



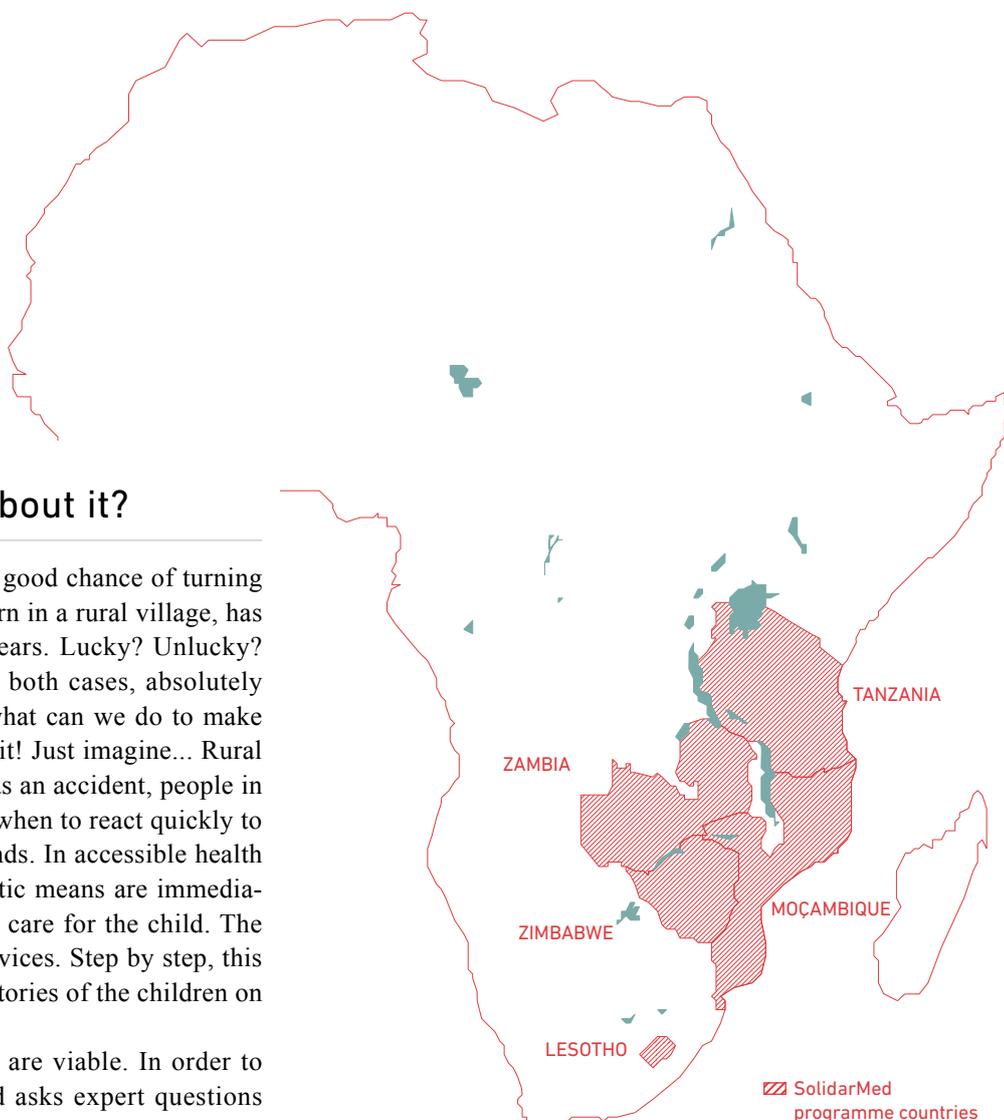
No child's play.

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What can a child do about it?

A child born in Switzerland has a good chance of turning 83 years old. An African child, born in a rural village, has a life expectancy of around 50 years. Lucky? Unlucky? What can a child do about it? In both cases, absolutely nothing. The question is rather, what can we do to make this injustice disappear? Quite a bit! Just imagine... Rural Africa: When a child falls ill or has an accident, people in the villages know what to do and when to react quickly to place the child into competent hands. In accessible health facilities, diagnostic and therapeutic means are immediately and permanently available to care for the child. The child's family can afford these services. Step by step, this vision can become reality, as the stories of the children on page 4 show.

Visions are best when they are viable. In order to find out what works, SolidarMed asks expert questions and finds answers which in turn influence the daily work in the projects. The current HIV programme, for example, is influenced by SolidarMed's successful operational research. On pages 6–7, Dr Niklaus Labhardt reports on a scientific study in Lesotho.

Scientific findings allow SolidarMed to help all people – including the youngest – even better. Join us in our efforts. Thank you for your support!

Dr med Svend Capol, President of SolidarMed

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Photo: Martin Walsert

Life is no child's play

«Do you remember your childhood?» This is more than many children south of the Sahara can hope for. From the first breath, they are exposed to all kinds of dangers to their health. One in 7 children will not live to see their fifth birthday.

SolidarMed visited some children who survived thanks to medical help.

Over 6 million children die worldwide every year – this is the biggest humanitarian catastrophe by far. They are victims of extreme poverty. In many places, this is what defines daily life for the rural population. Here, children are malnourished, their physical and mental development is impaired and they become susceptible to diseases. Of the 18'000 children which die every day, nearly half die from diarrhoea, malaria or respiratory tract infections – all treatable diseases.

Since 1990, thanks to international efforts, mortality amongst children could be reduced by half. Vaccinations, insecticide-treated mosquito nets or better trained health workers are some of the reasons why many children survive today. In SolidarMed's project regions, children benefit from better health care in the villages, from vaccination campaigns, growth monitoring and effective medical treatment in the health facilities.

Thanks to this help, these three children could celebrate their fifth birthday. They are living proof that medical help for children is worth it.





Photo: SolidarMed

Lerato Mokete (5) from Mafika-lisiu Boiketsiso, Lesotho

Life-threatening cold

In April this year, Lerato Mokete from Lesotho had a bad cough and developed a high fever. A concerned family member spoke to 'Me' Mathato Tlali, who had been chosen as a lay health counsellor by her village. Thanks to basic medical training financed by SolidarMed, she recognised Lerato's dangerous symptoms and accompanied her to the next health centre.

The two nurses in the health centre quickly realised that the girl had life-threatening pneumonia and needed immediate referral to the regional hospital in Thaba Tseka. Here, doctors could treat her infection and five days later, Lerato had survived the worst of it.

Thankfully, a well-trained Medical Licentiate was on duty. These are associate clinicians, specially trained by SolidarMed for the needs of rural areas. He diagnosed a fairly serious concussion and a broken wrist. Appropriate medical treatment saved this child's life – and without surgery, his wrist would have remained stiff forever.



Photo: SolidarMed

Life despite HIV

5 year old Tatenda Njeke from Zimbabwe was born HIV positive. Her mother transmitted the virus to her during pregnancy and died of Aids six months after giving birth. The first two years were not easy for Tatenda and her father, who is himself HIV positive. Their deaths seemed just a matter of time.

But since her second birthday, Tatenda has been receiving life-saving therapy from a SolidarMed partner hospital. As long as she carries on taking her medication, the virus will no longer make Tatenda ill. Still, she is very poor and daily life in her simple mud hut is very hard.



Photo: SolidarMed

Solomon Banda (5) from Nyafuka, Luangwa Distrikt, Zambia

Right column: Tatenda Njeke (5) from Bikita, Zimbabwe

Fall from a mango tree

Solomon Banda from Zambia loves climbing trees – most of all when the mangos are ripe. So last January, he went climbing again, hoping for a sweet treat. But his hobby can be dangerous: the branch on which Solomon was balancing broke and he fell, unchecked, three meters down onto the hard ground. His parents immediately carried the unconscious boy for 6 kilometres to Katondwe hospital.

Good chances to survive

These children have survived the most dangerous time for a child in Africa. After the first five years, a child's health is more resilient and chances are good that Lerato, Solomon and Tatenda will grow up and will someday be able to look back on their childhoods.

«SolidarMed protects children»

Only well-functioning hospitals and health centres can effectively treat diseases like malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea. SolidarMed sensitises the population and supports remote hospitals with initial and further training for staff, infrastructure renovation and maintenance, medical equipment and targeted medical and managerial technical support.

Thanks to competent health staff, **Lerato** survived her pneumonia. SolidarMed supports 28 rural health centres in Lesotho with technical advice, training, medical equipment and supervision of the lay health counsellors in the villages.

In **Solomon's** case, a Medical Licentiate reacted quickly and correctly to his head injury. SolidarMed supports the national training programme for MLs in Zambia. The focus of this training is on primary and emergency care, specifically for expectant mothers and children.

Tatenda is alive despite HIV thanks to antiretroviral medication. SolidarMed combats HIV/Aids in all project countries and prevents the transmission of the virus from mother to child. In addition, already infected children receive treatment.

Learn more about the projects for children:

www.solidarmed.ch > Topics > Mother & Child



Photo: Urs Allenspach

Important answers through operational research

An interview with Dr med Niklaus Labhardt

Lesotho has the second highest rate of HIV in the whole world. To make headway against the epidemic, it is indispensable that people get tested for the virus and receive counselling. As part of the HIV project, Niklaus Labhardt tried to discover the most effective ways of reaching people in the rural areas. He undertook a study for SolidarMed to find answers.

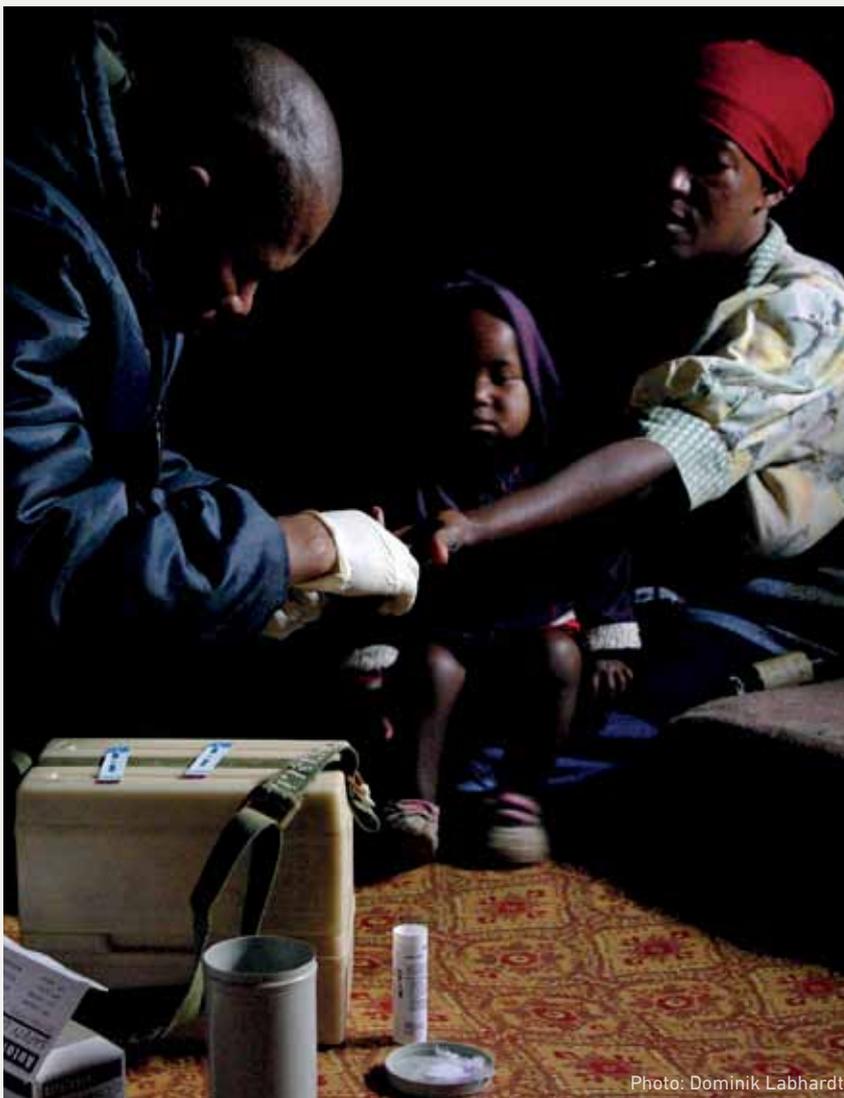


Photo: Dominik Labhardt

SolidarMed: Mr Labhardt, what did your study examine?

Niklaus Labhardt: We compared two different approaches for testing the rural population in Lesotho for HIV. One group of health workers carried out a «Pitso», which is a kind of village meeting. During these meetings, people were informed about HIV and other important health topics. Afterwards, they could be tested in specially erected tents for HIV, diabetes and high blood pressure. The second group went from door to door in the villages, offering families these same tests at home.

What did this comparison show?

It showed that through direct visits at home, more people could be reached that had never had an HIV test before, including many children and men. They had not felt sufficiently spoken to in the public HIV campaigns. However, with the Pitso approach, more new, previously undiagnosed HIV infections were discovered. In our opinion, this is because after being sensitised at a Pitso, people from at-risk groups fear they might be HIV positive, and are more motivated to get anonymously tested in a tent.

Both groups had an acceptance rate of over 90 percent for the HIV test. Even by international standards, this is very high. We assume that integrating other health topics in the campaign lessened the stigma of an HIV test.

Should an NGO like SolidarMed be allowed to engage in research?

Provided one abides by ethical principles and the study has a direct benefit for the people in the projects, it makes a lot of sense to cooperate with the scientific community. SolidarMed regularly carries out HIV test campaigns in remote areas. This gives the infected access to life-saving therapy on time and helps curb the further spread of the virus. As part of this study, more than 3000 people in very remote villages could be tested for HIV and other diseases, which is very much in line with SolidarMed's project work.

What happens with this new knowledge?

It helps SolidarMed with future project planning and shows in more detail what impact the projects are having and where there is still potential for improvement. SolidarMed funds are only used for activities in line with the core tasks of the organisation and which directly benefit the population. In the case of this study, SolidarMed carried out the test campaigns and contributed its experience. The evaluation of the study was externally funded, but the lessons learnt will be useful both to SolidarMed and to the scientific community.

Dr med Niklaus Labhardt works for the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH). In cooperation with SolidarMed, he is carrying out a further study on the «early detection of treatment failure and co-morbidities in HIV patients» in Lesotho. From 2010 to 2012, he was a SolidarMed doctor and project manager in Lesotho.



Research saves lives

For a number of years now, SolidarMed has been carrying out research projects in collaboration with scientific institutions. This allows a systematic review of what works in a project and which areas could be improved. Using operational research, we examine how people can get optimal access to medical care, how to make this care as efficient as possible and what effect this finally has on the patients. SolidarMed tackles these mostly complex research questions in collaboration with partners from the scientific community.

SolidarMed is currently investigating the following questions:

- How can women be persuaded to deliver their babies safely in hospital?
- Can a housing cooperative sustainably provide staff housing?
- Is HIV treatment just as effective in patients who are also infected with Hepatitis B?
- How widespread are chronic diseases in Lesotho?
- How can emergency transport for pregnant women be improved?
- How can HIV patients be kept in life-long treatment?
- What is the effect of a new HIV treatment scheme for expectant mothers on their retention in treatment?

You can find a selection of expert publications here:

www.solidarmed.ch > Info & Media > Publications

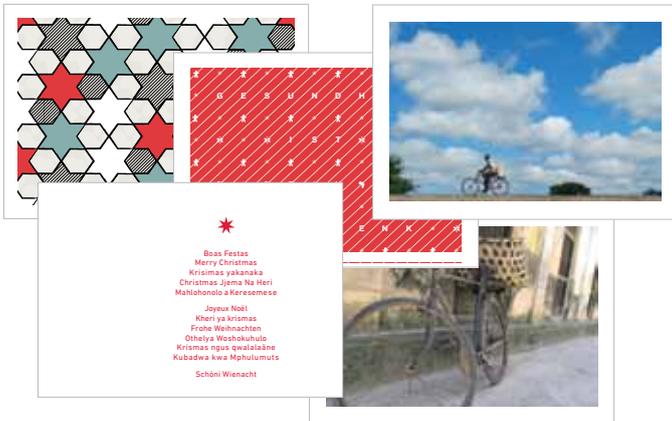
Meaningful giving

Spread twice as much joy with a SolidarMed gift certificate. Put 50 trips with a bicycle ambulance under the tree, so that babies are born safely in a health centre. Or tie a ribbon round a certificate for a first-aid-box. In the name of your loved ones, you can make urgently needed medical help possible. Many thanks and happy holidays!

www.solidarmed.ch > Engagement > Sinnvoll schenken



Christmas and New Year cards from SolidarMed



From now on, you can order special SolidarMed postcards on petiteposte.com with beautiful designs for an African Christmas or New Year greeting.

Petitepost is a platform with unique postcards created by artists from around the world. The cards can be sent online, per mail or ordered for delivery at home so you can write and post them yourself. Per card, 1.– Swiss Frank goes to SolidarMed projects.

www.solidarmed.ch > Engagement > Sinnvoll schenken

Do you remember your childhood?

To remember your own childhood is more than many children in southern Africa can hope for. At the end of October, SolidarMed used a classic child's prank to raise awareness in 17 cities here in Switzerland that in southern Africa, a childhood cannot be taken for granted.

Missed it? Watch the video here:

www.solidarmed.ch > Mediathek > Kampagnen



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Many thanks for your support.

Just a few more weeks and 2014 will be history. A good (his)story for many healthy people in rural Africa. Without the trust and generous support of the many individuals, as well as public, church-based and private institutions, the year would many life-saving moments poorer. Your involvement means health for Africa. Thank you for your support!

