

Jamaica

November 12, 2007

Global Links's 23rd container of 2007 was an important one for the organization – it was the 300th sea container of medical materials since the organization began making aid shipments in 1989. Appropriately, this container is headed to Jamaica, one of Global Links' longest standing programs.

This is the 33rd container that Global Links has sent to Jamaica since 1990. With our long term presence on the island, Global Links has been able to help hospitals and health centers all over the country. This particular shipment will benefit the Manchester Health department, including their main hospital, Mandeville Hospital, as well as smaller health centers throughout the region. It also included materials for Black River Hospital in the neighboring Saint Elizabeth Parish. Both of these areas are located in the southern/southwestern part of the island, serving a combined population of over 340,000 people.

Mandeville hospital is a "type B" hospital in the Jamaican health system, meaning that it is located in an urban center and offers the four basic specialties of general surgery, internal medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, and pediatrics. Key items that Mandeville will receive are gurneys and office furniture, including desks and wheeled office chairs. Black River hospital is a slightly smaller facility, with only 101 beds. It also offers just the very basic specialties. Key items that Black River will receive include gurneys, office furniture, scales for adults and babies, an EKG machine and nebulizers.

Every needs lists that Global Links received from Jamaica for this shipment requested desks, office chairs and filing cabinets as key priorities. It is often the offices and record keeping facilities that seem the most abandoned in many health institutions overseas. When health facilities with very limited budgets are forced to prioritize their purchases, filing cabinets, desks, and wheeled office chairs never make it to the top of the priority list. Yet these very items are necessary to maintain a neat and well-organized institution. Program Officer Patti Skillin reports seeing health professionals using cardboard boxes for filing systems or sitting in broken chairs behind small tables, instead of desks. Storage space, such as desk drawers and filing cabinets, is very hard to come by, which

leaves important documents sitting out in the open, vulnerable to being lost or damaged. Global Links shipments aim to improve health services, which means not only helping the patients but also the health professionals serving them, enabling them to do the best possible job that they can.

This particular shipment included 13 office desks, 13 wheeled office chairs, nine filing cabinets, and 9 chart racks. Improving health care means improving a wide range of areas and services, some of which are not always immediately obvious. In addition to the office furniture, this shipment included 10 gurneys, chairs, scales, some equipment carts, a pharmacy cart and over 300 boxes of medical materials.