



Overnight, the people were filled with hope

The Arusha Lutheran Medical Center, directed by ELCA missionary, Dr. Mark Jacobson, just graduated its first class of Assistant Medical Officers. In training these students, the center is addressing the huge need for health professionals in Tanzania. With a population of 44 million, Tanzania has fewer than 2,000 medical doctors to serve the entire population. The shortage is especially critical in rural Tanzania.

In response to this shortage, the center trains “assistant doctors.” These are students, previously trained as clinical officers or physician’s assistants, who have returned for a two-year course, upgrading to be an Assistant Medical Officer. In the course, their clinical skills are refreshed and they are introduced to basic surgery. The goal of the course is to increase the number of trained medical providers for the rural communities of Tanzania.

The school is the first faith-based program of its kind in the country. Among the first class of 20 students, 15 have completed the course and passed their examinations.

While 15 graduates sounds as if it will make little difference, the impact of these 15 on their home hospitals will be enormous. It means that 15 new doctors will serve 15 different hospitals in the most remote areas of the country.

Consider Dr. Wallace Sahani who received the “best student” award. Upon graduation, he immediately made the 14-hour drive to the western side of Lake Victoria where he resumed duties in a 150-bed hospital with only one other Assistant Medical Officer. Overnight, the medical professionals were doubled, the quality of care improved and the people were filled with hope.



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