



Full speed to hospital

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Dr. med. Niklaus Labhardt,
President of SolidarMed

The long way to hospital

When SolidarMed renovates operating theatres and delivery rooms in our partner hospitals, or when we help improve the obstetric skills of local doctors, we make significant improvements to the medical services on offer. However, these improvements will not necessarily benefit the very poorest people. Studies in southern Africa have shown that even when medical services are free, fewer poor women give birth under medical supervision than women whose families are better off. The same is true when it comes to the treatment of acute or chronic illnesses or preventive services, for example vaccinating children.

The reason is quite simple, nearly banal: the hospital is just too far away. The journey there is time consuming, strenuous, possibly dangerous and expensive. A woman in labour, severely ill children or adults simply cannot walk for hours to reach the hospital and the medical care available there. In as much as we support the hospitals, to truly enable "health for all" our projects also have to consider those people that live far away from a hospital.

The e-bike ambulance in Moçambique is a good example. It provides safe and rapid transport in case of a medical emergency. It is simply unacceptable that in this day and age, a woman bleeds to death after giving birth because there is no way to get her to hospital.

SolidarMed does more than simply deliver an electric bicycle to a village. We work with the population to develop a system to ensure this solar-powered vehicle works over the long-term. As the interview with Sonil Joanguete on page 5 shows, this project is deeply rooted in the local population because they can see its use. Thanks to over 120 donors from Switzerland and Liechtenstein, the e-bike ambulance prototype is now on a two-year test drive. We will continue to work closely with our local teams to ensure that this ambulance functions optimally. I am pleased that this innovative pilot project could be realised thanks to your donations.

Many thanks for your support!

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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.





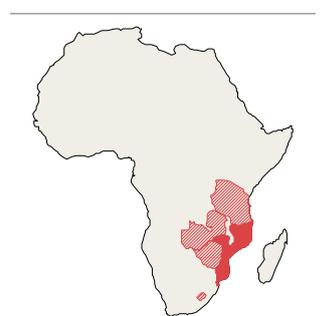
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E-bike ambulance – faster, further, healthier

Mozambique The dust cloud hanging over the village road can be seen from afar. Napithu's fastest cyclists are pedaling up a storm. Competing for victory is the Olympic champion and SolidarMed goodwill ambassador Nino Schurter.

Nino Schurter has actually come to northern Mozambique to inaugurate Africa's first e-bike ambulance. But first, the athleticism of one of the world's best cyclists is going to be tested. To celebrate this important occasion, Napithu is holding its first ever bike race. The young cyclists give it their all to really make the famous visitor sweat. Nino Schurter lets one cyclist take the lead and entertains the enthusiastic crowd with a photo finish for second place. Schurter is pleased with his race. "That was great fun. The guys were really motivated to beat me." Later, sitting on the wobbly benches

of the local school, the members of the health committee explain to SolidarMed's goodwill ambassador why the new e-bike ambulance is very welcome here. The traditional birth attendants have no medical training. In case of serious complications, pregnant women do not make it to the health centre on time. A life-threatening situation for both mother and child. Although this is not Nino Schurter's first time in rural Africa, the extreme poverty never fails to astound. "They lack so much. It is crazy how people here have to live."



Mozambique:
 Inhabitants 28'830'000
 Doctors per 1'000 inhabitants 0.06
 Life expectancy 55 years



Photo page 3
Just before the start of the first bike race in Napithu.

Photo to the left
Nino Schurter visited Samora Machel health centre on vaccination day.

Photo top right
The driver of the e-bike ambulance, the mountain bike pro and a SolidarMed driver talk shop.

Photo below right
On the way to the health centre. The e-bike ambulance's first test drive.

The next day, the world champion gets back on his bike and accompanies the first journey of the e-bike ambulance from Napithu village to the health centre. Normally, pregnant women make this arduous journey over the dusty track on foot. With the e-bike ambulance, this will now change. A strong electric motor on the back wheel pulls the heavy patient trailer and reaches speeds of up to 30 km/h. Nino Schurter is pleased with the successful maiden voyage. "The driver could take it easy, but we had to pedal like crazy to keep up. They have to cover impressive distances here. Having the e-bike to pull the trailer is a really big help."

It doesn't take long to view the four sparse rooms of the health centre, so the nurse-in-charge takes the sportsman outside. Here, forty women and their babies wait for a vaccination. This situation is somewhat familiar to Nino Schurter: "I had to do the same vaccinations with my daughter."

"I was very impressed by the solar panels. They charge the e-bike ambulance."

Videos with Nino Schurter:
[solidarmed.ch](https://www.solidarmed.ch)

The e-bike ambulance

SolidarMed has been testing the e-bike ambulance in Moçambique's northernmost province since November 2017. Over the next two years, this prototype will be continuously improved. The demands on this vehicle are high. It needs to be strong enough to pull at least one person in the trailer over African dirt roads. The project has three goals:

- Develop a prototype for an African e-bike ambulance
- Test the prototype for two years under real-life conditions
- If successful, expand the e-bike ambulance system across the district



© Adrian Bretschter

But the circumstances here are completely different. "The nurses have no time to pay individual attention to the mothers and children. One baby gets vaccinated every 30 seconds."

Nino Schurter is more than just a prominent goodwill ambassador. As a professional biker, he critically scrutinises the e-bike ambulance and sees room for improvement, particularly in the bike itself. "The motor is robust, but the quality of the bicycle is not good. Repairs are just a matter of time." Sonil Joanguete, the project manager of the e-bike ambulance, is glad for input from the bike expert. "Our strength lies in establishing this vehicle in the health system. Technical tips from the world's best biker are of course very welcome." ■



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An expert opinion

"I see many advantages."

Many people live very remotely in Chiúre district. With his team, Sonil Joanguete tests simple transport options for pregnant women, the ill and the injured.

SolidarMed: How do people remember Nino Schurter's visit from last year?

Sonil Joanguete: I grew up in that village myself. That an Olympic champion participated in the first bike race in their village still makes people happy. Of course they also value the e-bike ambulance and the solar power system. The entire project makes them proud.

Why are you testing the e-bike ambulance in Napithu?

We looked for a place with a lot of inhabitants and a dedicated health committee. Napithu managed to keep a bicycle ambulance going for over ten years. In my experience, this group is very open for new things. They are always looking for ways to improve the health of their fellow villagers.

A motorbike ambulance has been on the road in Chiúre district for the past year. What are your experiences so far?

The motorbike ambulance is of course faster than an e-bike. However, it needs repairs and spare parts are very hard to come by. And in our current economic crisis, the health centre cannot afford fuel. So the ambulance often stands still.

What do you expect from the e-bike ambulance?

So far, I see more advantages than disadvantages. I am particularly happy that this is an environmentally friendly vehicle – it runs on solar power. Using it is very easy, one does not need a driver's license and so far, the maintenance is the same as for a normal bicycle. Right now, we are looking for a partner to make more stable bicycles and equip them with the motors.



Sonil Joanguete,
Project manager "e-bike ambulance"



© SolidarMed

Cool blood with solar power

Moçambique Blood reserves are extremely important in medical care. Particularly in areas like northern Moçambique, where malaria, intestinal worms or malnutrition lead to chronic anaemia. If an already weakened woman loses a lot of blood during childbirth, the situation quickly becomes life-threatening. Blood loss during childbirth is the main cause of death among women in Namuno health centre. Since a few weeks, it is possible to conserve blood in Namuno. Thanks to the new solar power system, the inevitable electrical power outages can be bridged. This makes it possible to keep the blood reserves reliably cool. This is a major step forward for the lab technicians, as they can now also store sensitive vaccines safely. The health centre in Ancuabe is not there yet. In the past month alone, power cuts caused the loss of approximately 20 blood bags.

Nursing summit in Mpanshya

Zambia "Everyone talks about sharing experience and knowledge with others, but no-one does it..." These were the words of Dr Lonia Mwape as she opened the high-ranking nursing summit on behalf of the Zambian Minister of Health. This kind of meeting was unique and a total of 21 nursing schools from the entire country participated. In addition, the Ministry of Health sent a number of representatives, as did the national Nursing Council.

That this summit took place at the remote hospital of St. Luke's in Mpanshya was a major accolade for this institution whose nursing school SolidarMed has supported since 2012. Begun as a pilot project, the number of trainees has increased fivefold and the quality of training has significantly improved. Today, training nurses not only in the capital but also in remote hospitals, where they are most urgently needed, is a nationally recommended approach.



Zambia
Nursing summit in Mpanshya

Moçambique
Cool blood with solar power



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Legacies and bequests

Self-determination and solidarity beyond death

We are all aware of the finiteness of our existence. Sometimes we are more aware, sometimes less, depending on our phase of life.

For a long time, death for me was a far distant event. Then my mother was diagnosed with cancer and passed away. All at once, I became aware that death does not only claim the elderly.

Back then, we had the chance to discuss my mother's wishes with her before she passed away. But what happens when death comes suddenly and nothing has been sorted out? Perhaps there aren't any descendants?

In this case, it pays to have written a will in good time. Inheritance planning ensures that the people and organisations close to one's heart receive adequate consideration. Without instructions in a will, the assets are divided according to statutory guidelines. This rarely corresponds to the wishes of the deceased. For this reason, it is a good idea to think about this in good time and to record one's wishes in writing.

For this purpose, SolidarMed offers an information pack on legacies and bequests containing the most important information. Please get in touch to order your information pack. I would be pleased to personally answer any questions you may have – in confidence and without obligation.



Andrea Schneeberger,
Legacies and bequests

Children helping children

Ronja, Nisha, Elea, Julia, Grace, Lou, Mailin and Elin from the group "Elron & Firm" sold home-made jam. In Ronja's words: "Because we want to help the sick and poor children in Lesotho." The eight girlfriends were imaginative and very busy. They sold their home-made spread directly. Whoever missed this opportunity could call up and place an order, after which the children delivered the goodies straight to the customer's home. Our heartfelt thanks for your wonderful efforts!



Crowdfunding for the e-ambulance



Videos of the first test drive:
solidarmed.ch

The e-bike ambulance is having an impact not only on the projects in Africa, but also on our work here in Switzerland. For the first time, we used crowdfunding to generate support. And very successfully! In only 42 days, 114 generous donors promised to fund the prototype. This has made it possible to test the vehicle over the coming two years and review its strengths and weaknesses. The goal is to deploy a robust, solar-powered e-bike ambulance in places without any other modes of transport.

Cash for Trash

This winter, Stans partied loudly for silent disasters. Three bands, The Monsters, The Hydden and Failed Teachers, turned the amplifier up to 11 and waived their fee for the benefit of SolidarMed. The young organisers from Stans succeeded in combining fun with a good cause. This is how fun(d)raising is done!

Photos of the event: www.principe.photo

