. These factors, plus an already weakened health system, which has been stretched to breaking point by the high number of displaced people, are causing widespread misery and suffering.

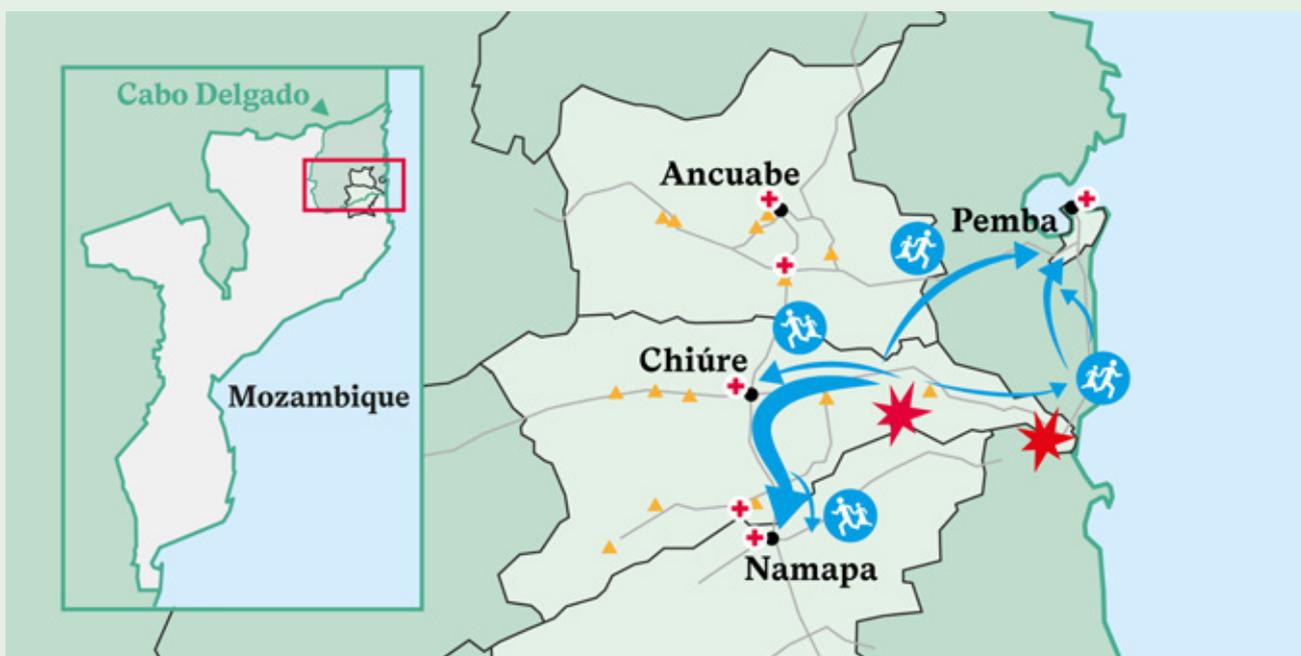
The attacks by non-state armed groups flared up again in late 2023, including in the regions where SolidarMed operates – and precisely where it is implementing measures to control the cholera outbreak. In the space of a few weeks, 90,000 people were again displaced, some of whom sought shelter in refugee camps. People who had previously fled to the regions of Macomia, Chiúre, Mecúfi, Muidumbe and Mocímboa da Praia are being forced to flee again. The displacement of many people within the country creates conditions that favour/promote the spread of diseases like cholera.

Particularly in view of this critical situation, SolidarMed recognises village communities as a key part of the

health system and one that can determine the extent to which the disease spreads. Coordinating measures in communities between all stakeholders, preventing duplication, and taking an integrated approach are crucial. In these very poor regions there is a lack of food, shelter, and access to essential information and health-care. To support people on the ground, SolidarMed is working with the health authorities. The flexible aid is constantly being adapted to current needs and comprises a mobile health team and outpatient prevention in the Chiúre region, for example. In Namapa, the health centre is being assisted through the provision of drugs and medical supplies. SolidarMed has also provided the district hospital with a tent as many internally displaced people had to wait for treatment in the open air. Through these measures, SolidarMed is helping improve healthcare for people in the two regions.

Information on the current situation in Mozambique:

 solidarmed.ch/en/not-mosambik



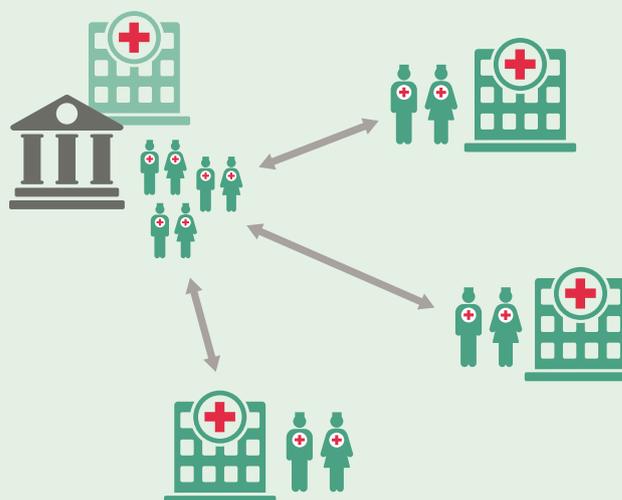
From prototype to nationwide model

Zambia The population of Zambia is suffering due to a shortage of health workers. Nurses and midwives in particular are needed to carry out prevention work, to treat diseases such as malaria and HIV, and to treat patients. In 2010 the country had only seven nurses per 10,000 population; in Switzerland that figure was 149. To counter the health worker shortage, SolidarMed launched a pilot project on the training of health workers in 2015.

Over a three-year period, a concept on decentralised, practical training of nurses was developed in rural Zambia in collaboration with St. Luke's College of Nursing in the Rufunsa district, 180 kilometres from the capital Lusaka. Traditionally, every college has an affiliated hospital where students complete their practical training. ■ ne

Decentralised model

The decentralised model allows students to attend theoretical and practical lessons. Half of the students at a nursing college rotate during their training to different affiliated nursing colleges. This enables the colleges to train more students overall. In addition, the rotation enables students to gain broader experience as the clinical cases they encounter can vary widely depending on geographical conditions (e.g. malaria, crocodile bites, road accidents).



Pilot project

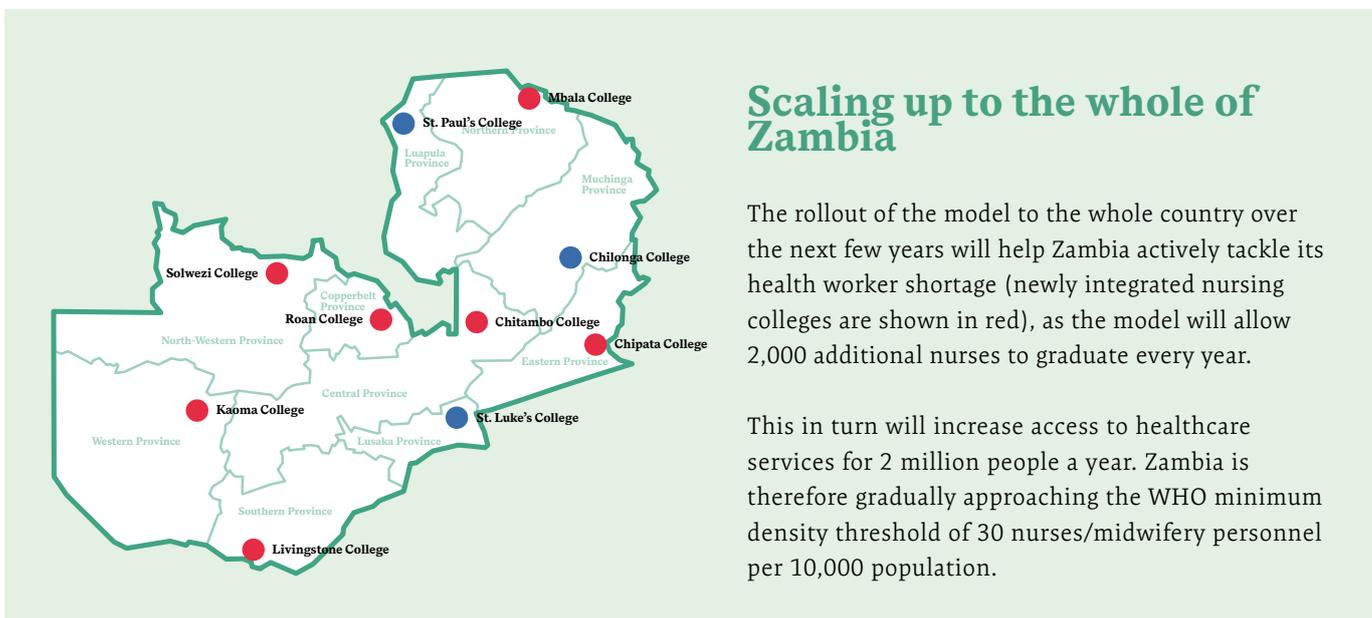
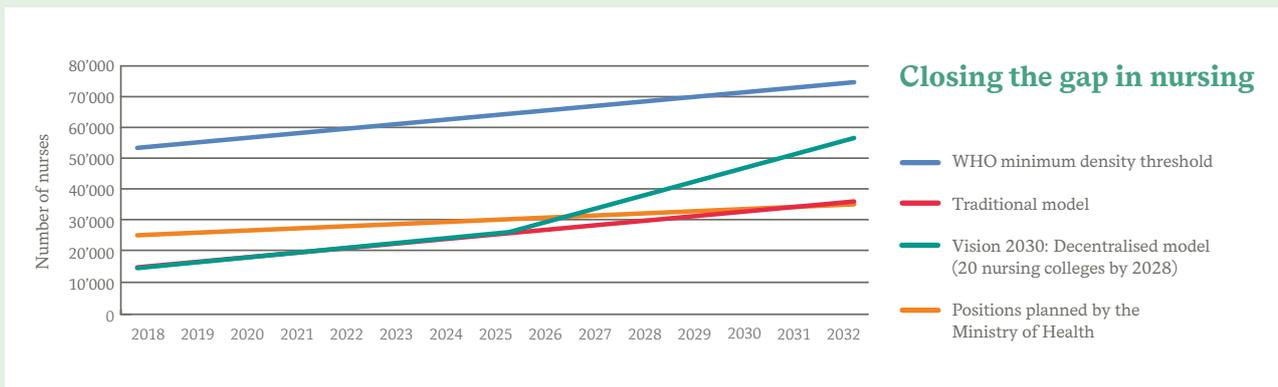
Following the success of the pilot phase at St. Luke's College of Nursing in Mpanshya, SolidarMed subsequently added St. Paul's College of Nursing and Midwifery and Chilonga School of Nursing (shown in blue on the map on the right). Students' ability to complete their training also depends on there being adequate accommodation, good transport connections, and continuing education offerings for students. In order to ensure that these requirements are met, SolidarMed is working with the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Zambia. The three nursing colleges have a total of 13 decentralised locations, which provide healthcare to around three million people in the project areas across the three provinces.

Preparation for nationwide rollout

After the Ministry of Health and the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Zambia praised the project as a valuable innovation for the training of nurses in Zambia, the project moved to phase three: rolling the successful model out across the whole country. To be able to implement this, the nursing colleges received support in terms of infrastructure, management and continuing education for managers. Optimisation of the model includes introducing the '3 in 1' training, where nurses, midwives and community health workers can be trained at the same time.

Now comes the next phase of the project: scaling the successful model up to national level. Seven additional colleges are adopting the decentralised model. This

phase is about stepping up cooperation with various stakeholder groups regarding training material, quality assurance and tools. At the same time, teachers are being trained, infrastructure requirements clarified, and digital learning rolled out and supported. Guidelines are also being drawn up to ensure training quality. This not only ensures that the project will be effective, but also that it will be sustainable, because the aim is not only to increase the number of students, but also the number of successful graduates. The project receives substantial support from the Hilti Foundation Liechtenstein and Liechtenstein Development Service.



New partnerships, relevant projects



From mid-May Eliane Kiener will take over as managing director of SolidarMed, while previous MD Jochen Ehmer will take on a new role within the organisation as head of medicine and public health. We sat down with them to talk about their new roles.

Jochen Ehmer, Eliane Kiener, SolidarMed is a non-profit organisation working in development cooperation in healthcare. What does SolidarMed mean to you?

Jochen Ehmer: SolidarMed has made great progress in the last 20 years. We now work with a wide variety of

different partners: from hospitals, health authorities and ministries, to local organisations, universities and private sector actors. SolidarMed is a modern and agile organisation that helps improve people's health in difficult or neglected contexts and makes health systems more efficient in the long term.

Eliane Kiener: What sets SolidarMed apart in my eyes is its resolute focus on improving equitable access to basic primary healthcare for all, its efforts to establish local partnerships on an equal footing, and its great capacity for innovation. I also find the organisation's marked ability to evolve and adapt really impressive. In the almost

100 years since its foundation, SolidarMed has developed to become a well-placed and recognised organisation with a great deal of expertise.

What do you think the future holds for SolidarMed?

E.K.: The organisation should continue to grow, but in a healthy way. The saturated donations market and the cutting of public funds are having a major influence on financial stability and mandate fulfilment. New, longer-term approaches based on partnership

“What sets SolidarMed apart in my eyes is its resolute focus on improving equitable access to basic primary health-care for all.”

Eliane Kiener,
new managing director
of SolidarMed

and forms of collaboration are set to become increasingly important to reduce dependencies.

In this context it is also important to step up investment in local capacity building.

J.E.: SolidarMed is a specialist organisation. We will continue to hone our

skills, in the South and in the North. This will allow us to remain relevant going forward and to offer true added value. At the same time, a growing number of partner countries are affected by crises, climate impacts and wars. To show solidarity in these settings too, expertise is needed on operating in fragile contexts. This is where we can get even better.

There is now a head of medicine and public health at SolidarMed. Why was that necessary?

J.E.: The demands of our partners and donors are growing – and that’s a good thing. We therefore need to ensure that as many employees as possible have very good knowledge of the relevant topics, ranging from technical aspects such as measuring viral loads and modern tuberculosis diagnostics to epidemiology, clinical research, health social sciences and approaches from the private sector. I feel extremely privileged to be able to stay at SolidarMed and to bring my medical expertise to a new role. And I’m very much looking forward to working with Eliane.

E.K.: This setup is a luxury and can generate real added value. I’m really happy that Jochen’s experience and expertise are staying in the organisation and that this will allow us to ensure a smooth transition. Thanks to

his expertise and my longstanding experience in international develop-

“I feel extremely privileged to be able to stay at SolidarMed and to bring my medical expertise to a new role.”

Jochen Ehmer,
Head of medicine and public health
SolidarMed

ment cooperation, we can work together in a very complementary way.

J.E.: It’s also interesting for our partners in the South and North if an organisation like SolidarMed can manage a change like this without it being disruptive. We’re ensuring continuity while bringing in fresh ideas. This wouldn’t be possible without our forward-thinking Board of Directors. ■ *ne*

Eliane Kiener

Eliane Kiener will take over as managing director of SolidarMed in mid-May. The 52-year-old lawyer spent over 13 years at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in various roles and countries, latterly as deputy head of the SDC’s Multilateral Affairs Division. As delegate at Switzerland’s permanent mission to the UN in New York, she was also responsible for the field of global health. The mother of two loves spending time in the mountains, whatever the time of year – skiing, cycling or hiking.

Jochen Ehmer

Since the specialist in general and tropical medicine became SolidarMed country director in Mozambique in 2004, he has held various roles within the organisation. Most recently he was managing director, helping to drive strong growth across the organisation. The public health expert is passionate about global health and is very interested in research and evidence-based interventions. He is staying at SolidarMed and taking up the role of head of medicine and public health. In his free time the father of two enjoys tennis, piano, magic tricks, hiking and skiing.

Information and warm blankets



▲ The blankets keep patients warm during the cooler months of the year. *pma*

Kenya The primary goal of the sickle cell event in Butere, organised by SolidarMed and the Don Amolo Memorial Kids Ark (DAMKA), was to debunk the myths and misunderstandings around the disease to make life easier for those affected. Because although the disease is widespread in Kenya, the health services are underfunded and there is public prejudice and a lack of awareness, leading to discrimination and severe psychosocial stress for patients with presumed or diagnosed sickle cell disease. Another key aspect of the event was raising awareness about the importance of blood donation as it helps those affected by the disease. T-shirts and hats were sold to raise money to buy warm blankets for patients during the cold months. Many visitors highlighted the importance of the event. The campaign's success was shown, among other things, by the extensive media coverage and generous donations. ■ *ne*

Medical aids and support for children



▲ Thanks to the new wheelchair Beverly can now go to school. *jn*

Kenya Some of the children suffering from HIV in Butere, Kenya also have physical or mental impairments and live in very poor conditions where even their most basic needs are not met. Some are deaf and mute or paralysed, and most have lost one or both parents. Because of their disability they urgently need specific help, such as medical aids or support to pay school fees or improve their living situation. The implementation of simple measures can effectively and sustainably improve these children's lives, allowing them to participate in society and reach their potential.

SolidarMed has been working in this region since 2015 and supports HIV-positive children and adolescents and their caregivers by providing medical care, running training on HIV, and organising support and guidance to be delivered by social workers.

A specific project component is giving these children the chance of a brighter future. Some need academic support or structural adaptations, for example for wheelchair use. Other things that have made these children's lives easier include a shoe lift, a hip operation, suitable crutches, and a sign language course for a family member. ■ *ne*

Kenya



A space for young people



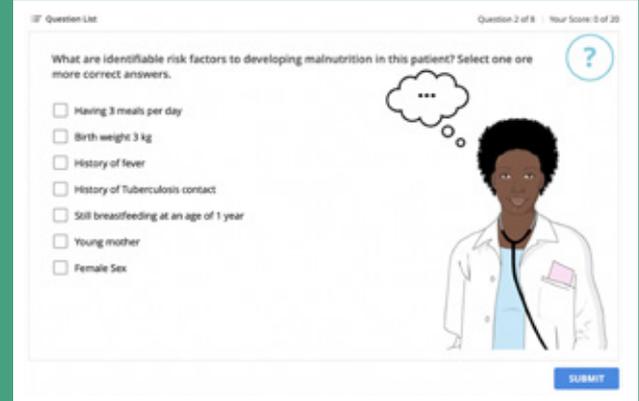
▲ The young people painting their space. *js*

Zimbabwe In a study conducted last year, young people cited the need for youth-friendly spaces in healthcare facilities as their main concern. One such space – known as THIIS (Teen Health Information and Innovation Space) – has now been inaugurated at Bota Health Clinic, in collaboration with SolidarMed. It will provide young people with medical counselling and treatment delivered by specially-trained healthcare professionals. The large space, which is similar to a youth club, will also host information events on health and self-help groups. The teenagers from one of the self-help groups for young mums suggested installing an oven to bake rolls that can then be sold. The proceeds will be used to maintain the building. The young people were involved in the building renovation and subsequently worked with an artist to paint it. They had a great day and there is a possibility of future workshops with the artist. ■ *ne*

Zimbabwe



INSIGHTS FROM RESEARCH*



Effectiveness of virtual patients for medical training

Zambia Given the severe shortage of health workers, innovative training programmes have been developed to bridge this gap. At Levy Mwanawasa Medical University (LMMU) in Zambia, strategies such as web-based and blended learning approaches have been implemented, using virtual patients (VPs) as a means to promote interactive learning. The study aimed to evaluate students’ knowledge acquisition and acceptance of two VP medical topics as a learning tool on a Zambian higher education e-learning platform. The two topics studied were appendicitis and severe acute malnutrition. You can find more details about the study and results here:



www.bit.ly/Virtual-Patients

Other current research involving SolidarMed

Community-based models of care for type 2 diabetes

Overview There is little evidence of care models for people with type 2 diabetes in sub-Saharan Africa, where a substantial portion of care is delivered in communities. Read the scoping review here:



www.bit.ly/Community-based-models

* SolidarMed provides scientific support to all projects and investigates how healthcare can be improved in rural Africa. It works with various partner institutions in this area..

Snapshot

◀ Sixty-seven-year-old Majoalane Mothetho in her yard in the remote village of Kholokoe in northeast Lesotho.

As in Mozambique (see article starting on page 3), people in remote regions of Lesotho also benefit from the engagement of village communities. In Lesotho, community health workers use digital tools to carry out checks and provide treatment for diabetes and high blood pressure in communities.

Meet Majoalane Mothetho and find out about SolidarMed's work in the film. [my](#)



“It’s great having a community health worker in our village. As the clinic is too far away, some of us can’t make it there on foot anymore. The proximity of the local health worker has helped us tremendously and we’re truly grateful.”

Majoalane Mothetho, 67, from Kholokoe in Lesotho [my](#)

Celebrate and do something good

Turning up to an event empty-handed is often a source of embarrassment for guests. But donating to a good cause instead not only benefits the beneficiary organisation, but also guests who are pleased to be able to make a contribution.

“We are lucky that we all actually have enough. And many small contributions add up to a hefty sum,” says Doris Spörri referring to her reasons for donating the proceeds from the sale of the wedding magazine at her daughter’s wedding. The qualified typographer designed the magazine that includes text and photos of guests and sold printed copies of it at the wedding reception. She explained to wedding guests that she intended to donate the money raised.

Doris Spörri had already donated money regularly before: “My aunt was severely mentally disabled and lived in an institution. At birthdays and that sort of thing we often did collections and donated the money to the institution,” she explains. The magazine she created is a nice memory, both for the newlyweds and for guests. For the sale, the mother of the bride made vendor trays featuring the SolidarMed logo and got the bride and groom’s nieces and nephews to sell the magazines. “Everyone gave very generously,” she says. However, Doris Spörri is unaware of the exact amount donated as contributions went straight to the cash box. People also had the option of making a digital payment using Twint. “I feel like people enjoyed making a contribution. Nobody had anything negative to say,” she says.

SolidarMed would be glad to help if you too would like to organise an event donation. You can even tell people about the collection on the invitations. That way, people can make a donation even if they can’t make the event. “If guests enter an intended purpose when they make the payment, SolidarMed can subsequently compile a list of donors for the person organising the event so that the donations can be acknowledged,” explains Lucy Kormann, individual giving manager at SolidarMed. If people would like some SolidarMed giveaways to hand out at the event, we can of course send them information brochures, cards and other merchandise. “We can also provide a collection box or a unique Twint code. That way, guests can make a donation on the spot. We don’t disclose the individual donation amounts though,” explains Kormann.



▲ Doris Spörri with the wedding magazine she used to collect donations. zvg

Conversely, if you would like to make a donation on someone’s behalf as a gift, SolidarMed offers donation certificates. Once a topic has been chosen, the donor receives a certificate, which can then be presented as a gift. “Whatever the event, if you want to make a donation, we can advise you,” explains Lucy Kormann. ■ *ne*

 solidarmed.ch/anlassspenden



If you have any questions,
please contact Lucy Kormann.

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L.kormann@solidarmed.ch



Webinar ‘Cholera in Mozambique’

Several of SolidarMed’s project countries (see article starting on page 4) are currently experiencing renewed cholera outbreaks. At 1pm CEST on Thursday the 6th of June, you can join our webinar on cholera in Mozambique to find out how cholera outbreaks can be prevented, how these outbreaks are linked to climate change – or not, and how SolidarMed is raising public awareness on the ground through trained volunteers. ■ *ne*



▲ Trained volunteer André Paia explains how people should wash their hands to control the spread of cholera in Mozambique. *rf*

Upcoming SolidarMed events:

**Pencil the dates in your diary now.
We look forward to seeing you!**

- 06.06.2024** **Webinar ‘Cholera in Mozambique’**
- 07.09.2024** **Summer event** in SolidarMed’s gardens in Lucerne
- 19.09.2024** **Event on estate planning** (online, with partner organisation DeinAdieu)
- 25.09.2024** **Event on estate planning** (in Zurich, with partner organisation DeinAdieu)
- 11.11.2024** **Event on estate planning** (online, with partner organisation DeinAdieu)

All events are free.

Your donation makes a difference



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