



Improving Healthcare.
Changing Lives.



A Helping Hand for Those Who Need It Most

Blood tests. X-Rays. CAT scans. MRIs. They are all part of the routine healthcare offerings available to patients in the West. In fact, modern medicine can't really function without the vital insights provided by these tests – information that directly aids doctors and their patients, and has a huge impact upon people's lives.

But the services and expertise that we take for granted in the West are desperately needed in less economically developed countries, where pathology and radiology departments are often ill-equipped and poorly funded.

Sonic Healthcare wanted to help address this imbalance, and we knew that we were uniquely positioned to make a significant medical difference.

As a global healthcare provider, Sonic Healthcare is renowned for our expertise and excellence in medical diagnostics and other medical fields. Quality really is in our DNA, and we know the effect that our high-quality healthcare has made to people's lives across Australia, Europe, the USA and New Zealand.

So, in 1996, we embarked on an aid program to provide long-term healthcare improvements and beneficial change by using our expertise to create sustainable, localised self-reliance in pathology and radiology.

We call it the Catalyst program and, over the course of almost two decades, we have helped to change the lives of thousands of people in some of the world's most disadvantaged areas.



The Catalyst Program

Instigated and championed by Dr Colin Goldschmidt, Sonic Healthcare's CEO, the Catalyst program brings together Sonic Healthcare's global expertise to make a meaningful and humanitarian difference to people's lives.

Driven by our considerable medical know-how, the Catalyst program aims to improve the lives and healthcare of people in some of the world's most disadvantaged areas, by training and equipping local hospitals and their staff in the quality pathology and radiology services that the rest of us have come to expect.

The Catalyst program is supported by Sonic Healthcare staff across the world. Dr Murray Thorn, a leading radiologist based at Queensland X-Ray, heads up the radiology initiatives, while senior staff member Lindsay Thitchener, together with Richard Jones, head of Microbiology at DHM, oversee the pathology side of the project, from both a scientific and administrative perspective.

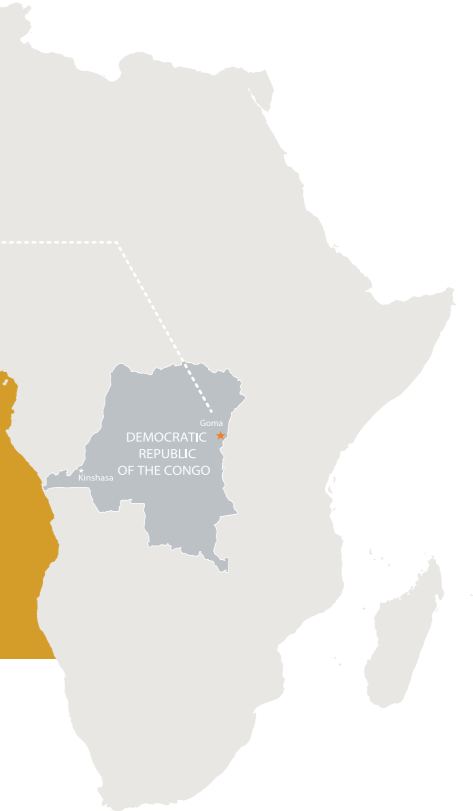
The team is further enhanced by the voluntary involvement of staff who travel to Africa and other disadvantaged areas of the world to help with specific aspects of staff training, and in equipping new laboratories.

More than 5.4 million people have died in DRC since 1992.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

DRC in Africa has been devastated by war for over two decades. More than 5.4 million people have died since 1992. Over 90% of those deaths have occurred from preventable diseases, such as malaria and diarrhoea, while malnutrition continues to be a huge problem, particularly among the very young and the elderly. The situation is further aggravated by the displacement of many people who are fleeing the regular fighting that erupts, leading to unsanitary and overcrowded living conditions in the Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps.

As of 2014, according to the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI), the DRC has the second lowest level of human development, ranking 186th out of 187 countries. The North Kivu region, in which the city of Goma is located, is still subject to ongoing conflict where the ongoing brutal war results in tragic social, emotional and economic consequences for the local communities.





The call for help

In 2008, we answered an urgent request to go to Goma, in the eastern part of DRC, to assess the laboratory capacity of the HEAL Africa hospital —a non-partisan hospital that provides medical services to all people, especially women and children—regardless of their ability to pay for the service. HEAL Africa seeks to help patients recover physically and psychologically. It also runs simple programs to help victims of war develop new skills and trades that will allow them to generate a reliable income in the future.

This initial visit signified the start of our long-term involvement with this vital tertiary hospital, and we returned in 2009 with our first container of much-needed equipment. Sonic Healthcare's initial association with HEAL Africa involved sharing our pathology expertise to improve the diagnostic skills within the hospital's basic pathology department. Tests and procedures, taken for granted in the western

world, and previously unavailable in Goma, would now become a routine part of the hospital's diagnostic pathology work.

Our first steps were to re-equip the laboratory with new equipment and supplies, and to train the laboratory staff in their use. A number of local and international suppliers to our Australian laboratories assisted in this process with generous donations of consumables and items of equipment. More importantly, senior Australian staff were sent to establish the laboratory and to train the local workers in current laboratory techniques, including infection control.

The HEAL Africa laboratory has been provided with modern, appropriate equipment and reagents. The laboratory now provides high-quality biochemistry, haematology and microbiology testing, and recently welcomed the installation of a new histopathology laboratory to process and analyse tissue samples.

Modernising radiology

The radiology capabilities at HEAL Africa have also been upgraded under the guidance of Dr Murray Thorn and Susan Reid, both from Queensland X-Ray. The radiology department now provides essential imaging services to the hospital. A new digital X-ray machine has replaced the older film-based X-ray machines, which were becoming increasingly difficult to operate due to the scarcity and cost of film. The installation of a CT scanner in late 2015 will be a particular highlight, being the only one of its kind in Eastern DRC, and will make an enormous contribution to the diagnostic capabilities of the hospital, and the management of many patients both in the hospital and in the wider community.



Improving staff and patient safety

During our first visit to HEAL Africa in 2008, it was evident that the existing infection control practices were less than ideal, due to a lack of funding for even basic disposable medical supplies. In the absence of new, disposable syringes, needles and other collection devices, items were being washed and re-used, putting staff and patients at risk of possible infections. Protective equipment, such as gowns and gloves – and even bandages – was being washed, dried in the sun and used again. Helping to establish an environment where staff and patients could work and be treated safely became a priority. Since 2008, Sonic has sent more than a dozen shipping containers filled with enough disposable and single-use equipment to achieve a high standard of infection control in the hospital.

The provision of a low tech/high temperature incinerator has also enabled staff to safely dispose of dangerous medical waste. Instruction in safe specimen collection techniques and the provision of specialised waste containers, as well as the use of modern disposables, has improved the lives of both patients and staff.



More than just healthcare

The shipping containers that Sonic sends each year don't just contain medical supplies. They also transport a wide variety of items donated by Sonic staff, ranging from basics like pens, paper and books for use in the two schools that HEAL supports, through to donated clothes, toys, personal items and gifts for the many thousands of displaced and at-risk people HEAL helps each year. We've even run a 'Croc drive', where staff were encouraged to donate new Croc sandals so that young children were given greater foot protection

when they walked on the unmade roads of Goma. Importantly, these containers also act as a valuable means for other generous donors to send humanitarian aid items that would otherwise be impossible to transport.

Individual Sonic companies also donate items for specific projects, for example, the fine netting that is used to produce mosquito nets for sale through the HEALing Arts Centre. We've also supplied the hospital with donated mechanical hospital beds, as well as mattresses, sheets and blankets, and supported the hospital workshop that makes crutches and prosthetic devices, with the donation of wood-working equipment.

Sonic Healthcare continues to offer scholarships to local staff, especially for the training of pathology and radiology technicians. We have sponsored the training of local Congolese radiographers and scientists to improve their skills and qualifications and, recently, two of our sponsored medical doctors graduated to become a specialist pathologist and specialist radiologist.

Our support now extends to projects such as the HEALing Arts Centre and the Tuungane and Magunga schools. Here, we've helped supplement the teachers' wages, supplied writing implements and sports equipment, and paid for a solar power unit for the roof at Magunga, which previously had no electrical power.

Our best efforts are ongoing, and now include fundraising by our own staff across Europe, Australia and the USA.

New Frontiers

Sonic Healthcare's work in the Democratic Republic of Congo has paved the way for us to lend similar support to other East African Countries that can also benefit from our assistance and expertise.

The Catalyst program receives more requests for help than we can realistically meet, but where we can, we share our expertise and experience. Sonic Healthcare is also involved in four additional projects in central Africa that aim to improve the health outcomes for the region's most disadvantaged people. In all of these countries, the main health problems are communicable (contagious) diseases, which are worsened by poor sanitation and malnutrition. There is also a very high infant and maternal mortality rate. These problems are exacerbated by the shortage of trained doctors, nurses and health facilities.



His House of Hope Hospital

South Sudan is not only the newest country in the world, but it also has the highest maternal mortality rate. One in seven women die during childbirth; 94% of all births take place in the traditional mud hut home; and only 16% of women receive any prenatal care.

Sonic Healthcare has formed an association with His House of Hope Hospital in Yei — a 50 bed hospital that provides care to more than 6000 women and children each year. Sonic will be supplying equipment, supplies and training to help create a modern diagnostic facility within the hospital.

Bahir Dar

The Catalyst program is working with an Australian Maternal Health Foundation to establish a small laboratory in a new hospital in Bahir Dar, a large rural town, five hours' drive north-west of Addis Ababa. This hospital's focus will be maternal health and fistula prevention and treatment.

Mille Hospital

Our most recent collaboration is with the Mille hospital in the Afar region of Ethiopia. Using the same successful model that we employed with HEAL Africa, Sonic Healthcare has commenced a long-term involvement to create a modern and well-equipped pathology and radiology facility, together with well-trained staff and adequate medical supplies.

Fistula Hospital

In 1996, we were asked to help establish a pathology laboratory in the Fistula Hospital established by Dr Catherine Hamlin and her late husband Reg In Addis Ababa. This involved the provision of equipment, on-site training and ongoing support. In a follow-up visit in 1998, we were gratified to find their new lab was successfully functioning at an extremely high level. The Catalyst team still visit the lab whenever they are in Addis Ababa, and have been encouraged to see first-hand how well the lab is functioning. Sonic Healthcare continues to support the Fistula Hospital to this day, answering any requests for equipment, training support and advice.





Catalyst
A SONIC HEALTHCARE PROGRAM

Recognising the dire medical needs that prevail in so many parts of the world can be a daunting exercise. Yet our deep involvement with just a few of these disadvantaged communities has yielded humanitarian benefits, as well as providing a unifying and gratifying involvement for Sonic Healthcare staff across the world. We look forward to helping to bring change to many more lives through improved healthcare in the years to come.

Colin Goldschmidt | CEO, Sonic Healthcare

www.sonichealthcare.com