



Safe childbirth.

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She who gives birth lives forever*



Kathi Jungen,
member of the SolidarMed Board

What joy! This autumn, I will become a grandmother. Memories return of the births of two of my children in a hospital in Cameroon, with an ant trail under my bed and a giant moth on the back of the birth attendant. Everything went well, we were very grateful.

I am glad that our daughter is giving birth here in Switzerland. As a midwife, she has decided to have a home birth, safe in the knowledge that in case of complications, she can be in hospital within 10 minutes. Yes, here in Switzerland women can decide to deliver their children at home. This is because in an emergency, they can quickly get medical help and if necessary have a caesarean section.

It's quite different in Africa. Here, a home birth all too often ends in death. Many women deliver at home, but not because this is where they receive the best care. Sometimes, it's because the next health centre or hospital is just too far away. Or they don't have the money to give birth in a health facility. In other cases, there is simply not enough time for a heavily pregnant woman in labour to make this arduous journey. Traditional birth attendants care for the women and do their best, but they don't stand a chance of treating women correctly if complications arise.

The results are tragic: In Zimbabwe, one in 126 women dies before or shortly after giving birth. Every 39th newborn does not survive. Behind these figures are the fates and faces of young mothers who wanted to give life. We

can only imagine how much sorrow and grief this means for the families.

In order to ensure that women in Africa can give birth safely and happily take their newborns into their arms, SolidarMed and the partners achieve a lot on the ground: offering antenatal care, sensitising expectant mothers so that they go to a health centre or hospital to give birth, training midwives, schooling traditional birth attendants, using bicycle ambulances for transfers to hospital, supporting health centres and hospitals and building mother waiting homes.

In this aktuell, you can read about a happy birth, one in which our proverb came true.

* A Tanzanian proverb.



Photo: Floris Braat

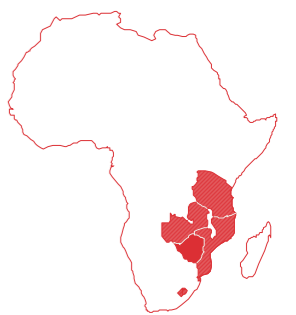
Princess is alive – and her mother is too.

In Zimbabwe, complications during pregnancy and childbirth are amongst the most common causes of death for women. In rural areas, medical care for expectant mothers is often lacking. SolidarMed supports professional treatment for mothers in two rural districts.

Princess is very aptly named. In the examination room at Silveira Hospital, no one can tear their eyes from the lovingly wrapped bundle containing little Princess. Project manager Dr Floris Braat is one of them. He is captivated by this preemie who weighed only 1.5 kilogrammes at birth. Six weeks later, Princess already weighs 3.2 kilogrammes. When her contractions started much too soon, in her 7th month of pregnancy, 19-year-old Lucy made the right decision. Accompanied only by her 13-year-old niece, she made her way from her remote village to a health centre supported by

SolidarMed. She made it – just in the nick of time. Only minutes after arriving, she safely delivered her daughter. For the doctor, Lucy's story has symbolic meaning. "Often, measures which are relatively simple to perform can save lives" he says, looking at little Princess and her mother. "The most common cause of death during childbirth is severe bleeding. Thanks to training which SolidarMed makes possible, the nurses can stop the bleeding in 90 percent of all cases and so save many lives."

19-year-old Lucy with her daughter Princess at their follow-up appointment.



Zimbabwe
Inhabitants 2013: 14'150'000
Doctors per 1000 inhabitants: 0,08
Life expectancy: 60 Years

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SolidarMed is the Swiss organisation for health in Africa and improves health care for 1.5 million people. SolidarMed strengthens and expands existing medical services sustainably and meaningfully. The projects pay particular attention to the health of mothers, pregnant women, newborns and children.





Photo: SolidarMed

and gave her oxygen – a life-saving measure. Afterwards, mother and child were brought to Silveira Hospital by ambulance, where both received intensive care for 2 weeks. In this time, the little preemie could gather strength and her mother learnt how to look after this very tiny bundle of life.

“The most common cause of death amongst mothers is severe bleeding during and after childbirth. In 90 percent of these cases, our trained personnel can stop the bleeding and so save many lives.”

One month later, both came back for a check-up and both were fit and well. Lucy’s eyes shone. Proudly, she held her Princess in her arms: “I am so grateful for the help we received here. I don’t know what I would have done otherwise.”

Intensive care before and after birth

Lucy and her daughter were exemplary cases. The young expectant mother had not delivered in her village, but had rather gone to a health centre as soon as her contractions began. When Princess was born there, two months premature, the well-trained midwife reacted correctly

Around 90 percent of deaths could be prevented with known, effective interventions. Well-trained midwives save lives.



Photo: Olivier Branden

Too many women deliver their child at home. It requires knowledge to ensure that more women give birth under professional supervision. To this end, the population in the communities is sensitised.

Health and human respect

Little Princess is sleeping peacefully when Dr Braat sends the young mother on her way with some final pieces of advice. Both of them laugh. The mood is relaxed, as it is in the other hallways of Silveira Hospital. “The human aspect is also important” Dr Braat notes, manager of the MAMA project in Zimbabwe. “The doctors and nurses of the hospital constitute an important authority for the people here. Yet we not only want to offer people health, but also show that we respect and value them. Only then do they feel well cared for – as patients and as people.”

“Our goal, particularly for mothers, is not only a pregnancy free of complications, but also a positive “afterwards”. Women should only fall pregnant again when they really want to.”

Princess gives a satisfied little grunt. She and her mother have made it. Now it is time to return to the village. In the hallways, the nurses say goodbye to Lucy and her little daughter. All are agreed: Princess is very aptly named.

How SolidarMed protects mothers

Every year, 15’000 pregnant women and their babies benefit from the project against maternal mortality.

Maternal mortality in Zimbabwe lies above the African average. For every 100’000 births, 581 women die. In comparison, in Switzerland this figure is 6. Most fatalities occur during or shortly after childbirth. Proper medical care could prevent a large number of these deaths. SolidarMed, in close cooperation with the health authorities, improves medical care for pregnant women and their newborns in the existing hospitals and health centres in two rural districts.



Photo: Olivier Branden

SolidarMed enables

- high quality medical care and treatment for mothers and newborns
- the prevention of HIV transmission from mothers to newborns
- further training for doctors and initial training of health staff
- supervision and support for existing health facilities
- the improvement and development of the medical infrastructure
- the sensitisation of the population on subjects like “pregnancy and birth” and “family planning”

Long-term impact

The MAMA project is embedded into existing structures and supports national efforts to improve maternal and child health. SolidarMed’s many years of commitment allow the medical structures in the two districts of Bikita and Zaka to be strengthened in a sustainable way. Every year, 15’000 women benefit from the project and more than 210’000 children receive access to better health care thanks to the efforts of SolidarMed.

Dr Floris Braat,
Doctor
SolidarMed



Learn more about SolidarMed in Zimbabwe:
www.solidarmed.ch > Countries > Zimbabwe



Photo: Klaus Thieme

Stumbling block

Zambia: “Boss, we have a problem.” This is how project manager Klaus Thieme was received on his first visit to the building site. SolidarMed had only just begun the construction of a student hostel for the school of nursing and midwifery in Mpanshya. Reason for the fuss was a huge rock, revealed just underneath the planned foundation. Without construction machinery, this was indeed a problem. Using muscle power alone, this solid boulder had to be pounded into shape to be used as part of the foundation. Seriously hard work!

Yet Klaus Thieme remained positive. “As early as November, 40 students will be able to move in.” From then on, the nursing school in Mpanshya can offer practical training placements, so that more and better qualified health staff will be available soon.

Neighbourly visit

Tanzania/Zambia: Effective health services also require competent leadership and workable ideas. To this end, visitors from the Ministry of Health of Tanzania, the Edgar Maranta School of Nursing and Lugala Nursing School travelled to Zambia to learn more about its much lauded government training programme for “clinical instructors” (practical trainers at the hospitals). The Tanzanian delegation was visibly impressed and is now recommending such a system to local health authorities and ministry representatives in their home district. By the same token, the Zambian hosts learnt about the high quality of theoretical training given to nurses at Tanzanian schools and showed an interest in learning from the experiences of their neighbouring country.

In Zambia, SolidarMed supports a pilot project to develop decentralised practical nursing training. Instead of training nurses at only one hospital, the trainees complete practical

rotations through four different hospitals with different focal areas. Both the students and the hospitals benefit equally from this arrangement.



Photo: SolidarMed

The lab provides clarity

Moçambique: The north of Moçambique remains one of the poorest regions in the world. In order to finance basic health services, the country would need a minimum of 70 dollars per person per year, which is still not possible. As a result, the country lacks good health infrastructure, trained staff and sufficient medicines. Social and cultural factors exacerbate the situation and mean that people often don't attend hospital, even when one would be available. They simply do not trust this institution. In the end, the most vulnerable suffer: For every 100'000 births, 4'000 newborns and 490 women die. In a study carried out by SolidarMed, 87 percent of women questioned knew a pregnant woman who had died giving birth in the village.

In order to change this, SolidarMed has been supporting the particularly remote district of Namuno for over a year in developing its health services. As one of the first activities, SolidarMed supplied the busiest health centre with material and a laboratory. Amongst other things, the lab can examine malaria samples. With functioning equipment, the newly motivated lab staff can now put the knowledge they've gained in training courses into practice. This is what makes correct diagnoses and effective treatment possible in the first place – and so prevents many malaria deaths.



Photo: SolidarMed

On the road with...

Nursing is a very tough job. In addition to primary health care, dispensing medication and wound care, nurses offer help with personal hygiene.

The graduating class of 2016 from St. Lukes School of Nursing in Mpanshya, Zambia, have completed their practical examinations. This means that soon, 110 well-trained nurses will begin their work in a Zambian hospital. In addition, for the very first time, they will be joined by 21 midwives.

To avoid unduly burdening the patients of St. Lukes Hospital, a part of the exam was practiced on special training dummies. As can be seen on the photo, body care is one of the examination tasks: the two nursing students Nancy Mumba (right) and Precious Mutale (far left) are washing the training dummy's hair.

More nurses for Zambia

Since 2012, SolidarMed has supported the decentralisation of practical training for nurses and midwives at St. Lukes in Mpanshya. Since the involvement of SolidarMed began, three hospitals could be upgraded into training hospitals. This was made possible by developing the necessary infrastructure like hostels and staff houses, but also by supporting the hospitals with consumables, training material and a specialised midwifery instructor.

Learn more about health staff:
www.solidarmed.ch > Topics > Health Staff



Zambia:
Stumbling block

Tanzania/Zambia:
Neighbourly visit

Moçambique:
The lab creates clarity

Water from Kriens for Moçambique



Photo: Sonnenberg restaurant



Photo: SolidarMed

For our 90th birthday, SolidarMed received a lovely birthday present from Kriens. In the middle of the celebration, Ron Prêtre, manager of the Hotel Sonnenberg, surprised the members present with a cheque for 1685 Swiss Francs. In the previous six months, the restaurant had collected this money by selling table water to its guests. For many years now, SolidarMed has been a regular and satisfied guest at the Sonnenberg and we are grateful for this wonderful support.

Free is not for nothing

Getting attention for SolidarMed's topics is a challenging task. Our issues are long-burning and as such are not particularly attractive for the media. And placing ads is too expensive for us. For this reason, SolidarMed regularly enquires about unsold ad space with various media companies. These free filler ads are very valuable. They allow us to regularly place our appeal for more "health in Africa" in the media.

Für Gesundheit
in Afrika.

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Lecture: Traces of living and dying



On the 14th of June, our long-standing board member Dr med Urs Allenspach linked the work of SolidarMed with art. One might think that in a region of the world where daily survival is such a challenge, there would be little room left for creativity.

The lecture impressively showed how the humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe is reflected in many striking works of art. This event will take place again in Zurich on the 9th of November 2016.