

Media release

The fight against HIV/AIDS in southern Africa must continue

Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis visits Ruedi Lüthy's HIV clinic in Zimbabwe

Bern/Harare, 10 January 2019 – As part of his state visit to southern Africa, on Wednesday, 9 January 2019 Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis visited Newlands Clinic in Harare, Zimbabwe. Founder Ruedi Lüthy showed him personally around the HIV clinic and the attached training centre. Federal Councillor Cassis emphasised the importance of Newlands Clinic to the fight against HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe. The clinic has been supported since its foundation in 2004 by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). It holds regular courses to train local specialist staff. Most recently, it held the first international pilot course for nurses from the SADC region.

During the tour, Federal Councillor Cassis and his delegation were able to see the everyday work of the clinic at first hand. Ruedi Lüthy and Chief Executive Sabine Lüthy guided their distinguished guests through the various departments, where Federal Councillor Cassis had the opportunity to speak with both staff and patients.

Federal Councillor Cassis, who is himself a doctor, appeared impressed: "Professor Ruedi Lüthy and his team are doing an outstanding job, which is now reaching out into Zimbabwe's neighbouring countries. Combating HIV and AIDS is one of the key objectives of Swiss development cooperation work in southern Africa, and Newlands Clinic makes an important and lasting contribution to those efforts by passing on its knowledge to local specialists."

Ruedi Lüthy, founder of Newlands Clinic: "Our team and I are deeply honoured by Federal Councillor Cassis's visit. For 15 years now, we have put heart and soul into caring for our patients, and it is essential that everything possible be done to continue the fight against HIV/AIDS. There are some 40,000 new infections every year in Zimbabwe, and the only way to overcome the epidemic is to have well trained specialists on the ground. We are exceptionally grateful for the enormous support that we receive from the SDC. Without this partnership, what we have achieved here in Zimbabwe would have been impossible. We hope that, in the future, we will be able to expand the training we offer still further. There is an urgent need in southern Africa for this life-saving knowledge."

Successful international pilot course

The SDC has supported Newlands Clinic financially since 2004. In addition to treating around 6,500 patients from the poorest backgrounds, it continually trains medical specialists from Zimbabwe in HIV management. With the support of the SDC, in October 2018 the clinic successfully conducted an international pilot course for 20 nurses from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland and Zambia. The two-week course was held at Newlands Clinic Training Centre, and offered practical insights into treatment, in addition to theoretical knowledge on HIV therapy. To date, a total of around 3,400 doctors and medical specialists from Zimbabwe have completed a course at Newlands Clinic and are now applying their knowledge in clinics throughout the country. There are a total of around 700,000 new infections and more than 300,000 AIDS deaths in SADC countries each year. Some 38 % of people with HIV/AIDS live in the region.

Highly effective treatment

The viral load is key to the success of HIV treatment. Almost 90 % of patients at Newlands Clinic have a viral load that is fully suppressed, and thus cannot pass on HIV via sexual contact, or via childbirth or breastfeeding. This outcome is on a par with that in Switzerland and other western countries. Treatment at Newlands Clinic costs an average of CHF 800 per year, per patient. In Switzerland, the equivalent cost is around CHF 25,000. In addition to life-saving treatment, Newlands Clinic patients receive nutritional support, and young adults can complete basic vocational training that gives them prospects for the future.

Images:

You can download high resolution pictures here:

www.ruedi-luethy-foundation.ch/en/news/bundesrat-cassis.html

Pictures: Andrew Philip, Harare

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The Ruedi Lüthy Foundation was set up by the Swiss AIDS specialist Prof. Ruedi Lüthy in 2003. The purpose of the Foundation is to provide comprehensive care to HIV and AIDS patients in Zimbabwe. The disease is widespread in the country, with 1.3 million people living with HIV/AIDS (14 %), and more than 40,000 new infections each year. Based in the capital, Harare, Newlands Clinic provides long-term outpatient care to some 6,500 patients from the poorest backgrounds. It also continually trains local specialists in HIV management. www.ruedi-luethy-foundation.ch/en/home

The objective of the SDC's regional programme in Southern Africa is to reduce the scale of poverty, inequality and vulnerability in the region. The SDC's support concentrates on two major issues of key importance to development: fighting HIV/AIDS and enhancing food security. Humanitarian aid is also provided on an ad hoc basis, in response to specific crises or natural disasters. SDC support aims to reinforce policy at the national level among the countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and to facilitate the development and implementation of regional standards on these different issues. <https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home.html>