

Swaziland



An HIV positive mother is examined during pregnancy and given advice as part of the Red Cross programme.

The small State of Swaziland in southern Africa has one of the world's highest AIDS prevalence rates. Roughly 26% of the adult population are infected with HIV out of a total of 1.1 million people. More than 10,000 people are also suffering from tuberculosis (TB). The average life expectancy is 47 years. Thousands of children grow up without parents.

The Swiss Red Cross (SRC), the Swaziland Red Cross and the health authorities have developed a comprehensive strategy to combat this tragedy. Since the end of 2004, the SRC has been working in education and prevention and offering AIDS therapies. It has also been providing home care for AIDS patients and supporting AIDS orphans.

The fight against tuberculosis was included in the programme in 2009, because the number of infections was rising dramatically. There is a direct link between the two diseases: as AIDS weakens the immune system, it makes people susceptible to infection with TB. Four out of five tuberculosis patients are therefore also HIV positive.

Treatment and care at home

In the Red Cross clinics in Sigombeni and Mahwalala the Red Cross is providing voluntary rapid tests and counselling.

Another clinic is currently being built in Silele. AIDS patients are given antiretroviral therapies and TB patients receive life-saving medicines. Shortly before giving birth expectant mothers are treated with medicines that prevent the virus being transmitted to their newborn babies. In this way, thousands of newborn babies are saved from infection. Very many people who previously had no chance of survival, were given a new lease on life.

In the catchment areas of the clinics Red Cross volunteers regularly visit patients and their families at home and provide support with their everyday problems. Even if a patient does not turn up at the clinic for the monthly distribution of medicines, Red Cross volunteers go out to find them. In this way continuous treatment is guaranteed – because this is essential for the success of the therapy.

Self-help with community vegetable gardens

So that AIDS and tuberculosis patients are not made even weaker from malnutrition, the Red Cross gives out foodstuffs and provides support for growing beans and other vegetables. The self-help groups supported by the SRC run community gardens or sewing workshops that enable them to earn some



income. So that orphans can also go to school, the Swiss Red Cross pays their school tuition fees.

The Red Cross works in close collaboration with the local health authorities. The comprehensive AIDS therapy programme serves as a model. Many of the SRC's experiences have been integrated into the national AIDS policy.

Prevention still important

Despite progress in treatment therapies, it is still the same story: AIDS cannot be cured. It is still just as important to prevent infections whenever possible. The Red Cross is therefore running education campaigns in addition to treatment. Special attention is paid to addressing men as well. Since the start of the SRC's commitment, the number of voluntary AIDS tests taken in the catchment area has risen considerably. It can also be noted that people are talking much more openly about the disease and that AIDS patients are less likely to suffer social exclusion.

Special attention is paid to teaching children and teenagers about the disease early on using an age-appropriate approach. The SRC trains young people who go into schools and public events to put on theatre plays about important AIDS-related issues. This includes, for example, how to behave around friends with AIDS or how young girls can protect themselves from sexual exploitation.

Swaziland



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| Population: | 1,1 million | 7,4 million |
| Surface area | 17 364 km ² | 41 285 km ² |
| Life expectancy | 47 years | 82 years |
| Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 births) | 390 | 5 |
| Child mortality (< 5 years) | 8,3% | 0,5% |
| TB infection rate (per 100,000 inhabitants per year) | 1250 | 5 |
| HIV infection rate | 26% | 0,4% |

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| SRC catchment area: | Sigombeni, Mahwalala and Silele |
| Beneficiaries: | 30,000 people in the catchment area of the clinics |
| Costs per year: | 1.2 million francs |

The SRC relies on financial support for its work abroad.

We would be grateful for any donations on post-office account 30-4200-3, endorsement *Swaziland*. Thank you very much for your contribution!