

Dentaid's first engineer training course hailed success by all!

Oral health charity Dentaid's engineers have just returned from Uganda, having successfully trained 14 hospital technicians and engineers in the basics of general maintenance and repair of dental equipment, to help in extending the working life of Dentaid surgeries.

The majority of the 14 students that attended the course were from Uganda but word had spread about the course and students were present from nearby Rwanda and Burundi. Believed to be the first of its kind designed specifically for the developing world, Dentaid's engineers designed a ten-day course, which was practical and hands-on. Thus, not only equipping the students with the necessary technical knowledge but also giving them the practical skills and confidence needed to investigate and diagnose potential problems with dental equipment.

"The local engineers were conscientious, hard working and always had a smile on their face. Most said that this was the first hands on training that they had ever received, which in terms of equipment maintenance was more than a little surprising," explained Richard Grapes, Dentaid's Head of Engineer and course leader.

On completion of the course all students were awarded a certificate and a toolbox at a formal presentation ceremony at the Mildmay hospital just outside Kampala. Her Majesty's Consulate, from the British high commission in Uganda, was present at the ceremony to congratulate the successful candidates and to formally open the dental surgery installed at Mildmay by the Dentaid team.

David Effamy, Dentaid's 2nd Engineer delivering the course added: - "The reactions of the engineers at the prize giving was the most satisfying part of our time at Mildmay," added Dave. "They were so grateful for time and effort we had invested in them. Sometimes, hospital engineers and their vital role don't seem to get the support and recognition they should, and so we were delighted to help in this way. One engineer told me that he was expected to provide his own tools in his job and only had a few random spanners, which he kept in a carrier bag. He said he would have had to save up for 10 years to afford a toolbox like the one he had just received. I think that everybody learned a lot, including us, and I am looking forward to doing it again ...Soon!"

Luke Wordley, Dentaid's Chief Executive added: - "The course was a great success and a huge tribute must be paid to Dentaid's engineers who worked virtually day and night for weeks in preparation for the course. This type of initiative is a major step forward in improving the sustainability of dental services in much-needed regional treatment centres in Africa. As a result of this course, we believe Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi now have their own trained and equipped dental engineers for the very first time, and we hope to hold similar courses in other regions in the future."

A significant by-product of the course was that two new clinics have also been established at charitable hospitals, serving HIV patients at Mildmay Hospital and disadvantaged communities surrounding nearby Bunawona Health Centre.

Dentaid is hoping to replicate this programme in Cameroon in early 2007, where the charity has just supplied ten surgeries to the Baptist Health Board, who run regional treatment centres serving some of the poorest communities in this West African Country. The charity needs to raise £2,000 for engineer and travel costs to complete this project. If you, your dental practice or your company would like to contribute towards these costs and help improve the sustainability of dental services in an entire country, please get in contact!