



Dangerous years.

Photo: Olivier Brandenburg

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Children are our future



Svend Capol,
President of SolidarMed

A birth changes the world! For parents, the birth of a child marks the beginning of their greatest concern. It means that what parents care about most - and what they worry about most - is their child. It means a close and nurturing connection and doing everything in their power to enable their child to live a fulfilled, healthy and carefree life. On the other hand, it also means a constant, hovering worry and even fear for the life of their offspring. There is no greater sorrow for a parent than to witness the loss of their child.

And yet in many places, children die who would readily survive here in Switzerland. Not because their parents did not look after them, but because often, it is not possible to access proper care. This can be because the nearest health facility is very far away and there are no means of transport, or due to a lack of knowledge on how to combat diseases like diarrhoea, respiratory infections or malaria.

Every birth carries a lot of hope - children are our future! Let us nurture this hope and reduce the fear of losing our children by making sure they have access to good basic medical services and a healthy future. Having confidence in a hopeful future can dispel our worst fears. Safeguarding the health of our youngest is SolidarMed's mission.

**“No mother knows
what will befall her child,
no mother can see the future.
– If her child will suffer,
– Or whether it might
even be envied?
No mother knows
what will befall her child.”**

Translation of an excerpt from
Paul Burkhard's "D'Zäller Wiehnacht",
a famous Swiss nativity play



Photo: Olivier Brandenberg

A difficult start in life

Adelina, Krescenzia and Lucia were able to celebrate their 5th birthday. They would not have made it without medical help. SolidarMed makes sure that young children do not die from curable diseases.

Over the past two decades, significant gains were made in the health of children worldwide. Worldwide, the number of children dying before their 5th birthday has halved over the last twenty years. This is good news but sadly no comfort to the parents of the 16'000 children across the world who die every day because of a lack of medical help. In southern Africa, the risk for infants is still around 30 times higher than in Switzerland. Particularly in rural areas, where health workers, medical equipment and medicines are lacking and the health facilities are many hours walk away, even today one in 9 children dies due to a lack of medical care. 45 percent of all victims are newborn babies.

The first 28 days are the most dangerous. For this reason, SolidarMed is committed to safe childbirth and proper postnatal care in our projects – for a healthy start in life. Until it is five years old, a child's immune system is not yet fully developed, which is why diseases like pneumonia, diarrhoea and malaria are particularly life-threatening. ▶



SWITZERLAND: 4 ...

SOUTHERN AFRICA: 112 ...

... in 1000 children † under the age of 5

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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.



How SolidarMed protects children

Diseases like malaria, pneumonia or diarrhoea can only be treated effectively in well-functioning hospitals and health centres. SolidarMed sensitises the population and supports remote rural hospitals and health centres with initial and further training for their staff, the renovation and maintenance of their infrastructure, with medical equipment, the targeted deployment of doctors and in management questions.

Simple and inexpensive measures like vaccinations, antibiotics, mosquito nets and better medical care by competent personnel save children's lives – if they are available there where they're most urgently needed. SolidarMed ensures that medical care, vaccination campaigns, growth monitoring and effective medical treatment are available in the villages.

Child mortality: the facts at a glance

- In 2015, a total of 5.9 million children worldwide died before their 5th birthday
- More than half of these children died from preventable causes. They suffered from extreme poverty and barely had access to medical help.
- Most of these children died because they were born prematurely, because they suffered from pneumonia, diarrhoea or malaria or because breathing problems after birth caused them to suffocate.
- The risk of dying in infancy is 30 times higher in southern African than in Switzerland.

Discover more about what SolidarMed does for children:

solidarmed.ch/eng > Topics > Mother and Child

Expert opinion on the subject

“Progress in the rural areas is slower”

SolidarMed: Child mortality has been halved in 25 years. How do you rate this development?

Michael Hobbins: It is indeed encouraging to see what coordinated mechanisms, like for example in malaria prevention, have made possible. But sadly, when looking at individual countries these are only average figures – the social divide between poor and rich, between rural and urban areas is actually increasing. For children in extreme poverty, the first five years are still very dangerous.

Which role does SolidarMed play?

Seen globally, our role is small. We have a distinct geographical focus. However, SolidarMed works in those places where the situation for children is the worst. Together with local authorities, we improve prevention and treatment in the villages and health facilities. This way, SolidarMed functions as a catalyst and this helps all children and increases their chances of survival. Close cooperation with local authorities makes it possible to replicate successes in other parts of the country, which saves many lives.

How are children in the rural areas doing?

Child mortality has also been reduced here. But progress is significantly slower. The population lacks knowledge. Rural areas lack infrastructure, medical professionals, medicines, laboratories, operating theatres and transport facilities. Sadly, the list goes on.

How does SolidarMed react to this?

The population has to understand the risks facing children, so that if a child falls ill, it receives medical treatment as soon as possible. Most diseases are curable if treatment begins at an early stage. Waiting too long is often deadly for children. Also important is the quality of the diagnosis and the subsequent treatment.

SolidarMed schliesst diese Lücken, doch gerade im ländlichen Afrika gibt es noch einen enormen Handlungsbedarf.



Dr Michael Hobbins, Responsible for the topic of child health at SolidarMed



Photo: Olivier Brandenburg

Lucia Simone, 6 years old

Lucia suffered from complicated malaria as well as intestinal parasites and a bacterial infection. Multiple diagnoses in children are common. A main reason is widespread malnutrition. Her malaria infection and the other parasites made her severely anaemic and she needed a blood transfusion. After only three days of intensive care, she could already get up again and move around the hospital.

Krescenzia Lotile, 5 years old

Krescenzia is one of many children who require emergency treatment after an accident. As she was helping her mother with the cooking, her dress caught fire and she suffered severe burns to a quarter of her skin. Using simple methods, hospital staff treated her wounds and protected her from infection. For three weeks, she lay in a separate room. To avoid draughts, the door always remained closed. Most of the time, her mother sat at the edge of her bed, comforting the girl. Without rapid help at the hospital, Krescenzia would not have stood a chance.



Photo: Olivier Brandenburg

Adelina Emanuel, 6 years old

Adelina's father brought her to an outpatient consultation at Lugala Hospital. Her abdomen was severely bloated, the skin on her entire body was dry and her gaze was empty. The girl suffered from intestinal worms which had stunted her growth and given her chronic anaemia and apathy. Just in time, Adelina received deworming medication. Now she is strong enough to go to school.



Photo: Olivier Brandenburg



Photo: Olivier Brandenberg

Visible cooperation

Tanzania: With a joint health campaign, the district authority of Malinyi and Lugala Hospital gave a successful demonstration of their closer cooperation. Supported by SolidarMed and the district authority, the hospital team drove into the villages of the region and informed people via loudspeaker that a team of eye specialists was visiting the hospital. “The response was overwhelming” commented the very pleased SolidarMed project manager Dr med. Peter Hellmold. “From Monday to Thursday over 1000 (!) patients - some of them blind and being guided - came to Lugala.” This activity shows the potential of the closer partnership between the authorities and Lugala Hospital.

This year saw the creation the new district of Malinyi. It is in the process of being established and Lugala Hospital is to become the official district hospital. As an example of a public - private partnership, the government health team was accommodated in the hospital, directly next to the hospital administration. This makes joint activities much easier and promotes mutual understanding. Dr Peter Hellmold sees a further big opportunity in this cooperation: “Offices in close proximity to one another and the first joint campaign for the vision impaired were good steps towards establishing Lugala as district hospital and promoting cooperation between local government and the hospital. This helps safeguard SolidarMed’s development work in the long term.”

“Small but crucial”

Zambia: Countries in Africa do not only need help, but also respect and cooperation with their international partners. In Zambia, SolidarMed has been cooperating with the Ministry of Health for the past seven years. In this time, mutual trust has grown. Today, the Zambian Minister of Health describes SolidarMed as a “small but crucial partner”.

In June, the Ministry invited our long-standing country coordinator Martina Weber to be an expert participant in the development of the national health strategy. This is a great honour for a foreign NGO and a sign of trust. It confirms that SolidarMed, working in partnership, has reliably ensured improvements at all levels of the health system.

Knowledge in the fight against tuberculosis and HIV



Photo: SolidarMed

Zimbabwe: In a special course, the community health workers in the districts of Bikita and Zaka learnt the most important facts about tuberculosis and HIV/Aids. Now, they find it easier to recognise the typical symptoms of these diseases and make sure that those infected go for testing in the health centre. There is no nurse or doctor in remote villages. Thanks to the knowledge of the community health workers and their activities, those affected receive treatment on time. This prevents people in the immediate vicinity of the patients falling ill too.



Tanzania:
Visible cooperation

Zambia:
“Small but crucial”

Zimbabwe:
Knowledge in the fight against
tuberculosis and HIV



Photo: SolidarMed

On the road with...

Jackson ng’Ambila has completed the theoretical part of her training. Now she is combining her knowledge with practical experience in the hospital.

My practical training begins at 7.25am in the men’s ward of Lugala Hospital. I help clean the floor, dust the beds, clean the sheets and bring dirty bedding to the laundry.

After everything is clean, I help the nurse in charge prepare the materials trolley for the daily round. Together we discuss the previous day’s notes so that questions from yesterday’s round can be answered. Where necessary, I get the ordered lab results.

One of my tasks is the presentation of the wounds, so that the doctor can review the healing. We can ask him questions at any time. This is very helpful. I learn more every day. In the meantime, I am a real help. Under the guidance of the experienced nurses, I help organise and implement further nursing care.

Support of Lugala Nursing School

Lugala Nursing School, opened in 2009, trains urgently needed nurses in Tanzania. In the practical part of their training, students assist in the department of physiotherapy, prepare patients for surgery and help treat wounds, assist with dispensing medication and care for the patients. SolidarMed is helping the nursing school complete the last steps to its final official recognition as a training institution.

Read more about the project:
solidarmed.ch > Topics > Health Staff



Who Wants to be Donaire?

Two years ago, the whole world was gripped by fear and turmoil as the Ebola epidemic spread through West Africa. The number of victims remained in the thousands. In contrast, the fact that over 10 million people die from preventable diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, pneumonia and HIV ever year attracts very little attention. In order to better sensitise the population in Switzerland and Liechtenstein about health in Africa, SolidarMed has launched an online game, a unique take on the well-known quiz show "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire". Without finger wagging, this game imparts knowledge and like in the TV show, your knowledge is worth real money!

Test your knowledge at werden-sie-spendionaer.ch¹

¹ Only available in German

Give meaningfully this Christmas

A meaningful gift makes many people happy. Give concrete help to families in southern Africa in the name of your loved ones. This could be 50 journeys by bicycle ambulance to the next health centre, a first-aid kit or 10 packages of the most necessary items for newborn babies. With a SolidarMed gift certificate, Christmas will become even more meaningful. Is there anything better than giving someone health for Christmas? Many thanks and happy holidays!

It will be Christmas soon. Order a little health today!

For more information, see solidarmed.ch

Many thanks for your commitment!

As we come to the end of the year, the SolidarMed team would like to thank you for the trust you have shown in us. The help of generous individuals, public, church-based and private institutions is what makes it possible to give people in southern Africa better health. Many thanks!