

Emerging third-world orthopaedics: An opportunity to make a difference

by Prof. Martin Salzer

The essential content of any orthopaedic project is always the "know-how transfer." But it is not sufficient that a team goes to Africa or to another place, stays there for some days or weeks, carries out operations, then leaves and returns a year later.

To bring a highly disabled person to Europe and perform difficult operations or expensive treatment here is a noble humanitarian action, but it cannot be considered orthopaedic development cooperation. Effective development aid means sustainable development aid. This sustainable development cooperation is the only possible chance to achieve a permanent improvement of the situation in developing countries.

To reach sustainability, it is important to do very exact strategic planning of a project.

- The focus of the project must be matched to the specific local needs.
- Local resources must be defined and the demands must be evaluated through a fact-finding mission.
- The physicians must acquire their first practical experiences through a pilot project.
- After evaluating the results, project

officials must establish a long-term project and arrange ownership and alignment (see Paris Declaration below) with the local government.

- Finally, educated local specialists must take over the project and foreign experts must withdraw as soon as possible.

The Paris Declaration

In 2005, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was resolved to enhance the development cooperation. The main points of the declaration are:

- Ownership: The government of the recipient country takes over the responsibility for the future project.
 - Alignment: Donating countries get oriented through the system of the recipient country.
 - Harmonisation: Coordination of support occurs among the different local working national governing organisations.
- These "new" guidelines have become more and more important for planning and implementing the development cooperation projects.
- For everybody who decides to join a third-world project, this is definitely a once-in-a-lifetime experience. This is



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true for young orthopaedic doctors as well as for experts who donate their experience on a professional and personal level.

Miracles can happen

The experience you gain from such a project is based on the fact that even with small medical interventions, miracles can happen, and a human life can be redirected from a negative path to a positive direction.

For all colleagues who are interested in third-world projects, this symposium will offer plenty of time for discussion and exchange of experience. ■

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info The EFORT symposium, "Emerging Third-World Orthopaedics," will be held on Saturday, 6 June from 10.00 to 12.00 in Room D at the Austria Center Vienna.



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