



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

Hospital partnerships work

Joining forces to strengthen health worldwide



“The training on doing an ultrasound by the bedside helps me make a precise diagnosis.”

Dr Vanessa Kandoole-Kabwere,
Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Blantyre, Malawi

“Together with our partners in Cameroon we have introduced new degree courses at the university.”

Dr Christian Doll, working as a
surgeon in Mbouo, Cameroon

“Our friendship and trust in each other make for a strong partnership.”

Dr Julius Emmrich, Doctors for Madagascar

“We were able to learn a lot in Eritrea – for example how a hospital can greatly improve maternal and child health using relatively simple means.”

Gesche Kranz, paediatric nurse at
Charité university hospital, Berlin

“With the Hospital Partnership’s support, we were able to train five doctors and over 100 midwives in Eritrea – quite an achievement!”

Prof. Helmut Kaulhausen, gynaecologist
and project manager for the Hammer Forum

“It has been great to see our young colleagues from the Republic of Moldova using the knowledge they have gained to set about improving their own health system.”

Prof. Christoph Lange,
Research Center Borstel, Leibniz Lung Center

Dear Readers,

It is no coincidence that, on big occasions, we generally wish each other good health above all else. After all, good health is vital in allowing us to take control of our own life and making it an active and fulfilled one. Anyone who has ever been ill knows how important it is to get quick and competent diagnosis and treatment so that they can be back on their feet as soon as possible.

Yet in many low-income and middle-income countries, the health system is underdeveloped. This has serious consequences. The longer that illnesses go undiagnosed and untreated, the greater the risk that patients will suffer as a result, be unable to work for long periods, develop complications or even die. Particularly in poor households, when one person falls ill it can often have a devastating impact on the entire family.

To prevent any of those things happening and to help ensure more people have access to good, affordable health services, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is working with its partner countries across the world on strengthening health systems.

The Hospital Partnerships – Partners Strengthen Health funding programme, which the BMZ launched together with Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung in 2016, plays an important part in this. Currently, there are 400 hospital partnerships, in which professionals from German healthcare institutions are working, researching and learning together with colleagues from 66 countries of the Global South. Over 3,000 medical professionals in Germany and the partner countries are benefiting from this cooperation. The hospital partnerships give them the chance to broaden their professional horizons and experience other health systems, different health conditions and a variety of cultural contexts. The partnerships are a way of introducing new technologies and solutions in the partner countries. In Ethiopia, for example, it has been possible to make improvements in the diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer.



And in Eritrea, laboratory analysis of tissue samples has been improved. All these partnerships give a vital boost to healthcare institutions, helping them to improve and innovate.

The hospital partnerships cover a broad spectrum and respond to whatever need exists in the specific location concerned. In Malawi, the focus is on improvements in neurosurgery, in Tanzania on gender-sensitive healthcare and violence prevention, in Bangladesh on the treatment of snake bites. Many hospital partnerships also focus on maternal and child health, aiming to provide women with better medical care during pregnancy and childbirth and to give their children the best possible start in life.

Dialogue, trust and peer-to-peer learning are all hallmarks of the hospital partnerships. This type of approach is more relevant than ever.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought it home to us that disease knows no borders and that we need to think about health from a more global point of view. Climate change and biodiversity loss are both creating conducive conditions for infectious diseases to emerge and spread. The increased frequency of natural disasters and violent conflicts also implies an increased need for skilled medical assistance. That makes it all the more important for health experts to join together in a spirit of international solidarity.

I would like to thank all those who, through the dedication they have shown to this programme, are working to ensure that more and more people across the world can enjoy good health and good healthcare services. And I hope that this brochure will inspire as many new partners as possible to get involved themselves. Enjoy reading it!

Svenja Schulze
German Federal Minister for
Economic Cooperation and Development



Ethiopian doctor Brhanu Teka examines tissue samples in the lab. The partnership between Addis Ababa University, the Black Lion Hospital and University Medicine Halle (Saale) is aimed at improving female cancer screening in Ethiopia.

What we do

Hospital Partnerships – Partners Strengthen Health

Globalisation has brought new challenges for health policy. But it also offers a whole lot of new opportunities. Thanks to modern forms of communication and the networks that have been forged between the research community, practitioners in hospitals and health posts and also the private sector, it is now easier to access knowledge, drugs and scientific innovations. Those are the upsides of globalisation on which the **Hospital Partnerships – Partners Strengthen Health funding programme** builds. The programme was launched in September 2016 by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation (BMZ) and Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung.

The idea: Professionals from healthcare facilities in Germany and in low- and middle-income countries jointly run **training courses**. This chance to talk to each other directly and visit each other's projects allows all those involved to swap experience and expertise on different health conditions, treatment options, technologies and administrative procedures. It is a process that benefits all concerned. Both public healthcare facilities and charities can apply to the Hospital Partnerships – Partners Strengthen Health funding programme.

Focus: healthcare professionals

The health sector currently lacks millions of skilled workers and that shortage is going to get even worse in the years to come, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. The way to counter that trend is to rapidly create more training opportunities in medical professions and careers, to provide more further training for those already working in the field and to share knowledge globally. Our hospital partnerships can play a part in that.

Our achievements to date

Hospital partnerships worldwide

374

projects



66

countries



3,000

partners



15,000

health professionals trained



Diversity and range

Focus – contracts



The hospital partners are working together in 23 fields. Their main focus is to improve training for new and existing healthcare professionals. Within the regional programme University and Hospital Partnerships in Africa, there are 13 university-based projects in which various partners have worked together to generate scientific findings.



Clinic partners Dr Abdullah Abu Sayeed (Chittagong Medical College Hospital), Dr Ulrich Kuch (Frankfurt University Hospital) and Prof. Aniruddha Ghose (Chittagong Medical College Hospital) discuss at a patient's bedside the use of COVID-19 supplies.

How we work

Progress through peer-to-peer learning

Learning with and from each other is an inspiring and effective way of overcoming challenges and developing innovative solutions. The funding programme brings together experienced professionals from **medicine, midwifery, nursing, laboratory science, microbiology, medical technology and hospital management**. Five principles guarantee the quality of their cooperation.

1. Partnership between equals

Responsibility for the partnership is shared between the two or more institutions or organisations involved. The hospital partners work together as equals, are respectful of each other and learn from each other. The regular and open sharing of information helps to create **trust and transparency**.

2. Local roots

The partnership projects are designed to meet **local needs**. They improve the situation for people in need of healthcare and in this way help partner countries to meet their health policy aims.



Dr Katharina Marggraf,
paediatrician at Charité university
hospital in Berlin, on the hospital
partnership with the Gash-Barka
Regional Referral Hospital
in Barentu, Eritrea

“This sharing of ideas and experience as equal partners ensures that the improvements made to the health system are lasting. It builds trust and a strong relationship, making it much easier to put in place systems and effect change than if just one side took the lead.”



Dr Carolin Meinus,
paediatrician and project leader for
the Robert Koch Institute, Berlin,
on the hospital partnership with
the Gash-Barka Regional Referral
Hospital in Barentu, Eritrea

“Our project came about in response to a request from our Eritrean colleagues and in fact fits in perfectly with the Maternal and Newborn Health Road Map.”



Dr Thi-Minh-Tam Ta,
senior consultant at Charité
university hospital in Berlin
working on a project in Viet Nam

“After finishing my medical training in Viet Nam, I had the opportunity to go on and study my specialism, psychiatry and psychotherapy, in Germany. The hospital partnership gives me the chance to pass back some of my knowledge and, at the same time, to work with my colleagues in Viet Nam on building something really exciting.”

3. Sustainable knowledge and skills

The aim of the hospital partnerships is to equip healthcare professionals and organisations to improve patient treatment and care over the long term, not only during the project but also when it has been completed. Training courses are designed to allow participants to pass on the **knowledge and skills they have acquired**.

4. Gender equality

Worldwide, there are considerably more women employed in healthcare than men. Hospital partnerships always take into consideration what impact all project activities will have on **gender equality**.

5. Ethical and scientific standards

All projects supported under the Hospital Partnerships programme must meet recognised ethical standards. That includes patient autonomy, non-maleficence (“do no harm”), a trusting patient-provider relationship, distributive justice and **ethical guidelines** on medical research. All research activities must meet the latest **scientific standards**.



Yemeselesh Hailu (l.) is a midwife, her colleague Etalem Sebsibe (r.) is a local health worker. Both work at Butajira Hospital in Ethiopia, where women from the surrounding villages come for screening.

Who we support

From non-profits to university hospitals

The Hospital Partnerships funding programme currently has two focuses and, in addition, special funding lines. There is a global hospital partnership programme that is open for all specialist focuses and a special academic programme for joint research activities. A special COVID-19 line and another funding line for projects in Ukraine have been established so as to provide rapid assistance in very acute situations. Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung provides financial support for the global hospital partnerships programme.

Hospital partnerships worldwide

Many healthcare institutions in Germany **work together** with institutions in low- and middle-income countries; good contacts exist **between their respective staff**. Funding applications can be made for existing projects or for new projects. Public health institutions and non-profit organisations can apply for funding of **up to 50,000 euros** for a period of two years. Applicants are free to

decide on the country and the specialist area on which the partnership is to focus. There are three dates a year on which applications for support can be submitted **online**.

Applications are then reviewed by the **technical committee** and the academic council, which are made up of independent experts from the fields of medicine, global health and international cooperation.

SOLOMIYA means peace

The Hospital Partnerships funding programme has direct contacts with many hospitals across the world, which can prove very valuable in times of crisis. It has allowed the programme to channel support to medical facilities in Ukraine.

As events unfolded in early 2022, Professor Malek Bajbouj and his team at the Department of Psychiatry and Neurosciences at Charité university hospital in Berlin immediately knew they wanted to support both their colleagues and the patients at psychiatric facilities across Ukraine. A team of ten got together to launch the SOLOMIYA project (the Ukrainian word for peace) and have now forged an extensive network. Six institutions with twelve hospitals from Lviv to Kyiv to Kharkiv are collaborating with the Charité in both virtual and in-person formats to ensure that people in conflict zones in Ukraine receive good psychological support and continue to receive drugs and medical supplies. The German-Ukrainian hospital partners have also expanded the treatment available for patients with psychiatric conditions to include emergency treatment and trauma.

The BMZ has provided special funding of 6.7 million euros to make this possible. A large proportion of this funding has been earmarked for the SOLOMIYA project. “People living in or fleeing from war zones are under great stress, some of them are traumatised. In order to help them better process what has happened, we have set up a telemedicine advice platform and developed first aid manuals,” reports Professor Malek Bajbouj. The team has also run train-the-trainer workshops for people working in jobs outside the medical sector.

Patients with schizophrenia or depression become particularly vulnerable when there is a war, says psychiatrist Valentyna Mazhbits. That is why there is such an urgent need for help in the field of mental health. She herself fled with her two sons from Kyiv in the spring of 2022. Their journey took them through Hungary and Austria to Germany. Now Mazhbits has joined the team of SOLOMIYA and is helping to manage the programme, together with her colleagues in Berlin. “We can only succeed in this together,” she says.



Dr Valentyna Mazhbits

“Now we are also operating on the wounded”

“What is it you need most urgently?” That was the question Dr Christian Schäfer, a hospital partner and psychiatrist from the German state of Thuringia, asked his colleague Dr Andrej Lohin from Lviv in the spring of 2022. He replied, “What we need most right now are drugs and bandages so we can set up an operating theatre in the cellar.” The two project managers actually work in the field of mental health. But Russia’s war of aggression on Ukraine made Andriy Lohin, CEO of the Sheptytsky Hospital, change his strategy. The mental health centre at his hospital now also treats people from East Ukraine who have been wounded. A ray of hope in times of war.

The BMZ has made available funding of 1.7 million euros to also support the following hospital partnerships in Ukraine, including:

1. Sheptytsky Hospital Lviv – Evangelische Stiftung Altenburg/Thuringia
2. AURORA Hearing Rehabilitation Centre near Kyiv - Lehnhardt Foundation
3. Lviv Regional Clinic Psychiatric Hospital / Kulparkov Hospital Lviv – LVR-Klinik Langenfeld
4. Mechnikov Hospital, region of Dnipropetrovsk in eastern Ukraine – Apotheker ohne Grenzen (Pharmacists without Borders)



Hospital partners Brhanu Teka and Dr Tamrat Abebe are scientists at Addis Ababa University Department of Microbiology, Immunology and Parasitology and work on the gynoocology project.

“Today I feel free of cancer”

Hospital partnership in Ethiopia



Tsehaynesh Dessie Hassen

Severe abdominal pain, a burning sensation whenever she urinated – Tsehaynesh Dessie Hassen could tell there was something wrong. **“I knew that some people get cervical cancer, so I went for screening – even though most women here are too frightened,”** says the farmer and mother of five from near the city of Butajira in central Ethiopia. “I decided to go for screening, hoping that they wouldn’t find anything.” But that was not how it worked out – the smear test identified some cancerous cells.

Cervical cancer is one of the most common types of cancer in Ethiopia. And yet there are **only five doctors** in the whole of this East African country who are specialised in women’s cancers. It is thanks to a German-Ethiopian hospital partnership that women can now access free cervical cancer screening in some areas of the country.

Under this partnership, doctors from Ethiopia receive training in gynaecological oncology. This means that more tumours can be spotted at an early stage and the women operated on.

Tsehaynesh Dessie Hassen did, indeed, have an operation and today she is feeling better. She is **no longer in pain** and hopes that she is finally free of the disease. “Today I feel I have been freed and I want to tell everyone about it,” she says. Tsehaynesh Dessie Hassen is now encouraging other women in her area to go for screening. “I tell them that I was frightened too. And that they should make the wise choice and go and have themselves tested.”

Treating snake bites – saving lives

Hospital partnership in Laos

Every year thousands of people in Laos, particularly those engaged in farming or fishing, are bitten by venomous snakes. If the bite is not treated, the venom can cause severe illness and permanent disability. It can even prove fatal.

“The pain started in my leg and then spread through my entire body. I lost consciousness and collapsed,” Bountha Tamavonga, a farmer from Laos, recalls. Following a bite from a **Malayan pit viper**, he spent four weeks in Setthathirath Hospital in the Laotian capital Vientiane, including eight days in intensive care.

It was thanks to the partnership between Setthathirath Hospital and the Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine in Hamburg, which specialises in diagnosing and treating snake bites, that he was able to receive the **treatment that saved his life**. The doctors and nursing staff in the emergency room had been trained by German and Laotian experts. A manual has now been produced in the Lao language and is being used by some 300 members of staff working in 16 provincial hospitals. It is planned to extend the **training course** to all the country’s provinces in future.

Visible success

“The project has grown very quickly and is saving lives,” according to Dr Sulphab Hanlodsomphou, an emergency doctor at Setthathirath Hospital. The project has also included an information campaign, which is proving successful. Dr Jörg Blessmann of the Bernhard Nocht Institute explains, “People didn’t even come to hospital before because they knew that they wouldn’t get any help. Now they know that they can get treatment at provincial hospitals or at Setthathirath Hospital if they have had a bite from a venomous snake.”

Bountha Tamavonga (78) survived. The right treatment has brought him back to health. Now he wears rubber boots as protection against snake bites whenever he is working in the fields.



Preventing life-threatening infections

Hospital partnership in Cameroon

Microorganisms that occur and spread specifically in hospitals pose a major threat for all health systems around the world. These hospital bacteria can spread as a result of inadequate hygiene protocols and when antibiotics are wrongly used. The increasing prevalence of bacteria that are resistant to the main types of antibiotic is particularly worrying. For seriously ill patients or those who have recently undergone operations, hospital pathogens can be life-threatening. They can, for example, lead to sepsis (blood poisoning).



The German-Cameroonian team focuses on patient safety. Part of its work is better equipping operating theatres.

“In Cameroon, almost a tenth of patients pick up some kind of hospital bacteria,” Dr Christian Doll reports. The surgeon spent two years working in Cameroon. He acts as the link between **Charité university hospital in Berlin and the two partners in Cameroon**, the Evangelical University of Cameroon and the Protestant Hospital Mbouo. “What I particularly like about the support programme is the way partners share their

respective skills and the way projects are planned and implemented by them on an equal footing. I get a lot out of this process of sharing, particularly the intercultural aspects,” Doll continues.

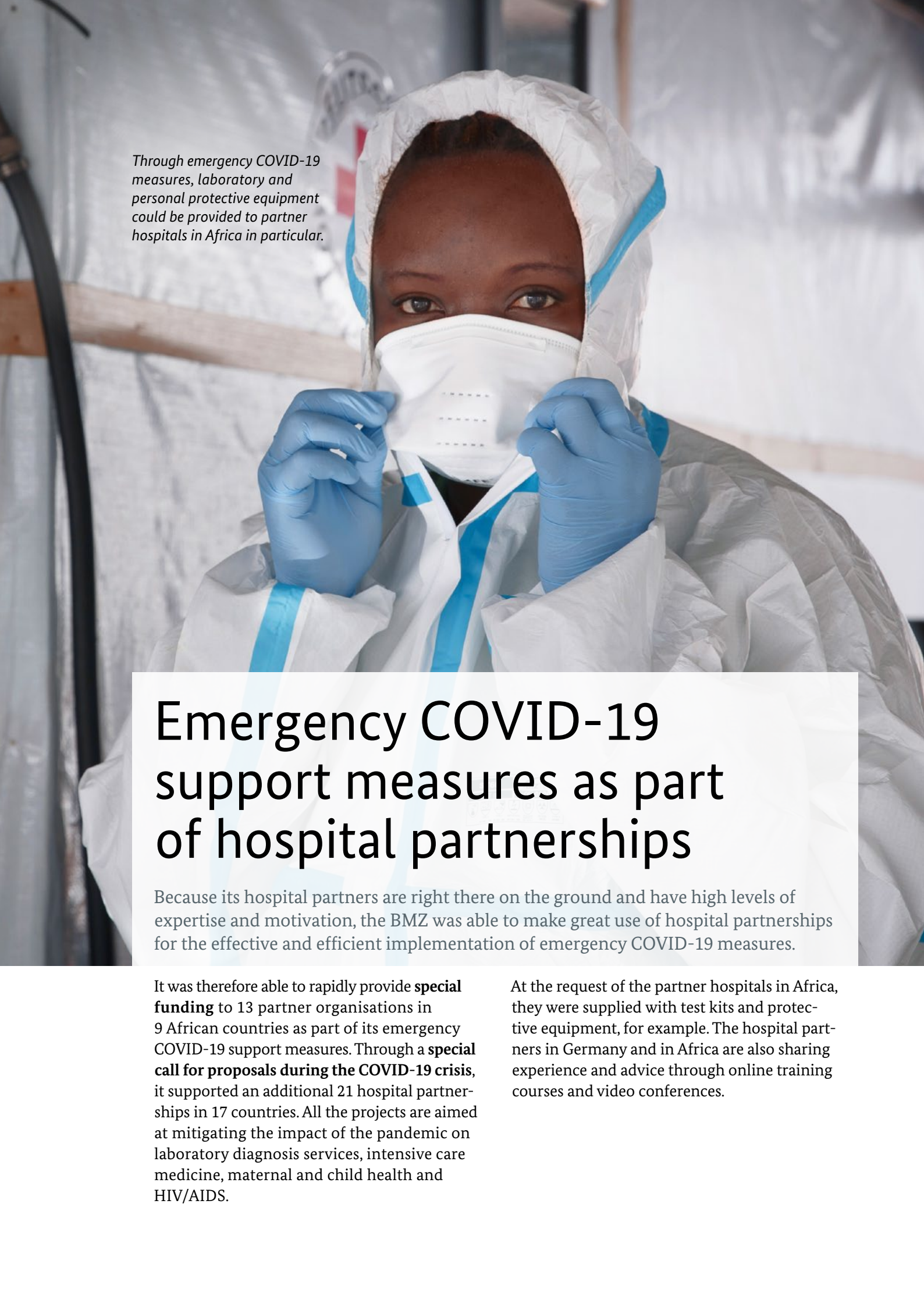
Simple steps achieve a lot

The first phase of the hospital partnership “Patient and occupational safety in surgery at Mbouo, Cameroon” (2017 to 2019) focused on the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of infections that patients had picked up either in hospital or following an operation. The doctors from both sides of the partnership **got together in workshops to share their knowledge** and experience.

Sharing experience

The teaching staff at the Evangelical University of Cameroon integrated the knowledge they had gained into their curricula. The existing degree courses were improved and new courses in biomedicine introduced.

In the second phase of the partnership, from 2020 to 2023, there has been an additional focus on sharing knowledge, experience and technology with other hospitals. In this way, the entire region can benefit in a lasting way from the partnership.

A close-up photograph of a healthcare worker wearing a white protective suit with blue accents, blue gloves, and a white face mask. The worker is adjusting the mask with both hands. The background is a blurred white fabric, likely part of a protective enclosure.

Through emergency COVID-19 measures, laboratory and personal protective equipment could be provided to partner hospitals in Africa in particular.

Emergency COVID-19 support measures as part of hospital partnerships

Because its hospital partners are right there on the ground and have high levels of expertise and motivation, the BMZ was able to make great use of hospital partnerships for the effective and efficient implementation of emergency COVID-19 measures.

It was therefore able to rapidly provide **special funding** to 13 partner organisations in 9 African countries as part of its emergency COVID-19 support measures. Through a **special call for proposals during the COVID-19 crisis**, it supported an additional 21 hospital partnerships in 17 countries. All the projects are aimed at mitigating the impact of the pandemic on laboratory diagnosis services, intensive care medicine, maternal and child health and HIV/AIDS.

At the request of the partner hospitals in Africa, they were supplied with test kits and protective equipment, for example. The hospital partners in Germany and in Africa are also sharing experience and advice through online training courses and video conferences.

“Partnership is the watchword for us”

Interview with Dr Carolin Kröner

Dr Kröner, your foundation launched the Hospital Partnerships – Partners Strengthen Health funding programme together with the Federal Development Ministry in 2016. What do you feel is special about working with a federal ministry?

Through their joint financing of the Hospital Partnerships funding programme, the BMZ and Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung are able to support a **great many innovative and dynamic partnerships**. The personal contacts that have been forged between the BMZ and EKFS and also between the partners themselves are invaluable. The foundation is also delighted to be able to support eligible projects that have emerged through the hospital partnerships programme and take the work further.

What projects are particularly close to your own heart?

As a member of the foundation board, my focus is on fulfilling the foundation’s mission. I am very grateful that we have the opportunity every year to support a great many **humanitarian** projects. I am pleased that, in this way, we can also continue this area of Else Kröner’s work.

You are a doctor yourself. If a colleague were to ask you if it was worth getting involved in a hospital partnership, what would you say?

I would say yes, absolutely. I firmly believe that these partnerships help both sides enhance their knowledge and also the quality of the medical services they provide. That applies equally to the **professionals** from Germany, who get the chance to look beyond their own experience and learn about very simple diagnostic techniques and therapies that can sometimes be neglected in the very technology-focused treatment approach used in Germany.



*Dr Carolin Kröner,
member of the foundation board of
Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung (EKFS) and paediatrician*

The Hospital Partnerships funding programme is contributing to one of the major development goals that form part of the 2030 Agenda: “Revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development” (SDG 17). How important are partnerships and networks for your foundation’s work?

The EKFS is looking to establish more links with important players in the field of **global health**, both in Germany and internationally. Cooperation between partners allows experience and knowledge to be used better and more widely. And networks allow it to be conveyed to where it is most needed, namely the patients seeking care. This is an aspect of key importance to the foundation, **both for its humanitarian funding and its scientific funding**.

Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung (EKFS) – Advancing research. Helping people.

The non-profit Else Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung promotes medical research and supports humanitarian projects. Further information can be found at www.ekfs.de

Here's how to get involved

Where do I send my application?

The Hospital Partnerships funding programme invites calls for proposals several times a year; applications are submitted online. Details are published on the website and in the newsletter. Information and contact details can be found at www.klinikpartnerschaften.de.

Who is eligible?

The programme is open to organisations (institutions under public law and/or non-profit organisations) in Germany that have skilled professionals both on the German side and on the side of their partner. Their partner institution should be from a country classified under OECD-DAC criteria as low-income or middle-income. It should be a legal entity or legal person that provides public health services.

What do I need in order to qualify?

You should have **medical expertise, commitment, time and an interest in an intercultural exchange**. You should be interested in gaining new experience and you should have a partnership that is already on a sound and equal footing.



Who should I contact?

The **Hospital Partnerships – Partners Strengthen Health funding programme** can advise potential applicants on writing their application and on the application procedure.

E-Mail klinikpartnerschaften@giz.de

Phone +49 228 4460 38 00



www.klinikpartnerschaften.de

Who decides who will receive funding?

A technical committee and an academic council made up of independent experts from the fields of medicine, global health and international cooperation will give their professional opinion on your application.

If they find your project is **eligible for funding**, it will be submitted to the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development for its approval.

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