



*"We need your service, right now, at this moment in history. I'm not going to tell you what your role should be; that's for you to discover. But I am asking you to stand up and play your part. I am asking you to help change history's course." – President Obama*

In late 2004, AIHA established the HRSA-funded HIV/AIDS Twinning Center to support PEPFAR objectives to build sustainable institutional and human resource capacity in target countries overseas.

The Volunteer Healthcare Corps (VHC) is a distinct yet complementary component of the Twinning Center's institutional partnership program. It is designed to rapidly expand the pool of trained providers, managers, and allied health staff delivering quality healthcare services—including care to people living with HIV/AIDS—by providing opportunities for skilled professionals from various fields to serve the cause of global health by volunteering their time and expertise. Flexible and dynamic in nature, the VHC works to tailor assignments to the unique skill set of each volunteer, thereby maximizing the benefits on both sides.

Volunteers help increase human resources for health, scale up existing services, and jumpstart new projects through long-term placements at twinning partnership sites and other institutions. They become catalysts for sustainable change as they transfer knowledge and skills and serve as mentors and role models for local counterparts.

In addition to building the capacity of local institutions that are working to deliver effective and sustainable solutions to HIV/AIDS and other public health challenges in Africa, the VHC makes an important contribution to American public diplomacy. A long-standing partner of USAID's Volunteers for Prosperity (VfP) program and President Obama's volunteer initiative, the VHC provides global learning opportunities for each volunteer while enabling these individuals to serve as a goodwill ambassadors by bringing meaningful change to people's lives.

Our volunteers bring a significant amount of professional knowledge across a broad spectrum of disciplines. Typical assignments range from three months to two years, depending on the needs of the host institution. Each volunteer is provided with transportation, a visa, travel insurance, vaccinations, housing, a modest living allowance, and in-country support.

As of May 2011, we have placed a total of 87 volunteers. Together, these individuals have contributed a total of 935 months of professional service toward building lasting capacity at their host organizations.

## COUNTRY SNAPSHOT

### **Ethiopia**

Inception: September 2006  
Volunteers Placed to Date: 47  
Placement Sites: 30  
Total Time Contributed: 625 months  
Average Assignment: 14 months

### **Tanzania**

Inception: May 2007  
Volunteers Placed to Date: 18  
Placement Sites: 14  
Total Time Contributed: 156 months  
Average Assignment: 8.5 months

### **South Africa**

Inception: February 2008  
Volunteers Placed to Date: 15  
Placement Sites: 16  
Total Time Contributed: 113 months  
Average Assignment: 7.5 months

### **Mozambique**

Inception: February 2009  
Volunteers Placed to Date: 3  
Placement Sites: 1  
Total Time Contributed: 9 months  
Average Assignment: 3 months

### **Botswana**

Inception: September 2009  
Volunteers Placed to Date: 4  
Placement Sites: 4  
Total Time Contributed: 32 months  
Average Assignment: 8 months

*(as of May 2011)*

# ETHIOPIAN DIASPORA VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

In Ethiopia, the Twinning Center aims to mobilize the Diaspora community to contribute to HIV/AIDS capacity building efforts through its Diaspora Initiative. This unique approach has the benefit of recruiting highly-skilled professionals with a particular motivation to return to their country of origin, allowing them to quickly engage in both professional and personal activities while confronting fewer cultural barriers.

The program in Ethiopia is a robust example of how the Diaspora and governments can collaborate to build capacity within a country. Volunteers placed through this initiative have made significant impacts on systems, organizations, communities, and individuals alike. Fourteen volunteers have been placed at the Ministry of Health and have made significant achievements in strengthening their capacity. Stories from volunteers attest to both the tangible and intangible outcomes of a volunteer experience, which provides unique opportunities for professional growth for staff at the host site, as well as for the volunteers themselves. In several instances, these volunteers have been repatriated and are now helping to combat the significant problem of “brain drain” that has been so detrimental to Ethiopia’s healthcare system.

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT



### **Dr. Theodros W. Gebriel, Doctor of Physiotherapy**

Hometown: Springfield, Virginia, USA

Host Site: Addis Ababa University/Black Lion Hospital

Volunteering Since: February 2009

### **Volunteer Assignment Goal**

To promote and improve the quality of rehabilitation medicine for patients with orthopedic, neurological, cardiopulmonary, and infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS and TB.

### **Selected Achievements**

- Developed a doctoral degree curriculum for physiotherapy students, with an expected launch of the post-graduate program in September 2011, upon approval from AAU.
- Twenty-nine physiotherapy clinicians have been enrolled in a new, 4-year on-the-job residency program and will be granted a Doctoral degree in physiotherapy from AAU upon completion. These graduates will go on to serve as faculty members for future residents.
- Developed partnerships with three American institutions to provide teaching staff, equipment, and educational materials in-kind, for the doctoral and residency programs.
- Provided mentorship and clinical consultations to physiotherapy clinicians.
- Strengthened the capacity of the Ethiopian Physiotherapy Association.
- Joined a task force at the Ministry of Health to advocate on behalf of the field of physiotherapy.
- Restructured the physiotherapy department at Black Lion Hospital to improve patient service delivery.

## PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF VOLUNTEERS

### **Clinician**

physicians, nurses, midwives, medical school professors

### **Pharmacist**

clinical pharmacists, pharmacy school professors

### **Psycho-social Care Provider**

psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, social workers, palliative care specialists

### **Laboratory Scientist**

microbiologists, lab technicians, lab safety specialists

### **Infection Control Specialist**

program developers, PEP experts, IC advisors, lecturers

### **Organizational Development Specialist**

policy and planning experts, capacity building advisors, human resource specialists, management consultants, student and patient services managers, monitoring and evaluation experts, quality assurance experts

### **Allied Health Professional**

HIV/AIDS nutritionists, epidemiologists, medical radiation physicists

### **Communications Specialist**

health communications and marketing experts, public relations experts, journalists

### **Information Technology Expert**

web developers, database specialists, ICT specialists, health informatics experts

*In 2009, President Obama signed into law the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, a legislative authorization establishing Volunteers for Prosperity. The Volunteer Healthcare Corps is part of this initiative, which was created to enlist highly skilled Americans to advance global development goals through service abroad.*