

Global children's surgery crisis discussed in Westminster

Influential figures in global health gathered at an event in Westminster to assess the state of children's access to surgery in many of countries with the world's lowest income.

Edinburgh based charity, Kids Operating Room ([KidsOR](#)) partnered with the Foreign Policy Centre to host the event to identify steps to strengthen health systems in developing countries and the role the UK can play in supporting such initiatives.

The sold-out event was held in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association room within the Houses of Parliament.

Key speakers included Dr Neema Kaseje – Founding Director of the Surgical Systems Research Group in Kenya and visiting surgeon for KidsOR and for Doctors Without Borders – alongside Ben Simms, CEO of the Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET) and Professor Dina Balabanova, Professor of Health Systems and Policy at LSHTM.

The event addressed the role local surgical capacity and expertise plays in strengthening the wider health system, exploring practical examples from across the developing world of interventions that have helped build the capacity and

resilience of healthcare systems.

Dr. Neema Kaseje has played a key role in transforming access to surgery at the first dedicated paediatric operating room within a refugee camp in Kenya by training the surgical team, while leading the procedures that have taken place to date.

She said: "This event has come at a pivotal time as the global challenges related to access to health care require collaboration, learning and investment to deliver sustainable change.

"Surgery is a basic human right which must sit at the heart of any sustainable healthcare system and by providing access to safe paediatric surgery we are breaking new ground to save children's lives."

The event also addressed how the UK currently supports global health initiatives, and the extent systems are prioritised compared to disease-specific interventions within current aid spending.

The role of international financial institutions and UN bodies in shaping, investing and implementing health interventions around the world was also a focus.

KidsOR co-founder and Chairman, Garreth Wood, said: "Our vision is a world where every child can access the care they need so that common conditions such as appendicitis or a broken leg do not have to result in a child's death or a lifetime of disability.

"A great deal has been achieved since starting the charity, however, there is a long way to go and for us this is just the beginning.

"Sustainability is at the heart of our model and we invest in local people, building real capacity and promoting self-reliance in the long-term."

KidsOR is the only global organisation focused on the single task of providing dedicated operating rooms for children's surgery. More than a billion children, and their families, need its help. Its research from earlier this year revealed that nine in 11 children globally have no access to safe surgery.

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

