

Riders for Health Zimbabwe update report – May 2008

Reaching the unreached – bringing the benefits of 21st century health care to rural communities across Africa

In Zimbabwe, GlobalGiving donors have been supporting the training of Environmental Health Technicians (EHTs) in riding and the basic maintenance of motorcycles. This report provides feedback of the progress made by Riders and the impact this will have on the communities of rural Zimbabwe.

Each health worker in rural Africa dealing with disease prevention is responsible, on average, for 20,000 men, women and children scattered across hundreds of miles of rugged terrain. Without transport we know that only those people living within a radius of five kilometres of the health worker's base will be seen on a regular basis. However, once mobile, the health worker will see all of the people they serve within any given month. This makes a huge difference as health workers do an incredibly important job. They deal with family planning, HIV/AIDS prevention and care, child immunization, clean water and sanitation, mother/child monitoring and care, malaria prevention, tuberculosis care, nutrition and other health issues. They link with clinics on patient referrals and carry out home-based care, which reduces the numbers of chronic cases in hospitals.



In 2006 and 2007, Riders' profile in the motorcycling community brought about a donation of 240 appropriate motorcycles for the Zimbabwe programme, as a result of charity rides. The motorcycles used for the ride – Yamaha AG200s – have now been handed over to the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, and will operate within Riders' transport management system. Thanks to the support we received through GlobalGiving, Riders has been able to train EHTs on these bikes so that they will be able to reach their communities with regular health care.



Photo: Health workers being taught basic maintenance procedures.

The training of the health workers has now been completed in six provinces: Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Manicaland, Masvingo, the Midlands and Matabeleland South. This means that 75 health workers are now using the AG200s for their life saving work, reaching over one million men, women and children across the six provinces. They have been trained not only to ride their motorcycles safely, but also to keep their bike in good order between each servicing with a daily maintenance routine. This preventive maintenance should ensure that no break-downs occur and that

the motorcycles last their full mechanical life-span.

Alfred Gongu and his team from Riders' International Academy of Vehicle Management undertook the training. "The work of the Environmental Practitioner involves a lot of travelling across some very rough terrain and with a motorcycle, this travelling is made easier. All areas are reached in time, with improved or enhanced performance," said Alfred.

"I hope the bike will go a long way in serving people in hard to reach areas, such as the Mudzi District. The area is so prone to zoonotic diseases¹ and other communicable diseases like cholera, dysentery just to mention a few," said Stephen Matiza an EHT from Mashonaland East.

"I am just undergoing training but the benefits of the motorcycle are immeasurable. Public Health in the Mashonaland Province would undoubtedly never be the same again," commented Edwin Tembedza, another EHT from Mashonaland East.

Photo: Edwin Tembedza with his new bike.

With the recent marking of World Malaria Day, the importance of regular access to rural communities for health workers was made even more apparent. Malaria is easily curable and treatable and yet kills a child every 30 seconds. Health workers need to be able to reach communities to supply bed nets, insecticides, anti-malarial drugs and awareness and education on a disease which claims the lives of over a million people each year, mostly in Africa and mostly children.



In Binga district, for instance, 16 health workers, all mobilised within the Riders system, as responsible for the fight against malaria. They are now reaching people over a 250km wide area, advising the villagers on the necessary precautions, distributing nets and tools for disinfections, and instructing volunteers on how to use them to keep their villages malaria-free.

Photo: A health workers teaching a volunteer to use insecticide.

Thank you

None of Riders' achievements 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 health care services the developed world takes for granted, Riders for Health would like to say "thank you".

For more information

Riders for Health
3 New Street
Daventry
Northants
NN11 4BT

0044 (0) 1327 300047
rfh@riders.org
www.riders.org

UK REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1054565

¹ The term 'zoonotic diseases' refer to diseases that are transmitted from animals to humans (and humans to animals). In rural Zimbabwe, this particularly refers to malaria, typhus and ringworm.