



Colours

save

children

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Stop development assistance?



Dr. med. Niklaus Labhardt,
President of SolidarMed

In recent months, development cooperation has come under fire again in Switzerland. Some voices even called for the complete halt of any type of development assistance, as this apparently hinders progress in Africa.

This criticism may be justified in some points. Nevertheless, the conclusion that Africa's problems will solve themselves without external support is too easy, perhaps even reckless. Economic, social and political development is only possible when people do not have to expend all their energies on the daily struggle for survival. Development requires sufficient capacities to focus on education, to plan, to engage with families and the wider society. Good health and a higher life expectancy are the basis for this.

Illness is often a poverty trap. Sick people are no longer economically productive and often have to spend their last resources on treatment. A family member falling ill can mean the economic ruin of the entire family. There is no money left for education, families no longer engage in long-term household planning and people have no energy left to get involved in civil society. Illness is the biggest obstacle to development in Africa. Only a society of healthy individuals can flourish economically, technically and socially.

To say that medical development cooperation hinders Africa's development is thus just as wrong as claiming that in a globalised and mobile world, the problems of the South are none of our concern.

Every child who does not grow up as an orphan because her mother died at birth, every child who does not suffer from malnutrition and can so learn better at school, every person whose illness is treated properly so that he or she can quickly resume daily life is a contribution to the development of Africa.

Thank you for your loyalty to SolidarMed. Your commitment enables better health for the families in our partner countries. This is the first step towards sustainable development.

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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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No time to wait

Moçambique Many children in the emergency ward die because they have to wait too long for treatment. Using simple coloured cards, SolidarMed was able to halve the number of deaths.

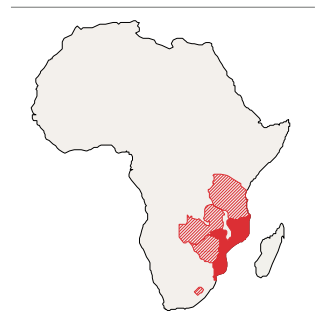
Every day, around one hundred children and their parents wait for treatment in Chiúre's emergency ward. A long queue starts to form from early in the morning. Who will be treated first? The children first in line or the real medical emergencies? Until now, the practice was first come, first treated. But this is dangerous. Due to the acute shortage of staff, it can take hours until all the little patients have been seen – much too long for acute emergencies.

For this reason, 76 children died in the emergency ward or whilst waiting for their treatment in Chiúre hospital in 2015.

Alarmed by the high number of deaths in the emergency ward, the SolidarMed team introduced a colour coded triage system from August 2016.

As soon as they arrive, infants are assessed by the emergency room's reception staff. They decide who requires urgent treatment. Acute emergencies receive a red card and ought to be treated immediately.

Children who require urgent medical assessment receive a yellow card. Patients whose ailment is not acute and whose condition does



Moçambique:
 Inhabitants 28'829'000
 Doctors per 1000 inhabitants 0,055
 Life expectancy 59



© Christian Heuss

"Parents are often not able to judge medical urgency correctly and the children die in their arms."

not immediately threaten to deteriorate have to remain in the queue. They receive a green card.

This simple and internationally proven system traffic light system had a big effect. Today, 47 percent fewer children die in Chiúre's emergency ward than before the introduction of this measure. As simple as this idea is – its implementation required a rethink among the reception staff and involved a lot of training. Reception employees typically have no previous medical training.

The parents and their children also have to be sensitised for these emergency situations. "Parents are often not able to judge medical

urgency correctly", says Barbara Kruspan, SolidarMed Country Director in Moçambique. Many also do not dare draw attention to their emergency and so don't demand medical help for their child. "The children die in their arms."

The results of this triage project have now also been scientifically validated, so SolidarMed is introducing the coloured cards in the emergency wards of two further central hospitals in Metoro and Pemba.

Picture Page 3
Mothers wait with their children in front of the hospital in Chiúre. Mortality rates among children in the overcrowded emergency rooms in northern Moçambique are alarmingly high.

Picture above
Emergency treatment in Chiúre. Around half of the necessary staff is missing.

Picture on the right
2-year-old Filomena is healthy again. Thanks to the triage system, today only half as many children die than before.

Picture Page 5
The system is very simple: Every sick child arriving in the emergency room receives a red, yellow or green card that corresponds to the severity of their condition.



© Olivier Brandenberg

Red card



Thanks to the red card, the severe burns in Rebeka's face were treated immediately.

Yellow card



Moira arrived in the emergency room with a very high fever. Malaria was suspected and this needed to be investigated quickly.

Green card



Judge fell off a tree whilst playing. His simple fracture could be treated without any problems.

Questions for Moçambique

SolidarMed: Why are there long waiting times in hospital emergency rooms?

Barbara Kruspan: I think a big problem is simply that the health workers are overloaded. There are just far too few employees. In addition, the staff at reception have no medical training and can often not distinguish a real emergency from a non-urgent case. A third point is the attitude of the parents of the little patients themselves. They don't know what to expect. They are very passive, rather amiable and just wait until someone tells them something. They cannot judge whether their child needs help urgently and don't react enough.

How are people accepting the new triage system?

It was challenging in the beginning. So we hung up posters to explain the background to the coloured cards. With understanding came acceptance. It became clear to everyone that the urgent cases receive help earlier and that this saves lives.

SolidarMed successfully introduced this triage system in one hospital and has shown that it works. Why does it take so much effort until this also works in other hospitals?

Changing established structures take time. The hospital staff and the patients first have to experience that this simple change has a big impact.

The economic situation in Moçambique is very bad. How does this influence treatment quality in the hospitals?

The supply situation locally is precarious. Very often, the medical facilities lack fuel to transport medical material, drugs or patients. The operating theatres lack crucial supplies like disposable gloves, for instance. The staff make do with washable gloves. But these are not really sterile and thus potentially dangerous for the patients. The situation is really alarming.



Barbara Kruspan,
Country Director Moçambique



Open for modern contraception



Zimbabwe
Open for modern contraception

Moçambique
Armed attacks in Cabo Delgado

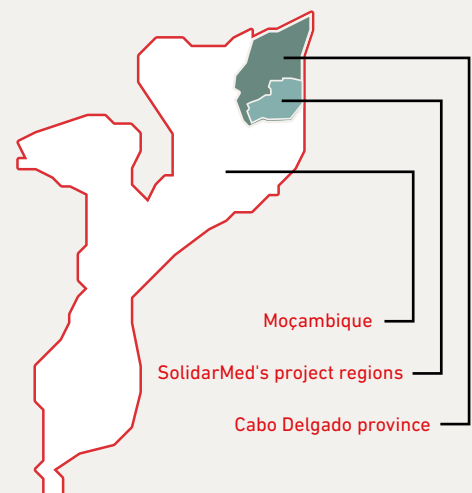
Zimbabwe For the past year, SolidarMed has supported cinema afternoons in the health centres of Bikita and Zaka district. The locally produced film discusses family planning. The viewings have attracted an audience of over 2000 people from the surrounding villages and have been very well attended. Each public screening is followed by an animated discussion on the subject of family planning. Many men, in particular, were not aware that family planning involves not only family size but also pregnancy spacing to ensure a woman can recover completely after giving birth.

Women also feel free to voice their needs during these discussions. During the introduction of possible contraception methods, many complained about the unavailability of the hormone implant. This method, which works for three years, would be particularly welcome but the injection requires a certain level of expertise. In response to this expressed need, SolidarMed is now providing the necessary training to the health centre nursing staff.

The participatory approach of a locally produced film encourages people to discuss their experiences. This dialogue helps question traditional attitudes and paves the way for better sexual health.

Armed attacks in Cabo Delgado

Moçambique For the past year, there have been regular armed and deadly attacks in Cabo Delgado province, not far from SolidarMed's project areas. The attacks in Quiterajo in August caused a lot of concern in the surrounding villages. Some villagers, fearing night-time attacks, have taken to sleeping in the bush. Health centres have been attacked too. "People are scared to go to their fields and this will have an impact on the harvest. We fear that people will soon have even less to eat than they usually do in this region", said Country Director Barbara Kruspan, who herself lives in Pemba. Media like the "Economist" have compared the attacks in August to the beginnings of the Islamist terror in Nigeria. Barbara Kruspan finds it difficult to judge whether the attacks are indeed religiously motivated. "What is certain is that the perpetrators are highly frustrated and poorly educated young men who were promised a better future but who aren't seeing any benefits from the recently discovered mineral wealth. While ever more natural riches are discovered next to their families' fields, they continue to live in poverty." SolidarMed feels the effects of these events even in the south of Cabo Delgado province. Certain roads can only be used when driving in a military convoy, which leads to delays. For now, SolidarMed will remain here and closely monitor how the situation develops.





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On the road with ...

... lab technician Ezekiel Kabelege

Tanzania It is not a matter of course for a qualified laboratory technician to spend a decade working in remote Lugala. Life here does not offer many comforts. The experienced professional Ezekiel Kabelege has a Bachelor's degree and could easily find a position in a place that at least has a shop or a petrol station. Yet Ezekiel has stayed.

"The quality of treatment, the infrastructure, really everything has improved in Lugala hospital over the past years", he says. He is visibly proud to be a part of this progress. "Today, we can help our patients much more reliably" he adds and points to the infusion liquid which Lugala produces completely independently. This is major progress in a hospital where life-saving medication and consumables are often scarce.

Photos: Ezekiel Kabelege today (above) and eight years ago (left)

Focus on health posts

Over the past nine years, SolidarMed has succeeded in significantly improving medical care in Lugala hospital. In addition to quality assurance in the hospital, the SolidarMed doctor Dr Peter Hellmold and his team now support twelve health posts in the catchment area. SolidarMed makes sure the necessary equipment is available, trains the nursing staff and sets up mobile clinics in the villages to ensure women can give birth safely.

From 2019, this magazine will be presented in a new guise. The new look "SolidarMed aktuell" will be longer and offer more detailed information about the projects in addition to interesting background knowledge.

SolidarMed project honoured

The Swiss Society for Infectious Diseases honoured SolidarMed president Dr med. Niklaus Labhardt in the category of "Clinical research of infectious diseases" for an innovative project on the treatment of HIV in Lesotho.



High school graduation with a happy end

As part of her final school project, Arbon high school student Leonie Wartenweiler raised 555 Swiss Francs for SolidarMed by selling delicious Easter cookies. Inspired by her, all three graduating classes of her school decided to raise money for "health in Africa" as part of their graduation ceremony. At different market stalls, pupils offered visitors delicious treats and handmade goodies for a price determined by the customer. This novel approach meant that barbecued sausages were frequently sold for twenty Swiss Francs! In just one hour, the pupils raised 1'417 Swiss Francs. Leonie was very pleased: "I was just overwhelmed and could only thank the approximately 200 people involved." A huge thank you also from us to the graduating classes and their teachers, we wish you all the best for the future!

Looking for a gift idea?

With our gift certificates, you'll place twice the joy under your Christmas tree. Your loved ones will be pleased with the good idea of giving people in Africa urgently needed medical help. You could gift 50 trips with an e-bike ambulance to the next health centre, a first-aid-kit or a baby package. Thank you so much and a very merry Christmas!

It's not long to Christmas! Order your gift certificate and give meaningfully this year.

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Our heartfelt thanks for your support!

"It takes a whole village to raise a child" is a well-known African proverb. And it takes people like you, as well many public, church-based and private institutions to enable the projects with which SolidarMed ensures better health for over 1.5 million people. Many thanks for your support!