



SABC NEWSLETTER

Interview with Didier REYMOND

SABC Founding Member

Former SABC Board Member



What is Mercy Ships?

Two out of three people in the world lack access to essential surgical care.

Beyond the human suffering, the Lancet Commission on Global Surgery Study Group highlights the disastrous economic consequences of untreated surgical problems. Without urgent improvements to their health systems by 2030, low- and middle-income countries will suffer losses of \$12.3 billion due to a lack of access to surgical care. This will reduce annual GDP growth in these countries by 2%.



Mercy Ships deploys floating hospitals in Africa: their volunteer crews provide life-changing surgery, as well as advanced medical training and infrastructure projects to support the local healthcare system of host nations.

Since 1990, Mercy Ships has focused most of its efforts on the African continent. By deploying two of the world's largest civilian hospital ships, the *Global Mercy* and the *Africa Mercy*, Mercy Ships offers holistic support to developing nations striving to make healthcare accessible for all. By the end of 2023, Mercy Ships' impact on the African continent will more than double with two hospital ships in service.

Mercy Ships, as partner of World Health Organisation is committed to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal no 3: good health and well-being.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO VOLUNTEER WITH MERCY SHIPS AND HOW WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE ON THE HOSPITAL BOAT AFRICA MERCY?

Following my retirement in 2021 from my position as CEO of Webb Fontaine and having seen during many years the tremendous impact of the Mercy Ships hospital ships operating in several African countries, I contacted them as a volunteer and was recruited as dining staff from March 21 to June 20, 2022 on the *Africa Mercy*.

It was an amazing experience. Although I was used to working in a multicultural environment, the experience of being on a ship with more than 50 nationalities, with every individual aiming to bring hope and healing, provided a real sense of fulfilment.

There was only a bit of frustration as only doctors and nurses were allowed to be in close contact with the patients due to the COVID pandemic. But having the opportunity to exchange with the surgeons and nurses, confirmed to me the huge impact of their actions in changing or even saving lives.

I must also confess that the 3 months spent on the ship were an exercise in humility after more than 20 years in executive managerial roles.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST IMPACT OF MERCY SHIPS ON THE GROUND, IN THE HOST COUNTRY AND REGION?

First the life-changing surgical programmes: The Africa Mercy docked in the Dakar port since 33 weeks and up to October 4, 2022, delivered 556 surgeries on 529 unique patients.

One of the greatest impacts on the ground also lies in Medical Capacity Building. Let me give you 2 examples, out of many:

1. Infrastructure and training in Guinea:

Mercy Ships has been actively engaged in Guinea since the Africa Mercy mission in 2018-2019. This year our key projects included investment and ongoing training at Gamal Abdel Nasser University's dental clinic in Conakry. Surgical and biomedical training, infrastructure renovations and equipment donations complete the list of projects carried out. In a setting where people can die from a lack of dental care, that dental clinic in Guinea is aiming to become a regional centre of excellence.

2. Mentoring in Togo:

Our volunteer surgeons train local health professionals through a wide range of training and mentoring. One example is Dr Abram Wodomé, an ophthalmologist in Lomé, Togo. Ten years ago, he completed a mentoring programme on board the Africa Mercy. After learning new skills alongside Mercy Ships volunteer eye surgeons, he became passionate about putting his skills to work in his own country and opened his own clinic to perform cataract operations and train other Togolese surgeons. As the leading cataract surgeon in Togo, Dr Wodomé performs thousands of operations each year on visually impaired patients. Many of these operations are completely free of charge to the patient.

WHAT IS THE MERCY SHIPS NETWORK?

It is a Swiss nationwide network of enthusiastic entrepreneurs who are involved with the work of Mercy Ships, which will provide you:

<https://mercyships.ch/en/get-involved/entrepreneurs-network/>

Networking: you join a network of entrepreneurs who share Mercy Ships' values and are committed to making a positive and lasting impact.

Impact: you have the possibility to support and promote the activities of Mercy Ships such as surgical projects, mentoring, volunteering, internal and external corporate communication.

Visibility: we offer you a unique opportunity to associate your name with concrete and tangible actions that transform lives

FIND OUR MORE ON MERCY SHIPS:

Site web: <https://mercyships.ch/en/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MercyShipsCH>

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/mercy_ships_switzerland

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/mercyshipsch>