

VOLUNTEER CASE STUDY

A joint effort to increase healthcare access for mothers and babies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Everything Starts with a Dream

“I am interested in improving access and outcomes for mothers and babies in underserved areas of the world. If we could improve breastfeeding rates to recommended levels, and make sure birth attendants are well trained to handle problems in the first five minutes of a baby's life, we could save over a million lives annually around the world,”

Deanne Francis, Intermountain Healthcare

When the BHS team met Deanne Francis in October 2020, we were amidst discussions with a multidisciplinary team from CCBRT who had been working on launching the highest quality Maternity and Newborn Hospital in the Tanzanian referral system. This facility would reduce the number of women and newborn babies who die during childbirth or the first year of life. This was the first time the CCBRT team would launch a new hospital and despite their diversity in skill sets they felt they would greatly benefit from technical support. Fortunately for us, Deanne was motivated to follow her aspirations and enrolled to volunteer with BHS.

What do Tanzania and Utah have in Common?

Together with 12 other experts from Intermountain Healthcare, Deanne volunteered to provide remote technical assistance to build the capacity of CCBRT and enable them to launch their new facility by mid-2021 to provide access to quality prenatal and neonatal healthcare to mothers and neonates in Tanzania.

Deanne said, “sharing experience, clinical information, and training between two very different cultures, located 9500 miles apart, has truly been an eye-opener for me. It has been amazing to see what can be accomplished remotely.”

Deanne, her daughter Shannon Clegg, and the Intermountain Healthcare team reviewed CCBRT's launch framework and gave recommendations on patient flow and workflow plans for the new infrastructure, staffing plans, clinical SOPs, education modalities, operationalization of an in-house static blood donation unit, blood bank database, and neonatal healthcare. The two teams from Intermountain Healthcare and CCBRT formed close relationships while exchanging ideas, sharing information, conceptualizing policies, and comparing best practices between the US and the Tanzania health system.



Deanne Francis
*NICU nurse,
Prenatal Educator,
International Board-
Certified Lactation
Consultant (IBCLC)
Intermountain Healthcare
Salt Lake City, UT, USA*



CCBRT (Comprehensive Community -Based Rehabilitation in Tanzania) is a healthcare organization that seeks to prevent disability through early identification and strengthening the maternal and newborn health system throughout the city of Dar es Salaam.

“Our purpose, here in the US, was to try to meet the needs for new clinical information assessed by the very capable team in Tanzania. We were all volunteers with lots of experience here, but with NO experience in trying to open a maternity hospital in Africa with limited resources. This hospital will eventually be doing 12,000 deliveries per year. This was definitely a two-way learning experience for all of us.” Deanne said.

CCBRT nurses in Tanzania received expert knowledge on neonatal hypoglycemia, neonatal sepsis, early lung recruitment in the care of premature infants, in-depth knowledge on breastfeeding, early childhood development, drug dilutions, and drug compatibilities. Knowledge which they are currently applying in their daily practice at the newly launched Maternal Newborn Hospital. Furthermore, CCBRT has incorporated these learnings into their training materials (audio, video, and print) with the aim of improving capabilities of clinical staff and educating women on maternal and neonatal health.

Everything is Possible

The volunteer experience left Deanne amazed:

“I helped with feeding skills, particularly breast feeding, and breast milk feeding when direct feeding at the breast is not possible (prematurity, sick babies, sick mamas) What a revelation to find that there are places in the world where mothers and babies are not separated , and where formula and bottles are simply not used because they are not an option. Wow!”

The teams theorized alternative techniques of breastfeeding in unusual situations (e.g., babies with cleft lip or cleft palate) for mothers who live in resource constrained environments. CCBRT has leveraged the opportunity to purchase feeding products for breastfeeding babies with cleft lip or cleft palate, in order to start gaining experience in using them. They intend to introduce a cleft lip and palate breastfeeding counselling center in the capital, Dar es Salaam, and also conduct surgeries for the same.

Learning as a Volunteer

Deanne commented on how much she herself learned from volunteering with Business for Health Solutions:

“During this project I have learned a lot about adapting, improvising, and coming up with unique solutions to fit specific needs. The desire for excellence and improving outcomes is equal here and in Tanzania. Thank you for the opportunity to work with this wonderful group of people.”



The newly opened Maternity & Newborn Hospital Dar es Salaam, Tanzania



Mecklina Isasi (BHS Client Engagement Manager) visits the New Hospital

On the first day of June 2021, CCBRT successfully opened their Maternity and Newborn Hospital with a 200-bed capacity, 14 delivery suites, and post and antenatal wards. They are in the early stages of implementing all the recommendations from Deanne and her colleagues at Intermountain Healthcare as they continue to receive patients.



The CCBRT Team Dar es Salaam, Tanzania