

Minister praises work of pioneering Scottish charity KidsOR

Scottish Government Minister, Neil Gray, has praised the work of a pioneering charity which provides life-saving surgery for children in low- and middle-income countries.

The Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development was on a fact-finding trip to Kids Operating Room's (KidsOR) logistics centre in Dundee where he met the charity's Co-founder and Chair Garreth Wood and Chief Executive David Cunningham to receive an update on how Scottish Government support had been put to use in Africa.



Garreth Wood, Chair and Co-founder of Kids Operating Room and David Cunningham, CEO Kids Operating Room with Neil Gray MSP, Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development Tour of the KidsOR logistics centre in Dundee for an update on the shipping of Scottish Government donated PPE equipment and on KidsOR installation of 50 Operating Rooms and plans for the future.

From its bases in Dundee, Edinburgh and Nairobi, [KidsOR](#) provides Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs) with surgical teams the infrastructure and training needed to perform operations for children who would otherwise go untreated.

Since 2018, KidsOR has installed 50 operating rooms (ORs) in LMICs – averaging 3,000 items per OR – and more than 60,000 children in 22 countries have accessed life-changing or life-saving care through KidsOR work.

It is estimated that as of May 2022 there has been an economic benefit of \$2 billion to the countries in which ORs have been installed and by 2030 the charity aims to have more than doubled the number of installed ORs across Africa to 120, providing essential surgery to more than 635,000 children.

The charity, established by philanthropists Garreth and Nicola Wood, has worked closely with the Scottish Government, which in 2020 provided £45,000 to help deliver a crucial project at Zambia's largest referral hospital, the University Teaching Hospital (UTH) in Lusaka.

As part of the Covid-19 pandemic response, in July 2021 the Scottish Government provided funding to purchase and transport 300 oxygen concentrators to Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia and for 30 disposable oxygen concentrators in Malawi, with KidsOR overseeing the logistics challenge of securely shipping all items to their destination hospitals.

Forty surplus NHS Scotland ventilators worth £743,553 were donated in August 2021 with £34,500 provided by the Scottish Government for transportation costs, followed by a donation of 25 million surplus PPE items worth £11.2 million and £250,00 required to transport the items to Malawi, Rwanda and Zambia.

Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development Neil Gray said: "Today's visit gave me the opportunity to meet with KidsOR, and its staff, to hear first-hand about their work. And to thank them, on behalf of the Scottish Government, for working with us on the delivery of oxygen concentrators,

ventilators, and surplus NHS PPE to our three African partner countries, during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

“I would also like to personally congratulate them on the installation of their 50th paediatric surgical facility. These surgical facilities make real changes to the lives and prospects of thousands of children all around the world, and their communities, and KidsOR should be commended for this work.”

Nine of ten children in LMICs do not have access to surgical care when they need it and KidsOR is the only global organisation dedicated to providing surgical solutions for children.

KidsOR co-founder and Chairman, Garreth Wood, said: “Sustainability is at the heart of our model and we only invest in local people, building real capacity and promoting self-reliance in the long-term. Working with regional partners, we train local surgical teams, and we work with health authorities in-country to ensure that the facilities we create are maintained and upgraded over the years. As a result, children are treated in a specially designed, fully equipped surgical unit and given skilled care by local surgeons who speak the same language as them.”

The charity’s Chief Executive Officer, David Cunningham, revealed the Scottish Government’s support during Covid-19 had been crucial in keeping on track the UTH project in Zambia which had relied on a KidsOR team travelling to Lusaka to upskill and train staff on the installation and use of OR equipment.

The Government funding allowed investment in technologies which enabled the hospital refurbishment, installation and

training to be completed entirely remotely, and encouraged the charity to further empower local people to deliver greater change.

Mr Cunningham said: “The funding from the Scottish Government allowed us to invest in technologies and methods that circumnavigated this fundamental challenge we faced in Lusaka. Without this support – particularly in the face of unprecedented challenges from Covid-19 – this project and this impact would not have been possible.”

Three ORs are now installed at UTH, creating the capacity for at least 1,800 operations each year. It is estimated that over a 10 year period the UTH ORs will prevent 250,000 years of disability as some 16,000 children access emergency and essential care, with an economic benefit to the local economy expected to be \$140 million.

The charity’s Director of Global Operations, Dave Tipping, added: “We are delighted the Minister was able to visit our logistical headquarters in Dundee and was able to see for himself the tangible results this partnership has produced and the dramatic impact our collective actions are having in some of the world’s poorest countries.”

For more information on KidsOR, please visit: www.KidsOR.org



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