

ready for take-off

Despite huge logistical challenges, a dedicated team is turning Global Flying Hospitals from a dream into a reality

Can our world ever be transformed to the point where life becomes bearable for almost one-third of the inhabitants who cannot afford, let alone receive, medical treatment? Can we ever experience harmony on our planet, where money is spent on healing, rather than on the machinery of war?

Is it too difficult to think that every person on our planet should be inoculated, receive dental treatment, have their disfigurements repaired, eye problems corrected, and be taught preventative healthcare?

We seem not to blink an eye at the expense of a B52 Bomber aircraft costing upward to USD\$200 million for the sole purpose of destruction, when for a fraction of that an aircraft can be created to heal and transform lives.

Time for change

Global Flying Hospitals' (GFH) founder and Chairman Neill Newton believes it is time for change. He and his team believe the impossible is possible.

In 2005 Newton relinquished a successful career as a business

author and keynote speaker, moving from Memphis, Tennessee, and relocating in Asia to establish GFH. His last book on business differentiation, *Uniqueness is a Red Striped Zebra*, gives a clue to the 'different' direction he would take in what he terms 'the last chapter in my life'. His vision is to create a global medical blanket using flying hospitals to provide free medical treatment to tens of thousands annually in many of the 100-plus developing countries, and to support existing humanitarian medical organisations with aircraft.

Newton states that he has only had two significant visions in his life. First, when he developed his Business Differentiation programme, coaching over 11,000 business people in seminars worldwide. The second, when he had the vision for a mini fleet of aircraft, similar to the Orbis Eye Hospital, yet much broader in width and breadth of operation.

GFH's most exciting feature is that it will operate a planned target of four Boeing 747s refurbished as high-tech, state-of-the-art surgical





Captain and co-pilot in the cockpit of GFH's refurbished Boeing 747

hospitals for large cities and six large cargo planes for transporting medical field clinics to a plethora of isolated areas. M.A.S.H.-style tents will support the flying hospitals, and will be the venue for minor surgical procedures, while more severe cases will be treated onboard.

The huge task does not end there. Funding such a target requires considerable financial resources, along with a database of medical volunteers, administration, aircraft servicing and specialisations. And then there's the global fundraising engine needed to bring in that budget.

Newton and his team have so far endured tough times to personally fund creation of GFH's infrastructure. They are currently establishing three departments in Asia: Medical Missions Planning, Publishing, and IT. This is in addition to the aviation holding company, GFH Aviation Partners Sbn Bhd, needed to refurbish, service, and operate the aircraft. However, costs are slashed drastically by basing the operation in Asia, as many developing countries are no more than four hours' flight time away.

The GFH Aviation Advisory Board includes leaders of airline-consulting firms from Tokyo, Manila, India, Malaysia, and includes the Director of Civil Aviation for Nepal, in addition to Boeing 747 pilots. The first Boeing to be acquired is now being refurbished. The Medical Advisory Board is chaired by Dr William Tan, the *Reader's Digest* Asian of the Year, who is also famous as the wheelchair 'Marathon Man' from Singapore. ►



GFH's onboard clinic



GFH aims to attract volunteer specialists and spread their expertise worldwide



Dr William Tan and GFH Chairman Neill Newton



GFH will provide free medical treatment to tens of thousands annually in developing countries

Fundraising

Global Flying Hospitals is launching over 20 fundraising centres worldwide. Scotland to Canada, USA to Singapore, Hong Kong to Europe, with Geneva hosting the GFH Parent.

Fundraising will incorporate Multiple Fundraising Pillars in each centre, such as corporate sponsorship, raffles of luxury cars, employer/employee donation, the Global Partners programme to gain one million individual supporters, and special events.

Eventually, with over 17 Pillars in each of the fundraising centres, GFH will be self-sufficient – enabling it to launch its annual target of 100 medical missions.

Pre-aircraft

Prior to acquiring the first aircraft, missions are planned using commercial airline travel and existing facilities, similar to other humanitarian medical organisations, but with the goal of developing a team that will understand the operational requirements of large jets, once GFH1 is launched.

GFH's most difficult job belongs to the Medical Missions Director. This role involves managing a team to plan missions, seek volunteer medical professionals, build rapport with medical centres in host countries, liaise with drug and medical supply firms, order supplies, arrange accommodation, food, visas, and a host of other challenges.

Operations centre

Landing, parking, and overseeing large aircraft is a costly and complex business. Overcoming this huge obstacle was achieved by planning operations at the new USD\$3.4 billion *Global City* air cargo hub project in Cambodia (www.globalcity.ws). Dr Iain Gray, the acclaimed project planner, bought an old Khmer Rouge airport and 20,000 hectares of land, where over 30,000 people died during construction. As a joint-venture partner of the Cambodian Government, Gray is developing it into the world's first air cargo hub-free trade zone and has done wonderful work in solving the logistics nightmare for GFH. This means: no fuel tax, no landing or parking fees, and land to build warehousing adjacent to a taxiway.

'Newton's vision is to create a global medical blanket, using flying hospitals to provide free medical treatment to tens of thousands annually in developing countries'

Training hump

Not only do developing countries lack equipment, they lack experience and expertise. Here, GFH has shown its talent for innovation by planning to convert the Boeing 747's 'hump' into a training room where local doctors can observe procedures via video link. GFH is creating a training department so that information and even a DVD library of procedures can be developed, to

donate as a legacy to each recipient country. Training is paramount to the whole GFH vision, in order to leverage the volunteer specialists from the West and spread their expertise and experience worldwide.

One vision

Global Flying Hospitals is a sizeable goal, but one that is vital to help transform the world. It is one man's vision. But Newton cannot do it alone. His aim is to create 'global ownership' of GFH. *Surgeons' News* readers can be a vital link and a partner to make GFH grow and become amazingly effective. ■



Volunteer with global flying hospitals

Two million women suffer needlessly from fistulas in Africa and India, 135,000 children in Vietnam need cleft lip and pallet reconstruction, scores more children in Vanuatu need cataract removal. You can help change all this!

GFH invite you to tour their website, www.gfhospitals.org or email your questions to neillnewton@gfhospitals.org.

You are also invited to volunteer, contribute in-kind or financially, or simply become involved. Your enquiry would be more than welcome because Global Flying Hospitals needs you.