



Media release

Swiss Aids Care International celebrates 10th anniversary

Prof. Ruedi Lüthy's fight against AIDS in Zimbabwe enters a new phase

Zurich, 15 March 2013 – The foundation Swiss Aids Care International celebrated its 10th anniversary yesterday evening at EB Zurich. The foundation set up by AIDS pioneer Prof. Ruedi Lüthy is entering a new phase, with plans to step up the training of local care workers at the Newlands Clinic Training Centre in Harare, Zimbabwe. Newlands itself has developed into a model clinic and training centre in recent years. The search has also begun for a successor as Director of the Newlands Clinic, as Prof. Ruedi Lüthy will be giving up some of his duties in the course of the next year for age reasons.

The essence of Zimbabwe could be felt at the cantonal vocational college EB Zurich yesterday evening, as Swiss Aids Care International celebrated its 10th anniversary with a discussion round and the opening of an exhibition of photographs by Pia Zanetti. Among the 150 or so guests, there were also some well-known personalities – among them State Councillor and member of the Patronage Committee Felix Gutzwiller, former Federal Councillor Elisabeth Kopp, and member of the Foundation Board Patrick Rohr. Patrick Rohr also chaired the discussion round, which lasted about an hour. Here Prof. Ruedi Lüthy, Maya Tissafi, Deputy Director General and Head of the Regional Cooperation at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and two long-standing employees of the Newlands Clinic in Harare talked about the situation of HIV patients in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as the future direction of the foundation and the clinic.

Stepping up the focus on training

Given that the Newlands Clinic has now reached its capacity limits, Swiss Aids Care International wants to further strengthen its focus on training medical staff. In this way, knowledge can be passed on to specialists from clinics across Zimbabwe. This is urgently needed, as the situation for HIV patients in the country remains dire: around 15% of the population are infected with HIV, and most of them cannot afford treatment or have no access to it.

Prof. Ruedi Lüthy: “Ten years ago, I would never have dared hope that we would be where we are today. We are now treating some 4,000 patients at Newlands Clinic, while 250 doctors and nurses visit the Training Centre every year for an intensive course in how to treat HIV. I am absolutely delighted with what we have achieved. We now need to focus on strengthening our training efforts even more. This is the only way that we can make a lasting improvement to the situation of HIV patients throughout Zimbabwe.”

Maya Tissafi, Deputy Director General and Head of the Regional Cooperation at the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC): “By passing on its expertise and experience in the treatment of HIV to medical staff from across Zimbabwe, the Newlands Clinic provides lasting help. Helping people to help themselves in this manner is a key

success factor in developing countries. This is why SDC has also been supporting Swiss Aids Care International financially since 2003.”

The aim is to increase the number of course participants from 250 to 350 by 2014. The Newlands Clinic Training Centre has also been commissioned by the *International Training and Education Center for Health* (I-TECH) of the University of Washington and the University of California to train up to 300 further healthcare specialists from Zimbabwe. At two-week crash courses, the specialists will learn how to treat HIV correctly. With this training, they will be able to independently diagnose and treat the most common complications of the HIV infection stemming from the destruction of the immune system. This also includes monitoring the therapy with laboratory tests. Particular focus is also placed on the treatment of children: there are an estimated 1.1 million AIDS orphans living in Zimbabwe.

Search for a successor is underway

For Prof. Ruedi Lüthy, to whom a long-standing employee paid tribute in a speech, the anniversary also offers an opportunity to take stock. In the course of the next year, the 72-year-old doctor plans to step down from some of his tasks for age reasons. The search is therefore underway in specialist circles for a successor to take over as Clinic Director. Prof. Ruedi Lüthy will give his successor a thorough introduction to their new job, and will remain on site to take part in the training efforts.

Photo Exhibition "10 Years of Swiss Aids Care International"

15 March to 20 April

The exhibition of photographs by Pia Zanetti at EB Zurich (Riesbachstrasse 11, Zurich) runs to 20 April 2013. The exhibition is open to visitors from 8.00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. Monday to Friday, and from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. on Saturday. For further information, please visit www.eb-zuerich.ch and www.fotozanetti.com

Swiss Aids Care International

The foundation Swiss Aids Care International was set up by Prof. Ruedi Lüthy in 2003. It operates the Newlands Clinic in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, providing HIV and AIDS patients with medical treatment and psychosocial support. The Clinic also has an ongoing training programme for local doctors and nurses. Zimbabwe is one of the poorest countries in Africa. Around one million people there are HIV-positive or have already developed AIDS, many of them children. Through the Newlands Clinic and its mobile clinics, Swiss Aids Care International now treats some 4,000 patients and trains more than 250 specialists from across Zimbabwe every year. It also distributes food, and provides extra tuition for children, physiotherapy, and self-help groups. The foundation is funded by donations and by contributions from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

www.swissaidscare.ch

www.facebook.com/swissaidscare