

## **Dentaid training helps sustainable oral health care in Cameroon!**

Fourteen Cameroonian hospital technicians have successfully completed a Dentaid training programme on the servicing and maintenance of dental equipment, ensuring ten recently donated dental surgeries will continue to serve thousands of needy patients for years to come. This project, partnering with the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board (CBCHB) - one of the major health providers in Cameroon - is a fine example of Dentaid's holistic approach to oral health need overseas. As well as supplying ten high-quality dental surgeries enabling CBCHB health centres and hospitals across Cameroon to act as regional referral centres, Dentaid is now able to offer specialist training courses to equip indigenous workers and projects with the skills they need to provide sustainable oral healthcare to their communities.

The technicians, who work at the numerous CBCHB health centres and hospitals around Cameroon, approached the comprehensive training programme on the installation, maintenance and repair of the various elements of a dental surgery with great enthusiasm. Dentaid Engineers and Trainers Richard Grapes and Dave Effamy reported: "The technicians were willing to learn and really keen to progress." Twenty-five dental assistants and five dentists were also trained in the use and maintenance of the equipment, including vital sterilisation processes.

Hospital administrator, Ndzenyuiy Rose said: "The time taken by your two engineers, Richard and Dave, to come out here to install and train our hospital engineers and technicians on the maintenance of the donated equipment is much appreciated. This will go a long to guarantee the lifespan of our departments."

Dentaid has been working hard to find the best ways of addressing the long-term needs of developing-world organisations working to improve the oral health of disadvantaged communities. Luke Wordley, Chief Executive, Dentaid commented: "Providing equipment alone is not going to help hospitals and clinics effectively meet the oral health needs of their communities. Training is a key element of the package of measures that is required. For too long, 'Western' efforts have centred around just sending equipment (often thoughtlessly) or providing short-term Western volunteers. Neither of these solutions is effective or sustainable in isolation. It is crucial that specialist training is given to indigenous workers to help projects sustain their dental services and even more vital that they are coupled with prevention and oral health promotion activities. Though these regional treatment centres are already treating 2,000 patients a month, the real level of treatment needs in Cameroon is much, much higher. In the summer, we hope to send Dr Robert Yee, Dentaid's Director of Oral Health and an expert in community oral health, to help the CBCHB to design and implement community oral health programmes which will help tens of thousands more."

Dentaid first provided a surgery to a CBCHB hospital (Banso Baptist Hospital) in 2002. However, demand for safe and effective dental services were so huge that last year a further 10 Dentaid surgeries were requested. Following the successful installation of these surgeries, the CBCHB team now believe they have the capacity to treat up to 4,000 patients a month across their hospitals and health centres. Often, treatment needs include the wiring of jaws following the many motorcycle

accidents that occur on Cameroon's roads, or remedial surgery from where traditional "healers" have tried to extract teeth using knives or other implements.

Dentaid needs to raise around £8,000 for the next stage of the partnership with the Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Board, to help them implement much needed community oral health care programmes. If any dental practice or individual would like to contribute to this project, donations can be made through the Dentaid website or by cheques (payable to Dentaid) sent to Dentaid, Giles Lane, Landford, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP5 2BG.