A Unique Partnership

Premature and sick babies are being treated at two specialty centers in the eastern Congo thanks to a unique partnership between Congolese hospitals, Global Strategies and Birthlink, a British non-profit organization. The relationship began three years ago when two Congolese nurses from Global Strategies’ programs traveled to Rwanda to attend a Birthlink seminar. Today that partnership has evolved into a broad initiative that provides treatment for 6,000 babies per year and offers specialized instruction for Congolese nurses in the care of their smallest patients.

“Working through partners is part of our DNA at Global Strategies,” says Global Strategies Director of Finance and Operations Sloane Drake. The organizations saw an immediate opportunity for synergy. Over the past decade, Global Strategies has developed strong relationships with local partners.

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caring for babies in the Congo. Birthlink knew how to take the next step, having helped improve neonatal outcomes through better nursing care and non-invasive respiratory support in Rwanda, Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh. Together with Congolese partners the organizations partnered to pioneer the first units in the eastern Congo capable of caring for sick and preterm infants.

“We have concentrated our support on education, equipment and supplies that will impact the care of the sick and premature babies. It has been a privilege to work with Global Strategies and the Congolese teams,” says Birthlink Director Kathy Mellor.

Birthlink just returned from visiting Congo. With the team was Ketsia Ilunga, a nurse born in Congo, who then moved to England as a child where she became a neonatal nurse. “Going back to Congo for the first time in 18 years to teach Congolese nurses was an opportunity I could not refuse,” says Ketsia. “Even as the needs are great, the progress is inspiring.”

New Board Member

I would like to welcome our newest Global Strategies board member—Dr. Joseph “Mike” McCune. Dr. McCune is a Professor of Medicine at the University of California San Francisco where he has been involved for many years in the study of HIV pathogenesis, prevention, treatment and cure. I first met Mike and witnessed his leadership while conducting “Think Tanks” for the Pediatric AIDS Foundation. Mike was one the first individuals to receive the prestigious Elizabeth Glaser Scientist Award from the Foundation. When the award was established, its goal was to support individuals with the ability to have a major impact on the control of the HIV epidemic. Mike more than fulfilled the expectations. With a $123 million grant from NIH he established a major research center in the US—the UCSF Clinical and Translational Science Institute. For decades he has worked closely with those in our community who were HIV-infected and fighting for their lives. I am convinced that working alongside our skilled and dedicated board members Mike will assist in defining what we do, how we do it and how to continue our work with the utmost credibility and accountability.

Arthur Ammann, MD
Founder
Volunteer Spotlight: Dr. Gayatri Madduri

Imagine writing a computer program to help a chef train students how to make a chocolate cake. The chef says, “I have a recipe, but I don’t always follow it. I substitute 70% cacao. I use different instructions at high altitudes.” Now imagine that instead of cakes, you are creating software for nurses caring for babies—you now have a sense of UCSF Chief Resident Gayatri Madduri’s volunteer work for Global Strategies.

Working with Ugandan pediatricians, Dr. Madduri aligned the NoviGuide, a software program developed by Global Strategies to help nurses care for babies, with bedside practice in Ugandan maternity wards. Like the expert pastry chef, real-world practitioners go beyond the guidelines. “I was amazed at the creativity and resourcefulness of Ugandan pediatricians,” says Dr. Boddupalli. Documenting how Ugandans apply neonatal guidelines enabled Global Strategies to tailor NoviGuide to Ugandan specifications. “Thanks to Gayatri, when Ugandan nurses opened the NoviGuide for the first time they saw a software that perfectly mirrored their training,” says GS President Dr. Joshua Bress.
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