



Improving access to healthcare in Zambia

Philips MediQuip brings quality healthcare closer

Who/Where

71 hospitals throughout the Republic of Zambia covering an area of 752,614 km².

Challenge

To modernize the healthcare infrastructure of this challenging country over a period of seven years from 2002 to 2009.

Solution

A sustainable MediQuip solution for a refurbished referral structure in healthcare by implementing diagnostic imaging and surgical services with a substantial training and education component.

Modernizing healthcare

Zambia is an emerging country with a poor infrastructure of roads, telecommunications, electricity and water. Medical facilities are spread over vast distances which can be extremely difficult for patients to reach. What's more, 90 percent of the equipment used in Zambian hospitals was obsolete. So in 1997, the Zambian government initiated a strategic plan to "improve proper diagnostic and treatment capability and to take quality healthcare services as close to the family as possible". The Dutch government was asked for financial and strategic assistance in rehabilitating the hospitals and a project team was established to develop the plans.

Proven partnerships

The seven-year healthcare infrastructure project cost a total of €25 million and was financed by the Dutch and Zambian governments. Philips Healthcare was responsible for the initial feasibility study, project design and implementation. With a decade of experience in large-scale healthcare projects in emerging markets, it was a natural choice. Philips understood that supplying and installing the equipment would not be enough; to make the project truly sustainable it had to build on existing infrastructures and provide essential training for local people.

It was this understanding that was one of the key factors for the success of the project. Philips put in place a comprehensive project management program from evaluating the infrastructure to training and maintenance. By building on resources and skills local facilities were created that could continue after the equipment was installed. This included rehabilitating some facilities, ensuring a clean water supply, access to electricity and management expertise.



"It is no longer necessary for Zambians in any district to have to be carried long distances to Lusaka or the Copper Belt in order to get X-ray or diagnostic attention. For that we're very grateful."

Mr Rupiah Banda, Vice President of Zambia

PHILIPS

MediQuip solves a complex project

Philips Healthcare opened a branch office in Lusaka and selected local partners to handle surveys, construction, distribution and logistics. Eight local engineers were also recruited to install and maintain the new equipment. It proved to be a crucial decision as the branch office played a vital role in overcoming many of the unique challenges faced by the project team.

Mark Coppens, Project Manager from Philips Large Scale Projects explains the dilemma; "Zambia is a landlocked country so everything had to be trucked over land. How do you get 50 containers of medical equipment across Africa?" It was decided to transport it from Durban to the Zambian border. To reduce the risk of hijacking, the equipment was sent in six batches via convoy. There was also the rainy season to contend with, which made the terrain extremely difficult to navigate.

Rebuilding healthcare provision

Thankfully the team eventually delivered the equipment to where it was required.

But installing it came with its own problems too. Many of the medical facilities had to be improved prior to installation, from new walls and roofs to new sewage systems.

Planning for future success

One of the key challenges that Zambia faces is retaining skilled medical workers and improving its maintenance. Philips set up a center in Lusaka for ongoing training including X-ray and ultrasound courses for more than 200 local hospital staff. A "training the trainer" program was also put in place along with a team of biomedical maintenance engineers to ensure the future success of the scheme.

A rewarding partnership

Thanks to a co-ordinated effort this complex medical project is now delivering quality healthcare where it's needed most. After implementation, more than 90% of the equipment was operational, a remarkable achievement that exceeds medical industry standards.



"69 X-ray rooms have been rehabilitated alongside 26 operating theatres, 27 sterilization rooms and 10 dental treatment rooms and this is commendable."

Dr B Chituwo, Minister of Health,
Republic of Zambia



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