

Riders for Health Zimbabwe update report – January 2008

Ensuring health delivery to communities in rural Zimbabwe

The [Global Health Council](#) published figures in April 2007 highlighting the importance of regular preventive health care. The report claims that two thirds of all child deaths could be prevented through 'inexpensive, effective interventions that target common illness and malnutrition', and that the most effective ways of reducing malaria and other infectious diseases are through effective surveillance and environmental interventions. This is especially true in Zimbabwe where, in 2003, 11% of babies had a low birth weight making them far more susceptible to disease and 45% of the population was undernourished.

With the support of GlobalGiving donors, Riders for Health has been working to reduce the isolation of communities in rural Zimbabwe by increasing the mobility of health workers and other basic service providers.

Reaching the unreached

Since 1996, Riders for Health has supported the delivery of healthcare to remote communities in Zimbabwe by mobilising community health workers within our Transport Resource Management system. The increased mobility of the health workers means that they can make regular visits to communities and schools to give advice on preventive health measures such as basic hygiene, family planning and preventing the spread of diseases such as cholera and HIV/AIDS.

Photo: Community nurse Barbara refuels her motorcycle as part of her daily routine.



In Binga district, for example, one of the poorest areas of the country, Riders is helping health workers like Barbara to reach even the most isolated villages regularly. As the district's family planning worker, Barbara is on the front line in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and her work providing contraception and health education is vital. "It's difficult talking about diseases like HIV," says Barbara. "You need to be particularly sensitive and encourage the listener to trust you".

Photo: Barbara discussing contraception with local communities.



In 2006, Riders' profile in the motorcycling community brought about a donation of 110 appropriate motorcycles for the Zimbabwe programme, as a result of a charity ride held at the end of the year. The motorcycles used for the ride – Yamaha AG200s – have now been handed over to the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, and operate within Riders' TRM system. Following a second ride at the end of 2007, a second lot of 130 bikes have been donated to Riders Zimbabwe. In order to

make the best use of the motorcycles, they will be allocated to health workers who are experienced in riding and maintaining motorcycles, like Barbara, as they have already been trained by Riders to use the smaller AG100. A donation from the charity ride has also been made towards the first year's running costs of these motorcycles.

More importantly, however, this donation of bikes will enable Riders to mobilise more health workers who do not yet have transport, by training them to use the AG100 motorcycles which will therefore become available. Once they have been trained in riding and maintaining the motorcycles, each of these health workers will be able to reach their target community of up to 20,000 people each. Thanks to the support of GlobalGiving donors, Riders will be able to train more health workers, such as Barbara, to ride these bikes, allowing them to do the job they were trained to do and reach thousands more men, women and children with health care – not just once, but on a regular basis.

The International Academy of Vehicle Management

Riders' International Academy of Vehicle Management in Zimbabwe has continued to grow as a respected centre of excellence for training in safe riding, driving and vehicle maintenance. From Jan to Nov 2007 the Academy had a total of 351 delegates from a wide range of organisations, from international NGOs such as Oxfam to local community hospitals. This is the highest number of delegates we have had per annum since the establishment of the Academy in 2002. 39 of the delegates that attended in 2007 benefited from a bursary scheme which is provided for members of smaller organisations. Delegates came from organisations such as Environment Africa, the Tsungirirai Centre and Farm Orphan Support Trust Zimbabwe:

Photo: A trainee learns to ride at the IAVM.



Environment Africa

- Works to raise awareness, encourage action and advocate a better environment that uplifts the livelihoods of current and future generations
- Provides training and helps set up income generation and food security projects.
- The Manica branch is currently providing 240 farmers with training in small grain production and start-up seed packs to improve people's self-sufficiency and combat the effects of possible droughts.
- *"The course is really valid. We look forward to a confirmed working relationship. Keep up the teamwork and cheerfulness of the staff. They were really encouraging and fun to work with."* Herbert Munyaradzi
Samusodza, Environment Africa



Photo: Trainees learning to ride on sand and grass.

The Tsungirirai Centre

- An AIDS Service Organisation whose focus is to see a significant reduction in HIV incidence in the community.
- Targets orphans and vulnerable children, people living with HIV/AIDS, youths and the community at large with HIV/AIDS training, home-based care to improve the quality of life of sufferers and the provision of basic needs. They also establish income-generating projects for the community resulting in poverty reduction.
- *“The course was very informative and enabled one to master the basic motorbike management skills.”* Stephen Zuze, field officer Tsungirirai Centre

Farm Orphan Support Trust Zimbabwe

- Provides a child nutrition programme, reaching 24,000 children directly across Zimbabwe, and 46,000 indirectly through the training of teachers.

- Also provides emotional and psychological support programmes for orphans; supports 70 children-headed households across Zimbabwe.

- *“Most of these disadvantaged children live off unbelievably bad roads. Riders enables us to get to these communities.”* Director, FOST.



Photo: Communities receiving health care from an outreach technician

“It really motivates and gives me a great sense of satisfaction when people come in for training scared and jittery, and at the end of the training they will be enjoying it so much we have to force them off their bike! You can tell what it means to them and the difference it will make to the way they will do their work of helping the needy.” Alfred Gongu, principal of the International Academy of Vehicle Management.

Since the IAVM opened five years ago, Alfred has helped to train 1,364 delegates. These delegates have then gone back to their communities with the ability to reach far more people and provide basic services and health care on a more regular and cost-effective basis.

Thank you

None of Riders’ achievements in 2007 would have been possible without the generous support we have received through GlobalGiving. On behalf of all the people in Zimbabwe who are now able to access the kind of healthcare services the developed world takes for granted, Riders for Health would like to say “thank you”.

For more information

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