



**MMS Bulletin #125**

*HIV, AIDS and Advocacy*

---

**“Zvandire programme” in Zimbabwe**

**“Make us the last generation to be born with HIV”**

Von Nicola Willis and Andreas Keller

*HIV positive children and adolescents are at the heart of the “Zvandiri” programme, taking the lead as peer counsellors, trainers and advocates for the needs of their HIV positive peers, both locally and internationally. With innovative and colourful actions they are campaigning for the access of children antiretroviral drugs and caring, supportive environments.*



Africaid is a community-based organisation based in Harare, Zimbabwe which is committed to helping HIV positive children and young people to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence to cope with their HIV status and to live happy, healthy, fulfilled lives. Africaid has been implementing its Zvandiri programme since 2004 at a time when access to medical care and treatment was increasing for HIV positive children and adolescents, yet gaps remained in understanding and addressing the psychological and social needs of this vulnerable group and how they impacted on clinical care and support.

Six HIV positive adolescents asked Africaid to help them establish a support group. They named their group “Zvandiri” as they wanted to say “I am a child with HIV, but accept me as I am”. This one support group has since evolved in to the “Zvandiri” model which provides holistic care for HIV positive children and young people through a combination of health services, psychosocial support and care, training and advocacy. These are provided through community-based services which are integrated within the clinical care provided by government and private clinics. This integration creates a robust continuum of care for children and young people with HIV and their families and aims to promote their health and psychosocial outcomes.

**An exhibition, camapaign and a mock graveyard**

HIV positive children and adolescents are at the heart of the programme, taking the lead as peer counsellors, trainers and advocates for the needs of their HIV positive peers, both locally and internationally. They have embarked on a variety of different advocacy campaigns which they have designed and implemented themselves.

In 2012, in commemoration of World AIDS Day, they created their own art exhibition which was held at Zimbabwe's national Art Gallery. The exhibition was named "The Audacity of Hope" and through their own artwork, including paintings, photos, sculptures, song and dance, the children from Zvandiri expressed their renewed hope for life as a result of access to treatment, care and support. They called on policy makers, donors, service providers, civil society and communities to ensure that children with HIV continue to receive antiretroviral drugs and can grow up in caring, supportive environments.

In 2011, the children from Zvandiri designed their own stigma campaign in response to the international campaign "Getting to Zero new infections, Zero HIV-related deaths and Zero stigma and discrimination". They designed their "Bury Stigma, Resurrect Love" campaign which has involved HIV positive children and adolescents talking in schools and communities about their experiences. Their aim is that people have a better understanding of what it means to be living with HIV and that they can feel and be treated like any other child in their classrooms and communities.

Also in 2011, adolescents with HIV from Zvandiri joined together in an extremely moving, powerful campaign, launched at the Zimbabwe's National HIV Conference. The focus of the conference was the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) and young people from Zvandiri used this platform to once again call on policy makers and donors. They constructed a 'mock graveyard', representing the thousands of children who have died in Zimbabwe as a result of HIV. This exhibit grew through the week long conference as conference delegates were invited to paint the name of a child they have known who died with HIV. The result was a thought-provoking reminder of the urgent need to prevent new HIV infections in children. The adolescents who created this exhibition led visitors around the graveyard, explaining that PMTCT programmes must be rolled out and that they must work. They summarised this by asking delegates to "Make us the last generation to be born with HIV".

Through activities such as these described above, children and adolescents from Zvandiri are making brave decisions and taking bold steps to stand up and speak out about their experiences. They are determined to improve the lives of their peers, both now and in the future. With the appropriate support, so that they are not harmed in any way through these activities, they are impacting on individuals and society and changing the way Zimbabweans think about, feel and respond to HIV.

*\*Nicola Willis is the founder and Director of Africaid and has been leading the development of Africaid's "Zvandiri" programme. . She is a paediatric HIV nurse from the UK but has been working in Africa since 2002. <http://africaid.co.uk/>*

*\*Andreas Keller is a secondary school teacher from Switzerland employed through Bethlehem Mission Immensee and supports Africaid in training youth in computing and modern media as well as in creating teaching materials. Kontakt: a.keller2@gmx.ch*

The work of Andreas Keller at Africaid is supported by Bethlehem Mission Immensee, Switzerland, Member of the Network Medicus Mundi Switzerland



## **Kontakt**

### **Deutschschweiz**

Medicus Mundi Schweiz  
Murbacherstrasse 34  
CH-4056 Basel  
Tel. +41 61 383 18 10  
info@medicusmundi.ch

### **Suisse romande**

Medicus Mundi Suisse  
Rue de Varembé I  
CH-1202 Genève  
Tél. +41 22 920 08 08  
contact@medicusmundi.ch

### **Bankverbindung**

Basler Kantonalbank, Aeschen, 4002 Basel  
Medicus Mundi Schweiz, 4056 Basel  
IBAN: CH40 0077 0016 0516 9903 5  
BIC: BKBBCHBBXXX