



ESPOIR

Association Espoir pour Demain–Lidaw and Hope Through Health Fight HIV/AIDS

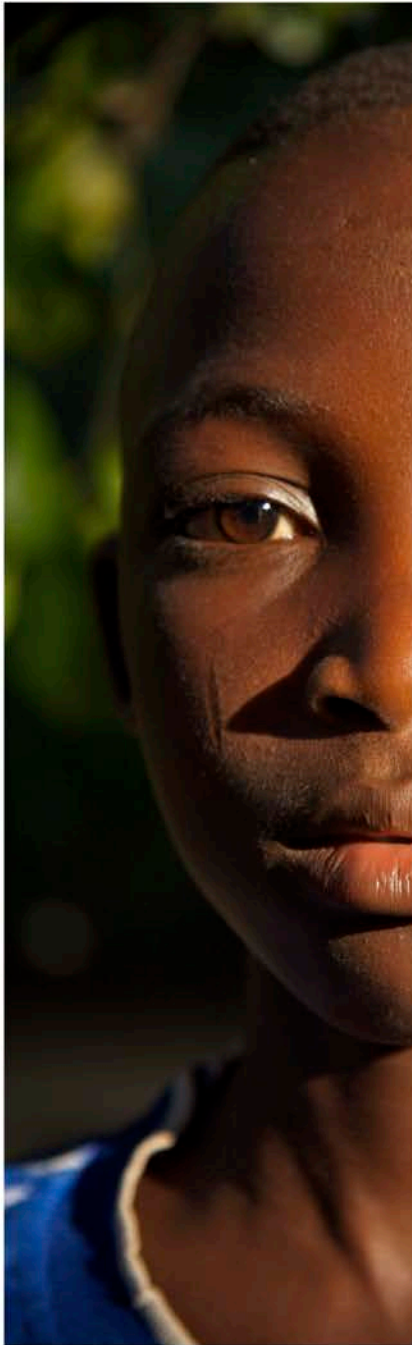
IS HOPE

Written and Photographed by Jared Macary
Edited by Paige Lapen

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2 A lush, August day in the mountains above the village of Pya in Togo, West Africa.

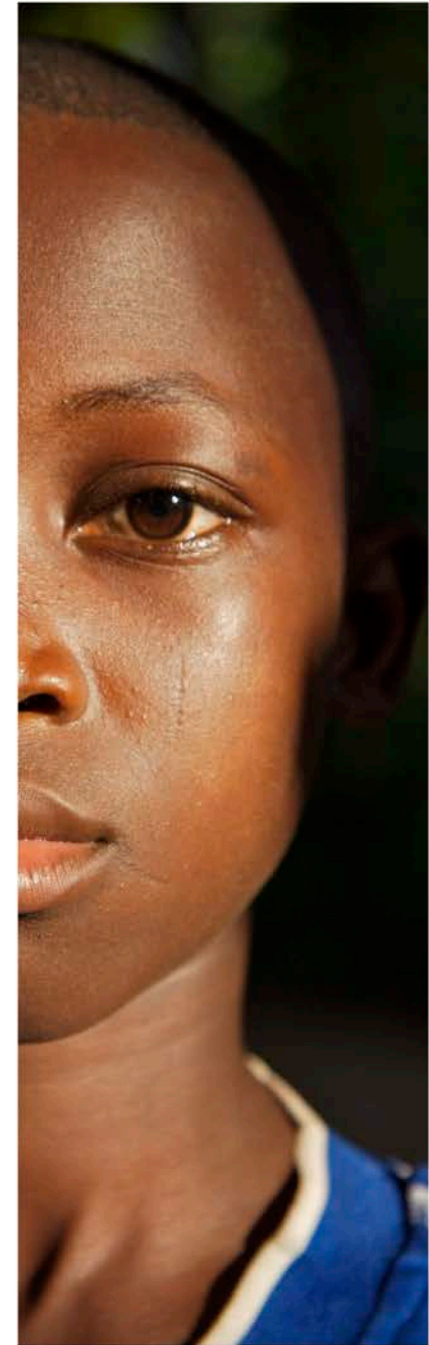


The French word *Espoir* translated into English is *Hope*.

HOPE |hōp| noun

A universal feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.

- a person or thing that may help or save someone: *their only hope is treatment.*
- grounds for believing that something good may happen: *he does see some hope for the future.*



Hope. Espoir. Lidaw.

An Introduction by Kevin Fiori, Jr.

Hope. Espoir. Lidaw. Transcending differences in culture and language, these three words share the same meaning.

When I began working in Togo as a Peace Corps volunteer in December 2003, Association Espoir pour Demain–Lidaw (AED–Lidaw) had less than fifty patients, offered no medical services, and had no paid staff. Six months later, there was a plan – *our response*.

This profound act of pragmatic solidarity initiated my great experiment with hope. I established Hope Through Health, a Boston–based non–profit, to meet the needs of the men and women who placed their confidence in my colleagues and me.

Today, our response is a community–based healthcare model serving over a thousand patients. We have four sites that offer comprehensive medical and psychosocial services with over ninety

committed Togolese professionals working as doctors, counselors, pharmacists, and community health workers.

Progress has not come without cost. We hold onto the memories of our friends and colleagues for whom our response came too late. It is in their memory that we improve our work and sustain this fight.

Through Jared's photography and writing, I hope you enjoy meeting the members of this growing movement. I hope you see that this movement has just begun and has no limits. And I hope you can find a way to join us. Visit Hope Through Health at www.hthglobal.org.

Kevin Fiori, Jr. is Co–Founder and Associate Director of Hope Through Health.



Friends and fellow AED-Lidaw members laugh beside Aida's demonstration of hope.



The Subject Remains

The shutter clicks. The man on the bicycle continues uphill. He pedals methodically against the grade. I return to my subject. Sunlight ignites its facade. Overhead, a storm approaches from the south.

I adjust my camera's exposure. I capture several more photographs, but I know the moment has passed. I look for the man. Clouds drift in front of the sun. The landscape darkens as if victim to an eclipse. The sky rumbles. Lightning flashes. Rain begins to fall.

I shield my equipment and run toward an open door of the AED–Lidaw clinic. I arrive just as a deluge prevails. I look back at where I stood. Wind tosses corn stalks and bends palm trees. Water carves the dirt road.

The man is gone. The subject remains.

At War

HIV/AIDS will kill you. It does not care who you are or what you do. It has no conscience and respects no laws. Its origin remains unknown and it continues to grow. You do not want HIV/AIDS. You want to live.

In the city of Kara, in the country of Togo, West Africa, someone died and someone else made a promise: never again will death strike so easily. To protect those they love, AED–Lidaw joined international partner Hope Through Health to solidify financial and technical assistance.

Together, dedicated hands built a medical and psychosocial clinic while compassionate hands united to expand health and social justice. Today, loving hands continue to reach out and embrace those who others have turned away.

Until there is a cure for HIV/AIDS, AED–Lidaw and Hope Through Health will fight. They will continue to provide hope through solidarity. They will continue to save lives.



A graveyard outside Pya, Togo.



An AED-Lidaw member holds his daughter in his lap.



Action

Ruth has a fever. It should pass, but then again a larger infection could be at work. And Ruth is living with HIV.

Ruth's primary caregiver is her fifteen year-old sister, Yvonne. Both their mother and father have passed away. Yvonne wants action. The physician's assistant listens.

We know this scenario. The details may be foreign, but at its core it speaks of our trust in science and medicine to fix what is wrong. AED-Lidaw and Hope Through Health provide a place to go with people who can help. Yvonne knows that she can get results because she's had them before. This is not Ruth's first time getting sick.

While the international community considers prevention versus treatment or how it should provide treatment, AED-Lidaw and Hope Through Health provide services and support to meet the daily needs of their members.



12 Regular visits by AED-Lidaw members to medical staff are expected and free of cost.



Physician Assistant Ketenga leaves no stone unturned as he checks Ruth's vitals.



Boris, an AED-Lidaw member, listens to an AED-Lidaw community health worker.



AED-Lidaw community health workers conduct home visits to monitor living conditions.

Identity

A man stands in a courtyard holding his daughter. They live with HIV. They are AED-Lidaw members and they allow me to photograph them.

In Togo, like many parts of the world, HIV/AIDS is stigmatized. To be open about one's infection is to be shunned. Disease dominates identity. No one wants to forfeit the system of support they have gained in their communities. Subsequently, many people will not submit to a blood test. One woman says, "Why would I want to know if there is nowhere to go?"

AED-Lidaw is more than a destination for people living with HIV/AIDS. It is a movement. AED-Lidaw and Hope Through Health not only provide health education and consultation, direct patient care, and anti-retroviral medication, AED-Lidaw and Hope Through Health provide security. When others reject, AED-Lidaw and Hope Through Health accept.

The face of the pandemic is changing. No longer fraught with despair, the visage more closely resembles hope.



Bode supports his daughter Wallia. Both are AED-Lidaw members.



Commitment

My name is Kapitan Abalo. I am the coordinator of the Orphans and Vulnerable Children program at AED–Lidaw. I am thirty years old, single, and without children of my own.

I am one of six children born to my mother and father. Our mother left when we were young. Our father was a farmer. Alone, he was responsible for feeding and caring for us when sick. He drank to overcome these difficulties. I became responsible for paying for my own education. I am the only one from my family to go to University.

My oldest sister married when she was sixteen years old. She became infected with HIV/AIDS. She died at the age of twenty-one. She left behind a baby. The baby died shortly after my sister.

I was shaken by the death of an innocent child. It is my passion to come to the aid of people living with HIV/AIDS. I do what I can. To help an infected child is to return hope to the world of tomorrow.



18 Jean-Peirre, or J.P., is an AED-Lidaw member.



Farida is an AED-Lidaw member.

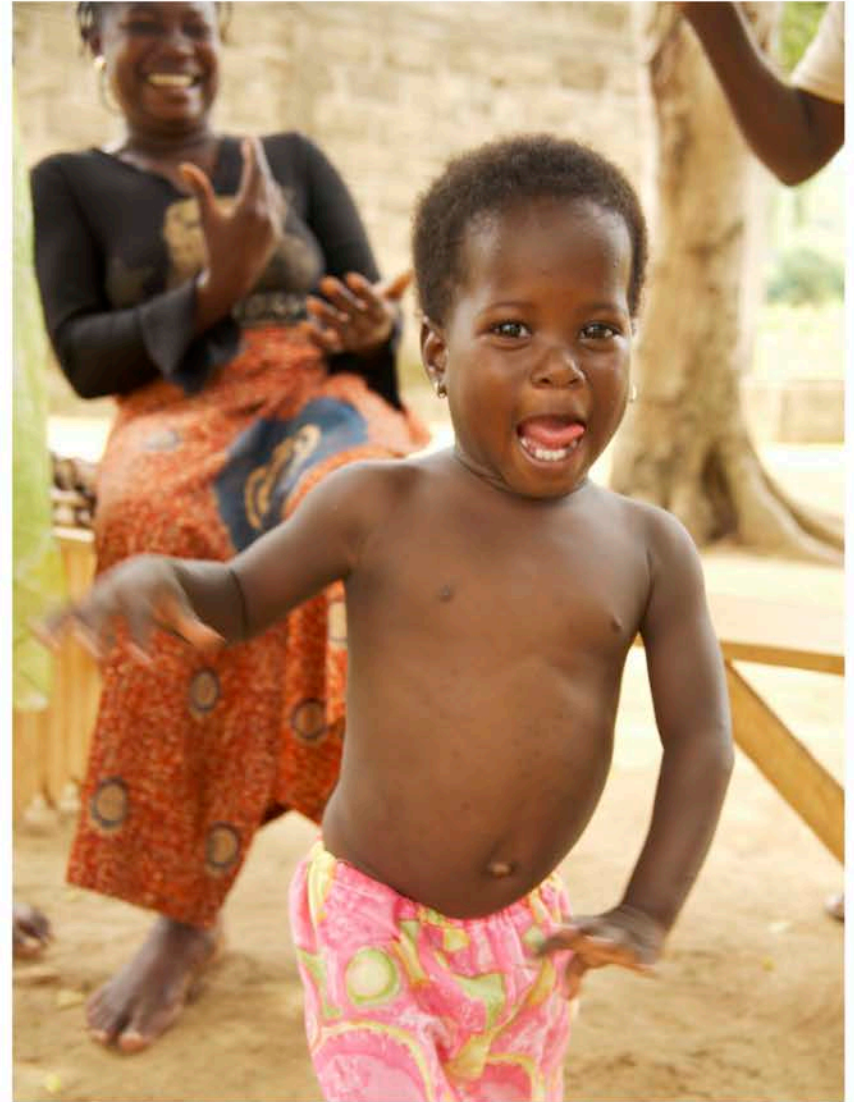


Lamatou is an AED-Lidaw member.





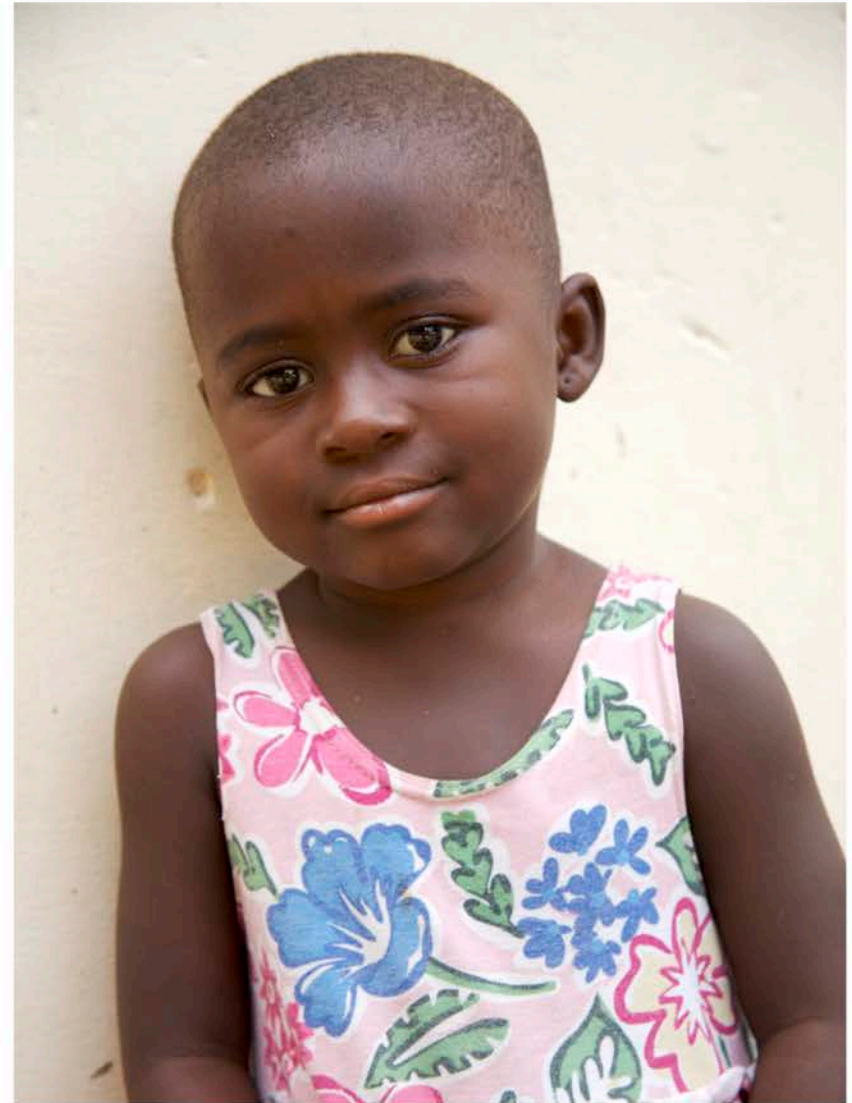
Sadat is an AED-Lidaw member.



Irene is an AED-Lidaw member.



22 Sani and his mother are AED-Lidaw members.



Ruth is an AED-Lidaw member.



Not all AED-Lidaw members are infected. All, however, are affected. Clockwise: Yvonne, Solim, Massa, and Frank.

Another Angle

The lens of my camera sees only what I see. I want to go deeper. I want to see what an AED–Lidaw member sees.

Mekizani has lived with HIV since a failed blood transfusion at the age of ten. Today, she is a visible and vocal member in the AED–Lidaw community. She is a role model.

I present Mekizani with two point–and–shoot film cameras. She tears the glossy packaging and runs her fingers over the flash, lens, and trigger button. I give her a notebook and several pens. I instruct her to photograph anything she desires and document her selections.

Mekizani has used a camera once or twice before our meeting. I refresh her with an abbreviated lesson in operation and technique. Through it all, she smiles widely.

Eight selected images by Mekizani follow.



AED-Lidaw member Mekizani shares her world.





One Woman's Mission

Rose Takes Action

Rose invites me into her home. The month is August, yet a Christmas stocking hangs by the doorway. A portrait of Christ and a calendar sporting Pope Benedict XVI adorn a far wall. Rose slips out of her shoes and brushes aside a curtain to enter her living room. I proceed to take off my shoes. Rose stops me, saying that I am her guest.

I first met Rose in 2005 when I was shooting a short, promotional video for AED–Lidaw and Hope Through Health. Rose, who lives with HIV, was unable to leave her home. Bedridden, she was receiving steady IVs as well as regular home visits from other AED–Lidaw members. Even then, Rose was determined to stay alive.

Much healthier now, Rose describes her pet project. To generate income, Rose processes and sells enriched dry porridge, or farine, to AED–Lidaw. AED–Lidaw incorporates Rose's product into nutritional supplement kits for members.

Previously, a comparable product was purchased by AED–Lidaw from another regional capital. Following a budget analysis, AED–Lidaw determined that it could produce its own at a lower cost. Rose, a long-standing member, was enlisted.

Rose operates out of her home. She retrieves large basins of corn, rice, soy, and millet from under her furniture and launches into the

process. The grains are roasted over an open flame and are cooled before being ground at the mill. Rose hand-mixes the powders then returns home to measure out the portions. She places the enriched porridge into plastic bags, careful to force out as much air as possible before sealing.

Rose makes porridge for both children and adults. The contents of the children's porridge include rice, fish, corn, soy, millet, and sugar. Adult contents include all of the preceding coupled with tapioca and spaghetti.

I notice the labels Rose adheres to each completed bag. Due to widespread illiteracy, the product for children receives an image of a baby wearing a bonnet while product for adults receives an image of a female golfer completing her swing.

Rose hopes to expand her operation. She would like to include Kara's main hospital in her business plan. She would also like to produce and sell soymilk, yogurt, and soy cheese. Although Rose lacks a refrigerator to jump-start such a venture, she is confident that it will happen when the time is right.

HIV/AIDS took Rose's daughter, but the disease won't take Rose any time soon: "I will fight until death," she says. "I will not only fight for myself. I have to fight for others. You must have love for others."



Rose, with the help of her younger sister, Abire, prepare grain for the mill.



Rose stores all the raw materials and the final product in her living room.



Innocence

Jon and Bienvenu are participants in Camp Espoir. Their friendship is immediately evident. AED–Lidaw, Hope Through Health, and the United States Peace Corps combined in 2004 to initiate the Espoir Campaign.

As HIV/AIDS kills, it destroys family structures. Infected and affected children left without parental support lack the crucial emotional and financial assistance necessary to advance.

The Espoir Campaign helps orphans, like Bienvenu, realize their full potential by connecting support systems, supplementing nutrition, paying school fees, and creating a carefree environment for children who often act as head of their household. Camp Espoir and its sister program, Club Espoir, provide a safe venue for a game of Capture the Flag, a lecture on improved study skills, improvised theater or even a lesson in tae kwon do.

Children remind all of us of our younger selves. They remind us of our optimism. They give us hope.



32 An AED-Lidaw member heads to jail during a game of Capture the Flag at Club Espoir.



Participants collaborate during a time management workshop at Camp Espoir.



Simonne is an AED-Lidaw member.



AED-Lidaw members Aida and Massa learn tae kwon do at Camp Espoir.

Espoir

An Interview With Hope

The paint is chipping. The metal is rusted. In the many times I have been here, I do not think I have ever seen a child navigate the playground. Today, however, is different.

Sylvie arrives on the back of a motorbike. She cradles her infant son in her arms. I position mother and child before my video camera. The interviewers are to my right. I run a sound check. Everything is a go.

The first few questions help put Sylvie at ease. Her son is very cooperative. As the interview progresses I hear a familiar word repeat through my headphones.

We take a break. I alter the frame and ask for clarification of what I am hearing. I am told that, yes, the boy's name is Espoir.

After the interview, Espoir discovers the slide and jungle gym for the first time. Sylvie guides his discovery by hand and voice, yet he never loses sight of her. Espoir is not sure how far he can go.

I am allowed to take pictures and am beside myself with what the lens reveals. Espoir is a healthy infant, but more than that, he is the future.

Espoir's mother is living with HIV. Espoir, however, was born, and remains, HIV negative. AED-Lidaw and Hope Through Health engage pregnant mothers in proven regimens of

medication and support to curb pediatric HIV/AIDS infection. Segments from the video interview have been transcribed as follows:

Interviewer (I): When did you discover that you were HIV positive?

Sylvie (S): I went to see my doctor at six months for a prenatal consultation. He asked me to do a test to know how I should deliver my child. I accepted. The test came back positive.

I: What was your reaction?

S: The day I received the results I was very scared. People die of AIDS. I will die. I didn't have hope. Death awaits me. The doctor told me that there are clinics for women who are positive. We could save the life of my child.

I: What about your husband?

S: The first day he was equally scared, but the following day he went and took his HIV test. He is positive as well. He said that we must save the life of our child. I went to AED-Lidaw.

I: Can you tell us about your relationship with AED-Lidaw?

S: When I first came to AED-Lidaw, I saw the coordinator of PTME (Prevention of Transmission from Mother to Child). She gave me advice.



A mother holds out her hand to her son. Both are AED-Lidaw members.



S (continued): She gave me medication to safeguard my unborn child. I wasn't sure about all of it. I have HIV. I will die even if I take the medication. I thought of my child. I figured that it couldn't hurt, so I took them. I always returned for the coordinator's advice. She always said it was going well.

I: Can you tell us about the birth?

S: I delivered the child under normal conditions. They gave me Nevirapine. After the birth they gave Nevirapine to the child as well. They told me not to breast-feed. I started with artificial milk. I followed how to prepare and give the milk. They told me to wait eighteen months before having my child HIV tested. After eighteen months, I went. The coordinator received the results. I spoke to her over the telephone so that she could give them to me. She told me that she could not do that. I would have to come in to see her. I was very worried. I did not sleep that night. I found the courage and I went to the coordinator the next day. She sat me down and told me that my child was negative. I was so happy. I didn't know how to thank God. My child is negative. AED-Lidaw and Hope Through Health have helped me. My child is negative. He can live like all the other children.

I: How did you decide to name your son Espoir?

S: My husband and I decided long before that we were only going to have one child. When I discovered that I was positive, I didn't know how I could do this. If he is born, he will be alone. We decided to give him the name of hope. We had hope that God would say something good to us. We had hope that our child would be negative.

I: How is Espoir doing?

S: He is very animated. He never leaves me alone. He has only had a small infection. He eats everything. He is not sick.

Espoir is the future. He is just one example of an HIV negative child born to an HIV positive mother. As I write, AED-Lidaw and Hope Through Health continue to expand. They continue to support new and existing members. They continue to provide hope through action.

Visit Hope Through Health's website at www.hthglobal.org to learn more about events, programming, and how to donate to the AED-Lidaw/HTH partnership.

While it only takes one act to become infected, it only takes one act to support and educate many. One person can ignite hope and make a difference. Let that person be you.



Photo of Jared Macary by Michael Wasson.

Jared Macary first joined AED–Lidaw and Hope Through Health in 2005. Today, he continues to explore advocacy through media as the Communications Specialist Consultant to HTH. For more information about the author visit www.jaredmacary.com.

Paige Lapen joined AED–Lidaw in 2004 when she was invited to help plan Camp Espoir as a Peace Corps volunteer in Togo. At her 2007 wedding, Paige gave away red AIDS ribbons woven by AED–Lidaw members. For more information about distributing red ribbons visit www.hthglobal.org.

Espoir Is Hope is dedicated to all members of AED–Lidaw and Hope Through Health. This book exists not only to celebrate their commitment to one another, but to let the rest of the world know what is possible.