

SOLIDAR MED aktuell

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Building sustainable health networks

A couple of weeks ago, headlines in the daily papers forcefully reminded us of the danger of respiratory infections – even here in Switzerland. The intensive care units of children’s hospitals were filled with cases of severe flu. Affected parents were extremely worried about their little ones. A reader, commenting on an article in the newspaper Tagesanzeiger: “If you would see your baby gasping for her life, you would hardly find it amusing.” These parents can easily empathise with what many parents in Africa go through. According to the authors of a study in the journal “Lancet”, between 60’000 and 200’000 children under the age of five die of flu infections worldwide. However, 99% of these children are in developing countries – like Lesotho (from page 3).

Sustainability has been a dominant concept in development for a long time. SolidarMed ensures that the projects also have a positive impact on the coming generations (page 6).

For SolidarMed, this means strengthening health networks where the patients are. Our engagement can make the difference between a child dying from a respiratory infection – or it being caught by a functioning health safety net.

Help us create sustainable health networks. Thank you very much for your support!

Dr med Svend Capol, President of SolidarMed

Key

- + Hospital
- *SolidarMed Office*
- Important town
- Political capital



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Online donations: www.solidarmed.ch

Thank you very much!

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Winter fills the beds on the children's ward in Paray Hospital, Lesotho.
Photo: Benjamin Gross

Pneumonia:

Timely treatment saves lives

Pneumonia is the deadliest disease for children worldwide. It usually takes too long until this infection is diagnosed and treated. Each year, 1.7 million children pay for this inadequate medical care with their lives. SolidarMed sustainably strengthens the health network in the mountains of Lesotho, ensuring that treatment begins on time.

It often starts with a slight cold. A runny nose, a cough or a sore throat are the well-known complaints accompanying a “cold”. Sometimes, it is enough for the body to defend itself against the bacteria or virus with a fever. Often, we support this process with medication from a pharmacy and frequently, seeing a doctor will stop any dangerous development. Here in Europe – and in Africa too.

Cold winters in Lesotho

In high altitude regions like Lesotho, which have cold winters with snow, severe colds are common. Without medical support, malnourished peoples’ immune systems are often not able to offer sufficient protection, which is why infections spread to the lower respiratory tract. At the latest

when the lungs are infected, it becomes life-threatening, especially for children. Whereas here in Switzerland, pneumonia tends to kill the elderly, in developing countries it is mostly small children and toddlers who are affected. According to the World Health Organisation, more people die from pneumonia than from HIV, measles and malaria combined.

Recognising symptoms on time

In most cases, it is possible to avoid respiratory infections becoming really serious – but only if the symptoms are recognised on time.

Health staff play a key role here. They must recognise the symptoms of a severe infection during the first examina-



Pneumonia

More information on SolidarMed's work can be found under "Countries + projects" at www.solidarmed.ch

→ tion and initiate effective treatment. In order to quickly distinguish between a harmless cough and a deeper infection or indeed tuberculosis, personnel must be appropriately trained. This is where there is an urgent need for action, as many of those employed by the health service in Lesotho do not recognise the most important symptoms of pneumonia: rapid and heavy breathing, coughing and fever.

Close to the families

Once pneumonia is diagnosed, fast and effective help saves lives. As many families in Lesotho live far away from the closest hospital and don't have any means of transport, treatment urgently needs to be brought closer to the people. SolidarMed ensures that key personnel in the catchment areas of our partner hospitals are appropriately trained. The medical supply chain is improved to ensure that rural health centres are properly stocked. In order to reinforce the entire health network, district hospitals are also strengthened with long-term development projects. To combat pneumonia in the long run, besides well trained staff and medicines, Lesotho also needs a viable network of different health facilities.

In Switzerland, children are well protected:

Worldwide, pneumonia kills 1.7 million children under the age of five every year, with another 2.5 million fatalities in the other age groups. With 500 million cases per year, this infection of the lower respiratory tract is the most common infectious disease worldwide.

According to the federal office of statistics, in 2010 more than 40 people a day on average visited a hospital due to pneumonia. Thanks to correct treatment, they can soon return home in good health. In Switzerland, a pneumonia infection is particularly risky for the elderly. Of the around 1300 people who die from pneumonia, 95 percent are over 65 years old, and 50 percent are even over the age of 85.

SolidarMed helps children with pneumonia by:

- financing specific training on "warning signs of acute infections";
- targeted further training of nursing staff and village health workers;
- effectively improving the health centre supply chain, in close cooperation with the health authorities. This way, even rural health centres always have medicines available.
- implementing long-term development plans for the hospitals of Seboche and Paray in Lesotho. By optimising hospital management, basic medical services are sustainably improved.

The fight against pneumonia forms part of the projects with which SolidarMed improves health services for 1.5 million people in Lesotho, Moçambique, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. More information on the SolidarMed projects in Lesotho can be found at www.solidarmed.ch



A simple cold became life-threatening in just a few days. For Thato Lekhanya, there was no medical help in the village – his mother's concern saved his life.

Photo: Thabo Lejone

... before it becomes life-threatening:

3-year old Thato Lekhanya lives with his parents in a round hut in the mountains of Lesotho. This lively boy is an enthusiastic animal lover and never misses an opportunity to help his father with the livestock.

Last October, Thato caught a severe cold. For more than 10 days, he fought against a persistent cough and a high fever. Very concerned, his mother 'M'e Ntebaleng Lekhanya carried him the 12 km to the SolidarMed supported Paray Hospital, hoping for help.

The well-trained nursing staff at the hospital diagnosed an infection of the lower respiratory tract. Thato narrowly escaped pneumonia, which is life-threatening at his age. After only five days of treatment, he was allowed to return home. Since then, his mother keeps in touch with the health worker in her village. She is able to distinguish between dangerous and harmless illnesses and would refer Thato to hospital if he falls ill again – before it becomes life-threatening.

Zimbabwe:

Projects need persistence and vision

Interview with Dr med Aldo Kramis, previously deployed as SolidarMed doctor

More than 20 years have passed since Aldo Kramis and his family lived and worked in Zimbabwe for SolidarMed. They have been 20 difficult years for the country, but in the face of all obstacles, Silveira Hospital has remained an island of hope for the ill and the injured. To this day, Aldo Kramis remains committed to health in Africa – with the same passion and perseverance as SolidarMed.

SolidarMed: Mr Kramis, what are your clearest memories of Zimbabwe?

Aldo Kramis: Zimbabwe is a beautiful country and the Shona and the Ndebele are very amiable and passible people who deserve a future in the same way we do in Europe. The families in the villages, the wonderful surroundings and the most beautiful sunsets, but also the daily medical challenges, experiencing your own limits, helping each other at the hospital – I carry and am defined by these memories to this day.

What were the most urgent challenges facing Silveira then?

In addition to the many challenges facing a rural hospital, it was the arrival of one of the worst epidemics of the last decades: HIV/Aids. Within a few years, Zimbabwe was confronted with hundreds of thousands of additional orphans, fatalities and sick people.

Today you work as a medical doctor in Emmenbrücke. Do you miss your time directly helping the people of Zimbabwe?

Today, other people are continuing my work from those days and I myself am at a different point in my life. I make my contribution by supporting SolidarMed. I like the perseverance and vision with which the projects are carried out. It is not only about helping today, but also about long-term perspectives and solutions for the rural population. Thanks to their many years of experience, SolidarMed knows what is needed for a hospital to function effectively.

For example?

Things that are taken for granted in medicine here in Switzerland are completely missing in many countries in Africa. For a doctor to even be able to work, you need medicines, infrastructure, sufficient personnel and someone has to be responsible for the administration. In short: you need a functioning environment. Today, even more than in the past, SolidarMed focusses on the hospital as a whole in its projects. SolidarMed doctors ensure timely medical care, provide initial and further training and form part of the hospital management team, where they can influence processes and structures. This makes long-term change possible.

People who are sick today benefit little from a hospital which works tomorrow.

The SolidarMed doctors of today don't simply stand next to the injured giving advice. Quite the reverse. They are still hands-on and also train local doctors. Despite the crushing burden of disease, you can't forget the long-term goal. In future, the hospital should be able to help patients without SolidarMed's assistance. More than in the past, today SolidarMed doctors are also hospital managers – with the clear goal of improving services. But this takes time – our health system here in Switzerland also didn't develop overnight. This is why I find the endurance and the long term vision with which SolidarMed implements projects so convincing.



"It is not only about helping today, but also about long-term perspectives and solutions for the rural population."

Dr med Aldo Kramis, former SolidarMed doctor

Place your no obligation order for our "Legacies and Wills" information pack.
Telephone: +41 41 310 66 60
E-Mail: p.loew@solidarmed.ch

Legacies – donations with long-term impact

SolidarMed projects have an impact over many generations – as do legacies. It is worth thinking about one's last wishes in good time, and to record these in writing.

Writing a will does not mean finishing up with life. It simply ensures that one's own assets – no matter how small – go to those whom we wish.

Taking the legally required particular family member portions into account, it is possible to consider an organisation close to your heart in your will. A legacy or bequest can reduce the injustice in the world and be a beacon of hope.

An inheritance means adding a person or an organisation like SolidarMed to a will. This person/organisation now has the rights and responsibilities of an heir. A simpler method is the legacy or bequest: the organisation is bequeathed a set amount in the will. This is a gift which lasts for generations.

It is worth thinking about your last wishes and making them legally binding. They need to be hand-written, the date and signature are also important. Further information is available in our information pack "Legacies and Wills" which we would be glad to share with you.

Ms Patricia Löw would be pleased to answer any questions you may have in person – this is entirely without obligation to you. Alternatively, she can arrange for independent legal advice.

Contact:

Telephone: + 41 41 310 66 60; E-Mail: contact@solidarmed.ch



The health system requires fundamental changes in order to combat diseases sustainably. This also helps future generations.

Photo: Zaka District, Zimbabwe, Urs Allenspach

→ What does this mean for you as a donor?

Without the work of SolidarMed, countless people would continue to suffer from their diseases or even die. What is even more important: in future, Zimbabwe's families can count on a well-functioning hospital. In order to achieve this goal, I can imagine remaining a part of SolidarMed, even beyond my own life. My family and I will certainly think about what should happen with our assets after our time. Devoting part of our assets the health of the people in Africa is undoubtedly a good investment. ■



"A legacy helps SolidarMed persevere in our challenging but valuable projects".

Patricia Löw, responsible for legacies and wills

All-round commitment

Matingatinga in Pratteln

Since 2010, the Pratteln secondary school has been helping SolidarMed with the “Matingatinga” project. Using Lugala Hospital as an example, the students discover how children in rural Africa live and what kind of health challenges they face. They pass on this knowledge to the population of Pratteln during numerous activities and also diligently collect donations. This past December, as well as candle-making and an exhibition about the hospital, the students organised a stand at the Christmas Market, spreading some African warmth through Pratteln’s winter and successfully collecting donations. Over the years, the commitment of various school classes has raised a total of 18’000 (!) Swiss Franks for Lugala Hospital in Tanzania. Thank you very much!



Students from Pratteln inform the population and fundraise very successfully for Lugala Hospital in Tanzania.

Valuable ProBons

Once again, in the run-up to Christmas, the customers of over 200 shops demonstrated their generosity. For the benefit of people in Africa, they gave up their discount coupons and donated them to SolidarMed. One full ProBon card is worth as much as an insecticide-treated net – this effectively protects a family from mosquito bites and therefore from malaria. Thank you very much!

We value your opinion

Every three months, we bring out a new “SolidarMed aktuell” information magazine for our loyal donors – you are holding a copy. We think it is important to show you the effect your donations are having, as well flagging up the significant challenges that still remain.

Which aspects of this magazine do you like?

Is there anything missing?

Do share your opinion via email at contact@solidarmed.ch

Thank you for your short feedback to contact@solidarmed.ch



The ProBon collection box in a bakery. Thanks to committed customers, discount coupons even saved lives!
Photo: Philipp Epp

Agenda

→25th April 2013: World Malaria Day. Information on this topic on our website: www.solidarmed.ch. →25th of May 2013: SolidarMed Annual General Meeting on the Sonnenberg in Lucerne. Save the date today – we will send out personal invitations to our members at the end of March 2013.