

Sabine Lüthy and Swiss Aids Care International – a meeting of two worlds

The Swiss Aids Care International foundation was set up by Prof. Ruedi Lüthy in 2003 with the aim of providing medical treatment for people suffering from HIV and AIDS in Harare, Zimbabwe. Since 1 January 2012, his daughter Sabine Lüthy has led the foundation as CEO. Almost one year on, we take a look at the story so far.

After graduating from university, Sabine Lüthy worked for more than ten years as a journalist and presenter at Swiss radio station DRS. The switch to her current job at the foundation might seem surprising, particularly as it appears to be so different from her previous role. But the two jobs have more in common than first meets the eye. Although this is a new area of work for Sabine Lüthy, it is one where she can put to use the skills that she learned as a jour-

nalist. Running the foundation requires a good understanding of human nature, empathy and the ability to communicate. She also trusts her gut instincts. As a journalist, Sabine Lüthy developed a very reliable intuition for whether or not people were being honest. This helps her a great deal in her new job, as charitable projects such as Swiss Aids Care International often also attract people with a range of different motives.

–Sabine Lüthy and her father Prof. Ruedi Lüthy.

Swiss Aids Care International: treatment for AIDS sufferers and lasting help in Zimbabwe

The foundation was established by Prof. Ruedi Lüthy in 2003. It runs the Newlands Clinic in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, along with mobile treatment units where impoverished HIV and AIDS sufferers receive medical treatment and psychosocial care free of charge. The foundation now provides care and treatment for almost 4,500 patients and every year trains over 250 specialists from across the entire country. The offering is complemented by other services including food donations, private tutoring for children, physiotherapy and self-help groups. Swiss Aids Care International is funded mainly by donations as well as contributions from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

For more information, visit www.swissaidscare.ch and www.facebook.com/swissaidscare

Support from Galenica over many years

Galenica supports the foundation not only financially but also with special promotions. This year alone, a child's drawing from the Amavita "Children help children" campaign was chosen as the subject of the Christmas card. The Galenica Group also made a cash donation as a Christmas present. At the MediService Anniversary Symposium, CHF 15,500 was raised from selling portrait photos and from the speakers agreeing to waive their fees. Half of this went to Swiss Aids Care International, with the other half going to the Theodora foundation. Amavita sent 500 hairnets to the Newlands Clinic, where they are being worn by nurses and laboratory staff. The Sunnemärit pharmacy in Adliswil ran a wheel of fortune at the "Albisstrassenfest" street festival and was consequently able to donate CHF 2,000.



About Sabine Lüthy

_Sabine Lüthy (43) grew up in Zurich. She studied journalism and communication at the University of Fribourg. From 1996 to the end of October 2011, she was employed at Swiss radio station DRS. After completing an internship, she initially worked on the regional programme "Regionaljournal Zürich". She then joined the in-house editorial team in Berne before finally moving in 2004 to DRS3 in Zurich, where she was presenter and editor on the talk programme "Focus" and on "Input", a programme carrying background reports on various topics. Sabine Lüthy lives in Muntelier, Canton of Fribourg, with her husband and two sons. Since January 2012 she has been CEO of the Swiss Aids Care International foundation.



_Sabine Lüthy in conversation with Bethule Nyamambi, whose roles include heading up the Newlands Clinic training centre.

A new challenge each day

_Sabine Lüthy shares her duties as CEO with her deputy. These are many and various, and include contact with sponsors and benefactors, organisation of events, media work, and communication with the clinic in Harare. Consequently, Sabine Lüthy travels a lot. "As is no doubt the case for many working women and men, my life is a constant tightrope act, and it is a fresh challenge every day to fit everything in", says Sabine Lüthy. It would be all but impossible without the support of her family, as the boundaries between her work and her private life often become blurred. But her husband and children are 100% behind her and her new job.

Reconciling two different worlds

_The huge contrast between wealthy Switzerland and impoverished Zimbabwe is sometimes difficult to bear. And the different mentalities also lead to problems on occasion. Agreements are, from a Swiss perspective, often broken, while supposedly binding commitments get "forgotten" with no explanation. At the same time, the Shona (the largest population group in Zimbabwe) are very similar to the Swiss: their modest, friendly nature means that contact with them is a pleasure. It is also not always easy for Sabine Lüthy to be working alongside her own father. The two are very close, share the same ethical values and think alike, but their temperaments are very different. "After 42 years of having a father-daughter relationship, we had to learn to get along at work as well", she says. "But we've grown to be a good team." The clear separation of duties also helps

here. Prof. Ruedi Lüthy is the doctor in charge of the Newlands Clinic in Harare, where he mostly lives, while Sabine Lüthy takes care of the operational management of the foundation in Switzerland.

Continuing to run the foundation is a big responsibility

_As the person who established the foundation, and still being a very influential figure, Prof. Ruedi Lüthy played a big part in his daughter's change of job. The foundation is his life's work. For Sabine Lüthy, it is an enormous privilege to be carrying on this work in the same spirit as her father. She sees this duty more as a kind of legacy, and she wants to put all the necessary care, as well as a lot of passion, into keeping it going in future.

_The foundation's fundamental vision also remains the same under the leadership of Sabine Lüthy: to provide lasting help to impoverished HIV and AIDS sufferers. "Lasting help" means not only providing regular treatment and care to patients, but also supporting them in other ways (see box).

Loyal donors support Swiss Aids Care International

_For Sabine Lüthy it is therefore important for the foundation to be able to keep adapting to changing conditions. This means constantly re-examining the chosen strategy, not least because the foundation has to compete with other non-profit organisations. "Swiss Aids Care International has to make sure that it isn't forgotten", says Sabine Lüthy. She says that her father, Prof. Ruedi Lüthy, is still better known than

the foundation itself. Work has to be done to address this. A lot of PR work is also needed. Thanks to the Patronage Committee and its prominent members, who include former Swiss Federal Councillor Ruth Dreifuss, there is public awareness of the foundation. And the foundation receives support from a loyal donor base, which includes the Galenica Group. "Galenica and its subsidiaries have been supporting us for many years with amazing commitment and a lot of creativity. We are very grateful for these strong ties!" says Sabine Lüthy.

Courage and curiosity – the prerequisites for running the foundation in future

_Sabine Lüthy hopes the foundation can keep going for a long time yet, and that it can continue to serve its purpose. She also hopes that – like her father before her – she will have the courage to keep taking on innovative projects and seeing them through. It is important for her personally that she is able to contribute to making things a little better for a few people at least. Sabine Lüthy feels her attitude is best embodied by something the Dalai Lama once said: "Our prime purpose in life is to help others. And if you can't help them, at least don't harm them."

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