

Edinburgh-based charity establishes operating rooms in Zambia

The charity KidsOR, which has its headquarters in Edinburgh has successfully installed six state-of-the-art operating rooms in Zambia – the biggest install in one single country and one that will benefit tens of thousands of children.

The Scottish global charity with other bases in Dundee and Nairobi, works to ensure that all children wherever they live have access to safe surgery. The charity also funds training of paediatric surgeons and anaesthesia providers, and estimates that more than 43,000 children have accessed life-changing or life-saving care via one of the 35 Operating Rooms they have installed since 2018.

The six new Operating Rooms in Zambia are located at University Teaching Hospital (UTH), in Lusaka, and in Arthur Davison Children's Hospital (ADCH), in Ndola, with each hospital hosting three separate Operating Rooms. The [Scottish Government](#) provided £45,000 of funding to assist with the refurbishment, re-equipping and retraining of staff at the paediatric surgical facilities at UTH.

[David Cunningham](#), CEO of KidsOR, said: "I am proud that KidsOR

has installed and equipped six Operating Rooms across the two hospitals. This is our largest project in a single country at the one time, and will ensure that surgeons have the right equipment to save thousands of children's lives for years to come. With around 45 per cent of Zambia's population being children, this is a country that will particularly benefit from these facilities."

KidsOR collated data on surgical cases in the past 24 months at UTH so that it could track the difference made once the Operating Room was installed. The charity identified that in the past two years, almost one in five of the operations that went ahead did so without the necessary surgical equipment and 40 per cent went ahead missing the necessary anaesthetic equipment. These issues will be rectified as soon as surgeons start using the newly installed Operating Rooms to treat children.

Mr Cunningham added: "This latest project forms an important part of the KidsOR '[Africa to 2030](#)' plan which will see us create 120 centres of excellence across Sub-Saharan Africa, each with world-class, state-of-the-art dedicated Operating Rooms for children. We aim to ensure that every child can access safe surgery when they need it."

Dr Bruce Bvulani, Consultant Paediatric Surgeon at University Teaching Hospital, said: "The renovations and re-equipping of the theatre suite is not only timely but also momentous. These new Operating Rooms will put a smile not only on the faces of the children but the surgeons as they use their new wares in a refurbished centre. On behalf of the children of Zambia, we are truly grateful to KidsOR, and we promise to make full use of the equipment for the betterment of the children."

Senior Medical Superintendent and Consultant Paediatrician at Arthur Davison Children's Hospital, Dr Mwansa J Kaunda, also extended his gratitude. He added: "There will be an increased capacity and ability to care for more paediatric patients

considering the hospital serves the northern part of the country. This means expanded services and more treatment options at the hospital, hence improved quality of health for children.

“What’s more, the new equipment and set up of theatre will improve efficiency in procedures, reduce the risk of post-operative wound infections. I am so excited as I never imagined that our Operating Room could look so nice. The last time it got a touch up was in 1978 and we have recently had to carry out operations using a phone torch light rather than proper operating lamp.”

International Development Minister Jenny Gilruth said: “The Scottish Government’s investment in this project will help benefit thousands of children who require life-changing and life-saving care.

“As well as contributing to the new paediatric Operating Rooms, our support will also enhance the skills and knowledge of the surgical teams that carry out these vital procedures. We are proud to work with KidsOR on a project that will change the lives of children and their families and strengthen the capacity and resilience of the health care system in Zambia.”

Africa has the greatest unmet surgical need in the world. Half of Africa’s population (1.3 billion) are children. It is also estimated that 85 per cent of children in Africa will require some kind of surgical care by the age of 15. Two of the six Operating Rooms in Zambia have been achieved courtesy of KidsOR’s partnership with cleft-focused organisation [Smile Train](#).

