

MONTPELLIER, France, September 25 (Infosplusgabon) - Recent meetings between the Ministry of Health and Mercy Ships have furthered planning for the hospital ship Africa Mercy® to return to Madagascar in early February. Initially, Mercy Ships plans to dock the 16, 572 GT Africa Mercy in the port of Toamasina. During the field service, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the ship's medical professionals, and teams will aim to provide more than 1,150 free specialized surgeries as well as targeted training for healthcare professionals.

Mercy Ships has already embarked on the beginning of a 5-year country engagement plan that further strengthens the partnership between Mercy Ships and the people of Madagascar, with the development of local partners, and completion of an initial programmatic assessment.

Dr. Lethicia Lydia Yasmine, Secretary General for the Ministry of Health, Madagascar said:

“Madagascar faces a shortage of surgical support from both local and international partners, especially in the most vulnerable areas. We appreciate Mercy Ships' approach in reaching underserved communities. As we open 28 district hospitals, each requiring at least two surgeons, we look forward to collaborating with Mercy Ships to strengthen our surgical capacity.”

Esperant Mulumba, Country Director for Mercy Ships in Madagascar, said: “We are very grateful to the government of Madagascar for welcoming us back to continue our partnership to deliver hope and healing to those who need it most.

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in 2015. We are very thankful that we are able to partner with them again to transform more lives through surgery and training.”

This would be the fourth time that a Mercy Ship has visited the port of Toamasina since 1996. Mercy Ships’ program strategy is being carefully aligned with the country’s current strategic healthcare plan.

These initiatives aim to provide equitable access to medical care, extending beyond the inhabitants of Toamasina to individuals across the entire island. The organization is also committed to covering travel expenses, ensuring that even those in remote areas can benefit from this service.

The life-changing surgeries delivered will include tumor removal, cleft lip and palate correction, cataract removal, orthopedic and reconstructive plastic surgery and dental care.

Patients with these specific concerns will be encouraged to attend screening days to receive appointments for their specific surgical needs. Patient selection teams are preparing to assess and register patients in multiple locations, in preparation for the ship’s arrival.

The actual surgical procedures will begin in February 2024. In addition to the surgeries, the care includes post-operative consultations and psychosocial support to facilitate patients’ reintegration into their communities.

According to Nantenaina Rakotonirina, mayor of the urban commune of Toamasina, the city is also preparing to accommodate patients, emphasizing the collaborative nature of this initiative to provide comprehensive care.

In collaboration with national and international partners, Mercy Ships will provide education and training across the surgical ecosystem. The emphasis of these programs will be on surgery, nursing, biomedical, sterile processing, and anesthesia. The five-year partnership in total, including follow up after the ship leaves, will focus on strengthening the surgical care system by investing in Madagascan healthcare professionals who will impact this nation for years to come.

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