



Volunteerism

In Ghana, BD volunteers build essential healthcare infrastructure

In a joint effort with Direct Relief International, a nonprofit humanitarian medical aid organization, 12 BD associates from around the world devoted three weeks to upgrading two healthcare clinics in Ghana. The April 2007 trip marked the third consecutive year that BD associate volunteers worked to strengthen healthcare infrastructure in sub-Saharan Africa by participating in the Company's Volunteer Service Trip Program.

The BD volunteers worked side-by-side with clinic staff and Direct Relief partners to train healthcare providers, construct a new health facility, improve laboratory capabilities and incorporate clean water solutions at the Maranatha Maternity Clinic and the Motoka Clinic.

Located in Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city, the Maranatha Maternity Clinic serves approximately 250 patients each month, about 40 percent of whom are unable to pay for medical treatment.

The BD team also helped construct a new satellite clinic outside Kumasi in the Bonkwaso village on what had been an overgrown field. The volunteers then outfitted it with medical equipment and an electrical generator—the first electricity in Bonkwaso. With support from BD, four local students studied in Kumasi and returned to serve as the clinic's staff.



Speaking about the efforts of BD volunteers, Agatha Amoateng-Boahen, head nurse at the clinic, said, "The BD team had such a great and positive impact. Our laboratory has taken a new shape and thus is helping to provide quality services to our patients. Above all, the team on individual levels sacrificed a lot to help patients with chronic diseases."

Established in 1996, the rural Motoka Clinic is the only healthcare resource serving a district of nearly 100,000 people. The services offered by the clinic, which is located on Lake Volta, are complemented by outreach visits to villages accessible only by boat. Reflecting on the effort, BD volunteer Paul Soskey said, "The clinic now has the best equipped lab in the whole West Krachi District of the Volta region." One incident brought home to Soskey the significance of what the team had done: "We installed a blood bank refrigerator with a complete battery-based backup power source and a sample incubator. While we were there, an anemic six-year-old boy was transfused with blood from the blood bank, giving him a chance to recover overnight."

This journey to Ghana follows similar initiatives in 2005 and 2006, when BD associates volunteered in Zambia to help strengthen the country's capacity to diagnose and treat HIV/AIDS.