

# REGIONAL NEWS

## SOUTHERN AFRICA

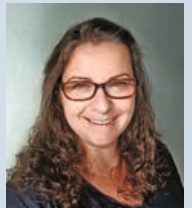
### Editorial

DEAR READERS

Simone Sievi's *Swiss Fondue in Africa* is a powerful memoir that blends the innocence of childhood with the rawness of war, seen through the eyes of a Swiss girl raised in Southern Rhodesia. What makes it so compelling is its honest confrontation of identity—how it feels to belong nowhere and everywhere at once. Sievi's voice is both personal

and political, offering rare insight into life under dictatorship, racial tension, and cultural dislocation. Her storytelling is enriched with moments of humour, love, and deep humanity, reminding readers of the resilience of the human spirit. This memoir doesn't just recount history—it makes it feel personal, urgent, and deeply relevant.

WARM REGARDS, GISELA PIERCEY



GISELA PIERCEY,  
EDITOR «SWISS REVIEW  
SOUTHERN AFRICA»

South Africa:

## Swiss Fondue in Africa – Growing Up in a Country at War

Simone Sievi's memoir, *Swiss Fondue in Africa – Growing Up in a Country at War*, is a vivid, heartfelt account of growing up in Southern Rhodesia during a time of political upheaval and social transformation.

Born the youngest of four daughters to Swiss parents, Simone's life began on African soil, yet always shadowed by European traditions. Her father's deep love for African

wildlife and flora shaped her own bond with the wilderness from a young age. She recalls a barefoot childhood, full of freedom, curiosity, and a quiet tension between belonging and displacement. Though she carried Swiss blood, she considered herself a white African—a label that brought both pride and complication. Her early years were shaped by the contrast of cultures: British colonial snobbery versus Swiss egalitarianism.

While her peers ate marmite sandwiches at school, her lunch comprised pungent Swiss cheeses. She was immersed in African nature but raised in a home where the adults spoke a language she did not understand.

### A Nation at the Brink

As the country descended into guerrilla warfare, Simone's family chose to stay—a decision that would irreversibly shape their future. The war, framed by the broader Cold War, pitted Rhodesians against Russian- and Chinese-backed forces. Violence, fear, and uncertainty became part of daily life. Simone's youthful optimism was challenged by the very real dangers surrounding her. Her memoir captures these moments not through political analysis, but through the honest lens of a child trying to make sense of chaos. She brings to life the emotional complexity of growing up amid conflict—with humour, raw honesty, and even satire. The narrative asks readers: who truly



'Simone with her Dad in the Makabusi'.



'Sievi Family Portrait'. Simone second from the right.

owns the land we live on, and what does belonging mean?

#### Dreams Redirected

From an early age, Simone aspired to become a doctor, driven by compassion and a love for healing. But financial limitations stood in her way, and her parents chose another path for her. She studied Pharmacy at the University of Zimbabwe, where she was the only white student in her class. This experience deepened her understanding of race, community, and the social inequalities around her. After graduation, she chose to serve in rural hospitals, where she provided medical care to black patients with humility and empathy. Her story is not one of attachment to

privilege, but of service offered freely, and with heart.

#### Love, Loss, and Legacy

Simone met her husband in Zimbabwe and later joined him in running a tourism business in South Africa's Drakensberg Mountains. Together, they built a life—and a livelihood—around their shared love for the land, had two children, and bred a small herd of Jersey cows for milk to make cheese. They still manage their lodge, a restaurant and cheesery, a tour company, and a craft shop. Simone, a self-taught ceramic artist, also runs a Paint on Clay workshop and sells her art across South Africa. Her ceramic pieces and paintings, often inspired by animals and landscapes, echo her deep connection to the African wilderness. She splits her time between the Drakensberg and a private nature reserve in Hoedspruit, where she writes and creates in solitude.

#### The Brutal Cost of Belonging

In 2001, Simone's parents became victims of politically motivated violence in Zimbabwe. They were attacked by young men claiming to be war veterans—a consequence of Mugabe's incitement against white citizens. Simone and her family cared for her parents during their final years in South Africa,

far from the Swiss Alps but safe and loved. This tragedy, though deeply personal, is framed within a wider reflection on racism, propaganda, and political manipulation. She bears witness to what happens when a government fuels hatred and suppresses truth.

#### A Voice from the Margins

Throughout *Swiss Fondue in Africa*, Simone Sievi addresses uncomfortable truths. As a Catholic, she reflects on harmful practices within the Church—especially toward children—topics that remain painfully relevant today. She challenges the reader to reconsider inherited prejudices and blind loyalty to power. Her perspective is shaped by living under dictatorship, where propaganda drowned out citizens' voices and human rights eroded over time. Her writing is as much a political testimony as it is a personal memoir. She speaks with the voice of someone who has seen both sides of freedom—and who understands its price.

#### Moments of Humour and Humanity

Despite the darkness, the book sparkles with anecdotes that bring laughter and warmth. There are holidays crammed into a family car with six females and one beleaguered father. There's the absurdity of high-brow Swiss Embassy luncheons amidst African turmoil. She remembers Christmas trees lit with real candles in the summer heat, and silver tinsel mailed from Switzerland. There's the memory of sleeping under the stars at Lake Kariba, and even catching crocodiles from a boat at midnight. Driving lessons with her Shona aunt facilitate cultural exchanges filled with laughter and learning.

#### A Memoir for Our Time

Simone Sievi's book is more than a personal history—it's a mirror held



'Dad and his four daughters in the Makabusi Woodlands'. Simone on the left.



up to our world today. Her reflections on xenophobia, dictatorship, cultural identity, and resilience resonate far beyond Africa. In an age when autocracy and inequality are on the rise again, her voice feels urgent and necessary. She reminds us of the value of empathy,

the power of truth, and the importance of never taking peace for granted. Through her story, readers are invited to walk barefoot through Africa's beauty and sorrow, and come away changed. *Swiss Fondue in Africa – Growing Up in a Country at War* is

not only Simone Sievi's story—it is a voice for every ordinary person caught in the extraordinary machinery of history.

## Zimbabwe and Zambia

# Swiss-South African Scientific Cooperation shows strong results

The 7th Swiss-South African Joint Committee meeting on Scientific and Technological Cooperation took place in Bern in March 2025. The session, opened by SERI head Martina Hirayama and South African Ambassador Sello Moloto, reviewed successful ongoing collaborations and explored new opportunities.

Since the bilateral agreement was signed in 2007, both countries have built strong ties through institutions like SERI, SNSF, and South Africa's NRF. The Swiss Leading House for Africa, operated by the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute and

University of Basel, will continue to launch joint project calls during the 2025–2028 ERI period.

Over 120 projects have been funded since 1962 through Swiss Government Excellence Scholarships, and the 2008 bilateral programme has supported long-term collaboration. A key milestone was the 2021 SNSF-NRF lead agency agreement, renewed in 2023, which has since funded 16 joint projects. A notable example includes the Bilateral Research Chair in Blockchain Technology.

## Wiederwahl

Bei den Wahlen für die ASR Delegierten (Region südliches Afrika) für die Wahlperiode 2025 -2029 wurde Hans-Georg Bosch einstimmig von den zurückerhaltenen Wahlresultaten wiedergewählt.

Hans-Georg Bosch hat die Wahl angenommen und wird für weitere 4 Jahre dieses Amt ausüben. Ein grosser Dank geht an Gisela Piercey, Wahl-Koordinatorin für diese Wahlen, welche diese effizient und transparent durchgeführt hat.

## SWISS CLUB INFO

### GAUTENG

#### SWISS SOCIETY ALPINA

Pretoria,  
Contact: *Ross Blignaut*, President  
C 082 851 0202  
[swissclub.alpina@gmail.com](mailto:swissclub.alpina@gmail.com)  
[ross.blignaut@gmail.com](mailto:ross.blignaut@gmail.com)  
Facebook: Swiss Club Alpina Pretoria

#### SWISS COUNTRY CLUB

31 Moerdyk Street, Midrand  
Contact: *Max Waspe* 083 412 0161,  
T 011 805 3039  
[office@swissclubjhb.co.za](mailto:office@swissclubjhb.co.za)  
Website: [www.swissclubjhb.co.za/](http://www.swissclubjhb.co.za/)

#### SWISS COUNTRY CLUB REST

«The Courier», T 011 805 3040  
*Devan Govender*, C 079 519 3563,

Tue-Sat 11-21h30 Rest./kitchen,  
Sun 10-17h, 11-24h Bar

■ Our Clubs of Society: Amicale Suisse Romande, Boccia, Skittling Club.  
Associated Groups: Swiss Choir, Swiss Rifle Club, Swiss Golf, Senior Swiss Circle meets every 2nd Saturday of the month for Lunch, Swiss Ladies meet every 4th Thursday of the month for lunch.

#### PRO TICINO PRO GRISCHUN BOCCIA CLUB

Johannesburg  
Contact: *Felix Gerber*  
[gerber.felix@icloud.com](mailto:gerber.felix@icloud.com)

### CAPE TOWN

#### SWISS SOCIAL AND SPORTS CLUB

P.O. Box 2279, Cape Town, 8000  
Contact: [info@swissclub.co.za](mailto:info@swissclub.co.za)  
PRESIDENT: *Christian Schiess*,  
[president@swissclub.co.za](mailto:president@swissclub.co.za)  
C 079 088 8233

VICE PRESIDENT/Treasurer: *Andreas Reichmuth*, [treasurer@swissclub.co.za](mailto:treasurer@swissclub.co.za)  
C 083 297 3803  
SECRETARY: *Chayenne Rusi*,  
[secretary@swissclub.co.za](mailto:secretary@swissclub.co.za)  
C 082 569 8446

#### SWISS RIFLE CLUB CAPE TOWN

PRESIDENT: *Dierk Lüthi*, C 083 441 4626  
[hdluthi@gmail.com](mailto:hdluthi@gmail.com)  
SECRETARY: *Eric (Pops) Fraser*  
C 072 570 2915, [popsfraser@gmail.com](mailto:popsfraser@gmail.com)  
*Marcel Matusik* C 082 650 0662  
email: [treasurer@swissrifleclub.capetown](mailto:treasurer@swissrifleclub.capetown)  
website: <https://swissrifleclub.capetown>  
Facebook: swiss rifle club - cape town & swiss rifle club cape town.

■ We shoot at the Navy's KLAVER shooting range off Red Hill road above Simon's Town, near "Just Nuisance" grave. Occasionally we use the Atlantis 'Good Hope' range of the SA Army. In May we

hold our popular 'Piggy Shoot' at the WCSU range, also near Atlantis.

## KWAZULU-NATAL

SWISS CLUB NATAL

Durban

PRESIDENT: Kurt Bacher,

Contact: [kurtbacher@mweb.co.za](mailto:kurtbacher@mweb.co.za)

<http://www.swissclubnatal.org.za/>

■ JASS EVENTS: This is held on the second Friday of each month and will commence at 2 p.m. and is held at Rolf Klein Jass Stube, 3 Bona Terra Road, Assagay (directions on our website).

■ SPORT TARGET SHOOTING: Held on the 4th Saturday of each month (weather permitting) commencing at 08:30 a.m.- Nottingham Road (calendar available on our website).

\*For more up-to-date information regarding times/venues/directions, please visit our most informative website – [www.swissclubnatal.org.za](http://www.swissclubnatal.org.za)

## LIMPOPO

SWISS CLUB FAR NORTH

Modjadjiskloof

Contact: Francois Schwalb

C +27 76 945 3948

[francois@zz2.co.za](mailto:francois@zz2.co.za)

CLUB SUISSE DE MAURICE

PRESIDENT: Rudolf Koller

C +230 5 802 55 50

[clubsuissedemaurice@gmail.com](mailto:clubsuissedemaurice@gmail.com)

Facebook: <https://fr-fr.facebook.com/swissclubmauritius/>

## HONORARY CONSULATE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

### DURBAN

CONSULAT HONORAIRE DE SUISSE /

HONORARY CONSULATE OF SWITZERLAND IN DURBAN

Flat 1, Retford Hall

151 Lena Ahrens Road, Glenwood

Durban 4001

AFRIQUE DU SUD

T +27 83 767 28 32

Email: [durban@honrep.ch](mailto:durban@honrep.ch)

### BOTSWANA

CONSULAT HONORAIRE DE SUISSE /

HONORARY CONSULATE OF SWITZERLAND IN GABORONE

Bryte Risk Services Botswana

P. O. Box 1221, 7th Floor Building 2

(Fairscape Tower) Fairscape Precinct,

Plot 70667, Gaborone, Botswana

T +26 771 54 3491 or +26 73 635 010

Email: [gaborone@honrep.ch](mailto:gaborone@honrep.ch)

### ZAMBIA

CONSULAT HONORAIRE DE SUISSE /

HONORARY CONSULATE OF SWITZERLAND IN LUSAKA

697 Kalambo Road, North-End DBD

Lusaka, Zambia

T +260 211 224 580 or +260 211 225 436

Email: [lusaka@honrep.ch](mailto:lusaka@honrep.ch)

### NAMIBIA

CONSULATE GENERAL HONORAIRE DE SUISSE /

HONORARY GENERAL CONSULATE OF SWITZERLAND

IN WINDHOEK

Craft Café Namibia

Namibia Craft Centre

Old Breweries Building

40 Tal Street

Windhoek, Namibia

Telephone and Fax: +264 816 507 075

### MAURITIUS

CONSULATE GENERAL HONORAIRE DE SUISSE / HONORARY

GENERAL CONSULATE OF SWITZERLAND IN PORT LOUIS

24, avenue des Hirondelles

Quatre Bornes, Mauritius

T +230 427 55 07

Email: [mauritius@honrep.ch](mailto:mauritius@honrep.ch)

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[info@swiss-moving-service.ch](mailto:info@swiss-moving-service.ch)

## IMPRESSUM

### DELEGATES OF THE ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA

Hans-Georg Bosch, [aso@hbosch.com](mailto:aso@hbosch.com)

OSA – Delegate of the Council of the Swiss Abroad responsible for Southern Africa and representing Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Pierre-Yves Roten, [pyroten@mac.com](mailto:pyroten@mac.com)

OSA – Delegate of the Council of the Swiss Abroad responsible for Southern Africa and representing Mauritius

Gisela Piercey, [giselapiercey@gmail.com](mailto:giselapiercey@gmail.com)  
Editor of Swiss Review Southern Africa

### NEXT REGIONAL ISSUE DEADLINES

Issue	Next Deadline	Distribution
04/25	08/09/2025	03/10/2025
05/25	22/11/2025	19/12/2025

FOR ADDRESS CHANGES, PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICIAL SWISS REPRESENTATION IN YOUR COUNTRY AND DON'T EMAIL THE EDITOR OF SWISS REVIEW SOUTHERN AFRICA. THANK YOU.