



PRESS RELEASE

Mercy Ships Welcomes First Patient in Madagascar, Marking a New Era in Africa

VICTORIA, BC, May 29, 2024 – Darryl Anderson, Executive Director of Mercy Ships Canada is excited to announce that the *Africa Mercy* commencement of surgical operations in Madagascar marks a milestone, for the first time Mercy Ships is operating in two nations in continent at the same time.

Toamasina, Madagascar, May 29, 2024 – A baby girl became the first patient to receive free life-changing surgery from Mercy Ships in Madagascar since the international charity returned to the island nation. Ten-month-old Anjara's surgery marks a significant landmark for the organization which is operating two hospital ships at once in Africa for the first time.

While the *Africa Mercy* delivers patient care and surgical training in Madagascar, the *Global Mercy* is simultaneously conducting her field service in Sierra Leone.

"It is just amazing to span the east and west of Africa. It really is the beginning of a next chapter" remarked Nathan Jansen, *Africa Mercy* managing director. "This day is the culmination of many years of work and preparation. It is truly special to welcome Anjara as our first patient, heralding a new chapter for Mercy Ships.

Jansen continued "As Mercy Ships expands its work across the continent, healthcare access and quality continues to grow. The dedication and hard work of volunteers and staff, coupled with the generous support of donors, have made this historic moment possible."

Darryl Anderson, commented from Mercy Ships Canada's national office in Victoria, BC. "I am extremely proud of the role that Canadian volunteers play as part of an international team from over 60 countries worldwide." Anderson continued "The wide range of skills from our volunteers speaks to the generosity of spirit that characterizes Mercy Ships Canada volunteers."

Since arriving in the country in February, the *Africa Mercy* implemented an extensive strategy to ensure the broad reach of its services, covering diverse regions within Madagascar. With registrations spanning 12 regions across the country. This marks Mercy Ships' fourth field service in Madagascar, following previous visits in 1996, 2015 and 2016. Over the course of previous visits, Mercy Ships collaborated with the government and Ministry of Health to provide more than 6,425 life-changing surgical procedures and over 52,395 dental procedures. In addition to these surgeries, Mercy Ships has a longstanding commitment to education, having trained 2,019 healthcare professionals in the past.

On Tuesday morning, May 28, at 8:30am, the starting signal was given as Dr. Parker, a long-term volunteer surgeon, led the hospital in a prayer before the little baby underwent a transformative surgery for a bilateral cleft lip, asking for divine blessings and successful outcomes.

Anjara's father, Mamy Jean Victor, expressed his gratitude: "I thank God for sending Mercy Ships to help my daughter so she can be like other kids. I hope their work continues for other children in need."

Lalaina, Anjara's mother, was filled with profound gratitude and relief when she heard about her daughter's surgery date.

She said: "I thank God that Mercy Ships is here to help repair my baby's cleft lip."

Photographer Joshua Chau, a Canadian volunteer who documented Anjara's journey commented "As a person with limited medical background, being able to document Anjara's journey through her surgery has been a phenomenal opportunity. It was incredibly moving to see a mother presented with a tangible, life-changing solution for her child and I am grateful to have played a small role in it".

Through an education, training, and advocacy strategy, the organization, in collaboration with Madagascar's Ministry of Health, aims to increase the number of surgical providers, deliver training across the surgical ecosystem, develop sustainable educational programs, establish a network of healthcare providers, and advocate for the importance of surgery in healthcare globally.

Dr. Lethicia Lydia Yasmine, Madagascar's Secretary General of the Ministry of Health believes that the key obstacles to advancing surgery and anesthesia in the country are a lack of staff, reduced capacity, resource limitations, and inequity in access to surgical care. One specific barrier to access to surgery is a lack of insurance, causing costs to be too high for many patients to access care.

During this year's field service in the Port of Toamasina, Mercy Ships will offer direct medical services to more than 1,000 patients, simultaneously mentoring and training healthcare professionals to strengthen surgical and anesthetic systems in the country.

ABOUT MERCY SHIPS:

Mercy Ships operates hospital ships that deliver free surgeries and other healthcare services to those with little access to safe medical care. An international faith-based organization, Mercy Ships has focused entirely on partnering with African nations for the past three decades. Working with in-country partners, Mercy Ships also provides training to local healthcare professionals and supports the construction of in-country medical infrastructure to leave a lasting impact.

Each year, more than 3,000 volunteer professionals from over 60 countries serve on board the world's two largest non-governmental hospital ships, the *Africa Mercy*® and the *Global Mercy*™. Professionals such as surgeons, dentists, nurses, health trainers, cooks, and engineers dedicate their time and skills to accelerate access to safe surgical, obstetric, and anesthetic care. Mercy Ships was founded in 1978 and has offices in 16 countries as well as an Africa Service Center in Dakar, Senegal. For more information, visit mercyships.ca and follow us on social media.

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