

Moçambique:

Safe childbirth.

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Women: the pillars of the world

Ascension Day – my day off, a day to sleep in. But early in the morning, the phone rings – I should come quickly; there is not enough time to reach the hospital! I rush to a farmstead and find a woman in the pushing stage of labour. Swiftly, we place a mattress on the floor – we need some space and clean towels. I have all the necessary sterile instruments in my medical bag. Everything is ready now – the baby can come. And everything went well! Both mother and baby were doing just fine when the ambulance crew arrived to take them to hospital for further care.

In Switzerland, an unplanned homebirth is an unusual situation – yet in Africa this is a daily occurrence, with critical differences in the environment and hygiene, the level of training and equipment available to birth attendants, the transport facilities and the distances to the next hospital. We have optimised these in our health system – and as a result, hardly any women die whilst giving birth in Switzerland.

SolidarMed supports the health systems of its partners in southern Africa, so that they too can make safe childbirth a reality. And so that expectant mothers in Africa no longer have to live with the fear of dying whilst giving birth. The loss of a mother is particularly grave in Africa, where it is most often the woman who safeguards the survival of her family. She creates the home and is responsible for the care, feeding and often also for the education of the children. It is women who shore up African society.

Together, we can help the women of Africa. Everyone benefits from healthy mothers.

Many thanks for your support!

Dr med Svend Capol, President of SolidarMed

Key

- Hospital
- SolidarMed Office
- Important town
- Political capital



With the MAMA project, SolidarMed improves health protection for women and their babies in the two remote districts of **Chiure** and **Ançuabe**. Around 85 000 women and 70 000 children benefit from this intervention.

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SolidarMed, Obergrundstrasse 97, CH-6005 Luzern, Telefon +41 41 310 66 60, Fax +41 41 310 66 62, www.solidarmed.ch, contact@solidarmed.ch

Editorial team: Silvia Bucher, Benjamin Gross, Joel Meir
Text: Benjamin Gross **Graphic Design:** Silvia Bucher **Translation:** Raphaela Scholz

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Online donations: www.solidarmed.ch

Thank you very much!

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Filomena Ali with her five-day-old twins. The 39-year-old woman has had a number of safe deliveries, thanks to the competent help available at the health centre in Chiúre Velho. This health centre is supported by SolidarMed. *Photo: Dominik Labhardt*

Improved safety for expectant mothers

Pregnancy is not a disease.

Pregnancy is not a disease, yet worldwide, it is nonetheless the second most common cause of death for women. In rural northern Moçambique, the risks are particularly high: competent staff is lacking and health centres are poorly equipped. SolidarMed sensitises the population and makes targeted improvements to health services, so that a birth can be a cause for happiness instead of mourning.

“Eat some of everything you have at home” the midwife Emilia Zacarias advises 15 year old Lucia Joao. To ensure her body receives the nutrients it needs during pregnancy, her diet should be as rich and varied as possible. Not an easy task in an area where there is little to eat apart from maize porridge and manioc. In Moçambique, for the health of their bodies and their babies, pregnant women like Lucia should not avoid any foods.

Valuable ante-natal care

Emilia Zacarias is a trained midwife and responsible for the care and treatment of pregnant women and their babies in the health centre of Chiúre Velho. There is no doctor. Emilia helps the women understand everything better and

shares tips on how pregnant women can keep up their strength even in this resource poor area. To do this, she tackles certain societal myths during ante-natal consultations: “People think that eating sugar cane during pregnancy leads to a difficult birth or that a baby will be born without hair if a pregnant woman eats too many eggs.” These beliefs result in many women unnecessarily missing out on valuable nutrients which are particularly important during pregnancy.

Giving birth without medical support

Generally, rural Moçambicans have only limited basic health knowledge. The reconstruction of the health system after the end of the civil war was incomplete and no-one →



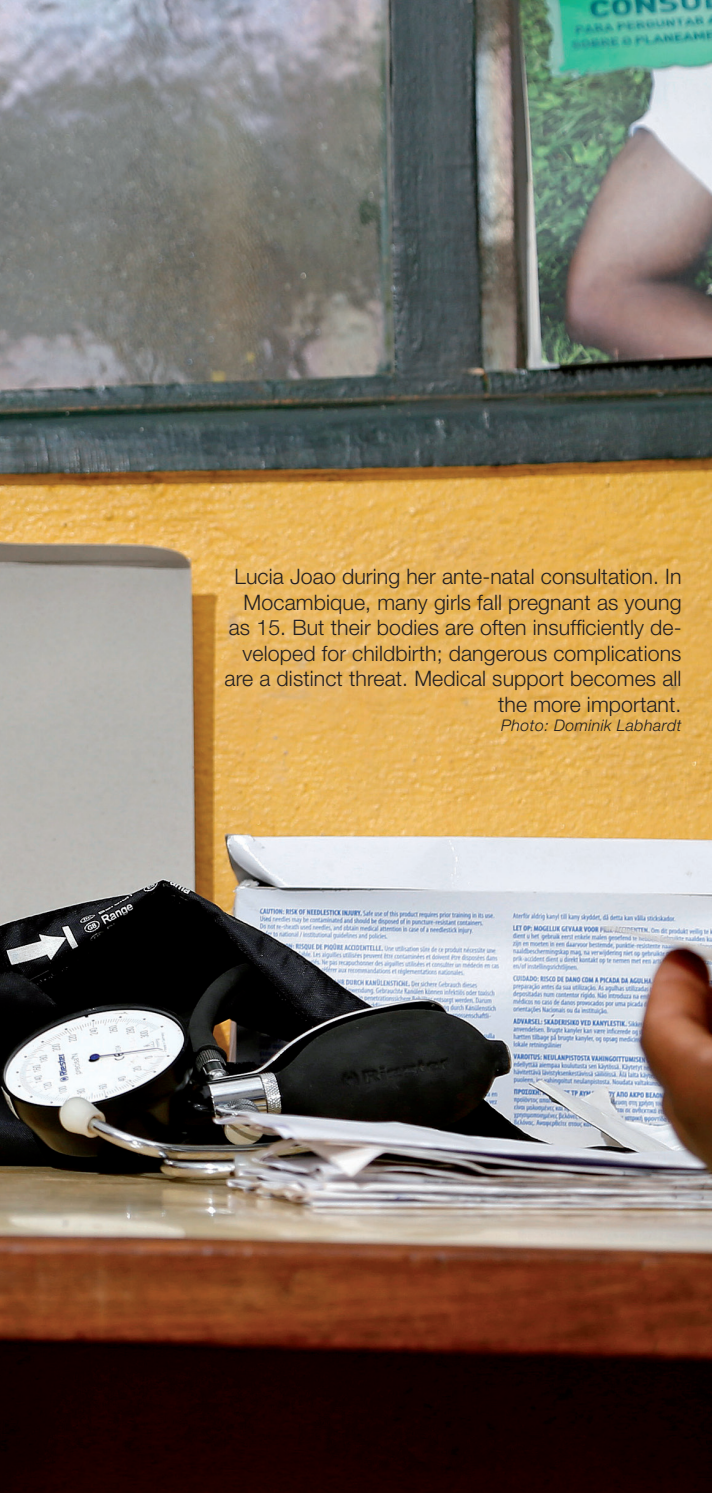
→ gave much thought to the needs of women. Unlike at Chiúre Velho health centre, which SolidarMed supports, in rural Moçambique, perfunctory ante-natal care, insufficient hygiene, missing equipment in the delivery rooms, inadequate post-natal newborn care and a lack of knowledge about gynaecological ailments are facts of daily life. These health service shortcomings result in around half of all women preferring to deliver their child at home – without professional assistance. As a consequence, in this region two women die due to pregnancy or childbirth complications every week.

MAMA for healthy mothers

Against this backdrop, Cabo Delgado's provincial health authorities asked SolidarMed for support. The MAMA

project is the outcome of this cooperation. As part of this project, SolidarMed supports local health staff's efforts in making the population aware of the possible risks surrounding childbirth and in offering medical assistance to women before, during and after delivery. To accomplish this, staff of all 16 health centres in Chiúre and Ancuabe is receiving further training through SolidarMed. SolidarMed is also improving the water and electricity supply and supplementing medical supplies.

Staff can respond effectively during routine and emergency deliveries and so save many lives. Thanks to the MAMA project, every health centre will soon be able to carry out the safe removal of a placenta, resuscitate newborns, treat eclampsia – a life-threatening pregnancy com-



Lucia Joao during her ante-natal consultation. In Mocambique, many girls fall pregnant as young as 15. But their bodies are often insufficiently developed for childbirth; dangerous complications are a distinct threat. Medical support becomes all the more important.
Photo: Dominik Labhardt

How SolidarMed protects mothers and their babies:

Moçambique:

- By improving infrastructure and training nursing staff, the SolidarMed MAMA project enables safe deliveries in all the **16 health centres** of Chiúre and Ancuabe.
- SolidarMed works with traditional birth attendants. These advise women to have a **medically attended birth**. For heavily pregnant women who live far away from the health centre, mother waiting homes allow them to deliver their babies safely.
- At the end of 2012, **27 midwives** will complete their training and begin working.
- **In the villages**, expectant women are advised by women's groups, health committees, community health workers and traditional birth attendants. SolidarMed supports their efforts.
- Thanks to better administration, **the health centre registers mothers** and offers them long-term support. Consumable and medication availability is enhanced.
- In cooperation with the Swiss Tropical Health Institute, SolidarMed collects additional data in order to optimise the **quality of maternal and child health care**.

SolidarMed also supports safe childbirth in Zimbabwe and Tanzania. You can find information about this here: www.solidarmed.ch

→ plication – and carry out a blood transfusion where necessary. These are important preconditions for safe childbirth.

Midwives save lives

SolidarMed is very aware of the fact that technical improvements only make a difference in combination with competent personnel who are able to treat patients effectively. The knowledge and experience of a well-trained midwife like Emilia creates trust. She knows how to make best use of the tools available. Anyone visiting the health centre in Chiúre Velho quickly recognises that Emilia Zacarias has an excellent reputation amongst the pregnant

women present. “I like the people here in Chiúre Velho”, she confirms. “Even though my work concerns their health, I get to know a lot of personal things about the women. I gain a lot from these conversations.”

Her reputation precedes her, which is why even young Lucia listens attentively to the midwife. “Your body is maybe not yet ready for childbirth and if the baby gets stuck, it will become dangerous. If this happens, I can help you”. Now it is up to Lucia to take up the midwife’s offer and to come to the health centre when her labour begins. ■



Students of the nursing school in Pemba during theory classes.
Photo: Benjamin Gross

More midwives for Moçambique. In good hands.

An interview with Andre Mponda, the Director of Education at Pemba nursing school.

Nursing staff of most health centres only have basic training. In coordination with the provincial authorities of Cabo Delgado, SolidarMed¹ is making it possible for 27 nurses to receive additional training as midwives.

What is the biggest challenge for a midwife in rural Moçambique?

Andre Mponda: Childbirth is childbirth, whether in Switzerland or in Moçambique. This is why our training is focussed, first and foremost, on creating a sound basis of theoretical knowledge and acquiring assured practical skills.

But are there nonetheless differences?

Certainly. A midwife in a remote health centre is on her own from her first working day. She has to know what to do from her very first delivery. This is why give particular weight to practical training and learning the most important practical skills during this two-year course.

How does this affect the training?

The theory is learnt in modules, and then practiced in models. Early on in their training, students work in health centres for a couple of weeks. Due to the severe lack of staff, students are already actively involved in work during their practical internship. However, whilst still in training they receive the professional support of an experienced colleague.

Where do the midwives work afterwards?

A few will support health personnel in the maternity ward of a larger hospital. As there are only few hospitals, most will work in remote health centres. Directly upon completion of their training, our midwives will often become heads of maternal and child health departments, as there are no doctors available. It is our task to ensure that they are prepared for this responsibility.

Why is SolidarMed's support so important?

The government does not have the funds to train health staff adequately and many nurses are simply overwhelmed by the enormous number of patients. In the near future, thanks to the training course funded by SolidarMed, pregnant women will receive the support they need. Midwives are lacking all over Moçambique, but particularly here in the North. As SolidarMed is funding this training, it is certain that the Ministry of Health will keep the trained midwives here in the periphery and not post them to the wealthier South. ■

¹ Midwifery training in Pemba is being financed by the Liechtenstein Development Service (LED).

From the diary of Nadine Strittmatter

Nadine Strittmatter is an honorary SolidarMed ambassador. She uses her fame as a model to raise awareness and generate publicity for SolidarMed's concerns. In her modelling career, she has travelled to every continent. Yet during her project visit to Moçambique, she got to know a completely new world.

Day 1

"Behind me lies a 17 hour journey to distant Moçambique, one of the poorest countries in the world. For once, my destination is not the wonderful beaches. The drive took us past simple mud huts. The cooking is done outside, over a fire".

Day 2

"Our journey takes us to Chiúre Velho. Although nearly everything is treated in this health centre, the government is not able to find a doctor willing to live and work in this remote area. The 319-year-old bringing her 5-day-old twins for a follow-up check seems surprisingly fit. The two are her 10th and 11th sons!"

Day 3

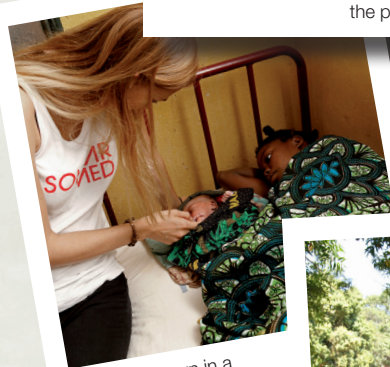
"My reception in Matequite is overwhelming. The drummers and dancers insist I join in their dancing. Afterwards, the entire village discusses the health issues currently facing the community. At the same time, they say thank you for the bicycle ambulance donated by SolidarMed. In emergencies, the bicycle ambulance can cover the 12km to the next health centre much faster."

Day 4

"Just when you think there is nothing here, mud huts appear and excited kids greet the rare visitor. Reaching families way out here is a formidable challenge for SolidarMed. The health of the people benefits all the more."



Nadine Strittmatter amongst the people of Chiúre



With a newborn in a health centre



During the community meeting in Matequite ...



A mother with her baby during the first medical check-up



"Just when you think there is nothing here ..."

Nadine Strittmatter's entire diary of her visit to Chiúre in Moçambique can be found in our photo gallery on Facebook.

→ www.facebook.com/SolidarMed

Photos: Dominik Labhardt (1-4) and Benjamin Gross (5)



An example of a bicycle ambulance gift certificate (in German)

Now available online:
order your gift donation
with gift certificate:
www.solidarmed.ch

The gift idea this Christmas. Meaningful giving.

Give your loved ones tangible help for people in need this Christmas. Please visit our German website for that very special gift idea (www.solidarmed.ch).

Make someone happy with a gift donation and we will send you a beautiful certificate which you can place under the Christmas tree for the recipient. Please note whether you wish to receive an English certificate and feel free to call +41 41 310 66 60 for further assistance.

Many thanks and merry Christmas!

→ www.solidarmed.ch



The poster for the 2012 SolidarMed donation appeal

Every ProBon helps. Collect ProBon against malaria.

For the second time, shops and customers are collecting ProBon for SolidarMed. As part of the Christmas appeal “Every ProBon helps”, around 200 shops have a ProBon collection box at the till. Instead of cashing them in yourself, you can drop your ProBon voucher into these collection boxes. Donations raised this way will be used by SolidarMed in the fight against malaria.

Many thanks for your support!

→ www.solidarmed.ch

Many thanks!

Another year will be over soon and we would like to thank you for the trust you place in us. It is the commitment of the many individuals as well as public, church and private institutions that make it possible to improve health services for people in southern Africa.

Your donation brings about health!

Agenda 2012

→ 5. November until 24. December 2012: “Every ProBon helps”. The SolidarMed appeal in participating ProBon shops (see text above). → 1st December 2012: World Aids Day. Africa suffers more than ever. Further information on this topic available on the SolidarMed website: www.solidarmed.ch. → 17th to the 22nd of December 2012: The “Every Penny Counts” campaign is in Luzern again, with the SolidarMed honorary ambassador Nik Hartmann in the Glass Box (www.jrz.ch).

Advance notice for 2013: The SolidarMed General Assembly will take place on Saturday, 25th of May 2013 in central Switzerland. Save the date – your personal invitation will follow at the end of March 2013.