

## Riders for Health Zimbabwe update report – September 2008

### Reaching the unreachable – bringing the benefits of 21<sup>st</sup> 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.*

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.

Riders have now completed the training of the government's EHTs in the last two provinces,

Matabeleland North and Mashonaland Central. Training has also been carried out for the Harare units. In this case, Riders' Alfred Gongu, who carried out all the training of the EHTs, placed a greater emphasis on defensive driving in traffic. Riders would like to thank all the donors on GlobalGiving for allowing us to complete this training and give EHTs in all eight provinces and in Harare the transport they need to reach their communities, day in, day out.

These EHTs play a crucial role in putting in place basic preventive health measures and raising awareness about the importance of hygiene and sanitation as well as providing treatment to rural communities across Zimbabwe. EHTs may be the only health practitioners some families in rural Zimbabwe see for months and even years.

Michael Marime in an EHT from Mashonaland Central who received a new motorcycle and training in riding and basic maintenance in July.

"From the time I received the motorbike I have managed to cover the entire Province, supervising our malaria control programme. I have also been able to assist many people during the floods at Chadereka and helped to control an outbreak of cholera. I also use it to make follow ups of TB patients and to carry out shop inspections to prevent food poisoning."

*Photo: Michael Marime with his bike at his first training session in Mashonaland Central.*



Michael has also been able to assist in many health studies that have been carried out in the region, including the potential side effects of some insecticides used. Using the motorcycle as a mode of transport has been very helpful as, with the scarcity of fuel in the country and the rising prices, cars became a problematic and expensive forms of transport. The motorcycle has also been very useful for carrying out distributions of bed nets and condoms.

"I fully support districts using motorcycles, as they are a reliable mode of transport. Really motorbikes are saving lives in my area of operation," reported Michael.

*Photo: The training of the EHTs on the donated AG200s.*



Gupo Marizani is another EHT from Mashonaland Central who received a new AG200 and training from Riders.

"From the time I received the motorcycle, I was able to cover five Wards. Before I received the bike I was using a bicycle and sometimes I used to walk which made it very difficult for me to cover a large area," says Gupo.

"I am working in the Dande Valley where cases of malaria are very high throughout the year but with the motorbike I am able to carry out social mobilisation in all areas in my Wards. The bike also played an important role during the floods experienced in the Muzarabani area. I used the bike to distribute tents for temporary latrines and aqua tablets for water purification. At the same time, I was also giving talks on health education to the community."



"Over this period, there was also an outbreak of cholera in Chadereka village. The bike helped a lot in carrying out all the duties required so as to save the lives of the people in Chadereka Ward. Thank you."

*Photo: An EHT visit a rural school to teach the children about malaria.*

All these EHTs have been trained to maintain as well as ride their motorcycles. The daily checks they are taught to carry out on the bikes

will ensure that these do not break down and continue to operate reliably, allowing the health workers to see any member of their community at any time. This is a very important element of Riders' work as it ensures the sustainability of the programme and builds up the skills base within the communities. It will also instil a culture of preventive maintenance, which is so important to the survival of all vehicles operating across the rugged African terrain.

Riders outreach technicians will also travel out to the EHT's base to carry out a more thorough and technical service on the bikes on a regular basis. This outreach maintenance also means that the EHTs never have to take a day away from their communities to get their bikes serviced. These Riders technicians are all local men and women trained to the highest international standards.



*Photo: Patients waiting to receive treatment at a clinic*

### **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 and the Environmental Health Workers who are now able to properly carry out the work they were trained to do, Riders for Health would like to say "thank you".

### **For more information**

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