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Self-sufficient, mobile pediatric heart clinic performs groundbreaking surgeries in Burundi

Supported by several products from global medtech company Getinge, the German non-profit organization kinderherzen continues to save the lives of children in countries with no or inadequate access to cardiac care.

The world's first modular, self-sufficient and mobile cardiac surgery clinic*, also called MOHKI, is designed to provide children with congenital heart defect in accordance with internationally recognized standards of care. Packed into 12 containers, it can be deployed wherever local infrastructure and specialized expertise are insufficient.

After its pilot mission in El Salvador in the spring of 2024, where a team of volunteering doctors and nurses saved the lives of 24 children born with heart defect, the MOHKI was transported to its current location in Burundi in East Africa.

“Before we arrived, many children born with a heart defect in Burundi died. So far, we have operated on more than 70 tiny patients. We typically perform two surgeries per day, unless a case is particularly complex. Even by German standards, this is a very strong performance,” says Anja Schlarb, Head of kinderherzen International.

In March of 2025, the surgical team performed an open-heart surgery on a three-year-old girl, who is now doing very well. The procedure marked a major milestone for pediatric cardiac care in Burundi. The groundbreaking procedure was followed by a successful transposition of the great arteries (TGA) surgery on a five-week-old baby boy. Left untreated, this rare congenital heart defect, where the two main arteries leaving the heart are switched, may lead to death within the first days or weeks of life.

“These achievements transcend the single procedures. They give hope, not only to a child and a family, but to an entire country. And it shows what becomes possible when commitment, trust, and compassion come together. For us, the MOHKI mission is the start of something much greater in Burundi,” Anja says.

In addition to the surgery missions, kinderherzen's aims to train local specialists in each region. The long-term goal in Burundi is to build a permanent cardiothoracic center for children.

“The building already exists, but it is empty. We are now working hard to raise the funds needed to equip it. Once the center is fully set up, the MOHKI will move on to another country. Several

nations have explained interest, but we must conduct visits and research before we can decide where to go next,” Anja explains.

Getinge’s expertise and advanced medical technology will continue to be part of upcoming MOHKI missions.

“Without Getinge, none of this would have been possible. In addition to most of the equipment for our mobile clinic, including the mobile operating table, ventilators, anesthesia machines and a heart-lung machine, we also get access to invaluable service support,” Anja says.

The equipment from Getinge is made available to kinderherzen with a license agreement. On-site maintenance is handled by the company’s distributor in Tanzania, while Getinge employees, such as Marcus Kleinert, Senior Service Technician in Germany, provide 24/7 online support.

“I am happy to be at hand whenever the kinderherzen team need help. Sometimes the call comes outside working hours, but that’s part of the service. Even if I only contribute with a small piece of advice, an idea or technical assistance over a video call, most of the time it can enable them to continue saving children’s lives,” Marcus says.

[Learn more about kinderherzen and their work \(in German\) >>](#)

[Read a previous news article about MOHKI >>](#)

*Source: <https://mohki.de/>

Contact:

Caroline Örmgård, Corporate Communications

Phone: +46 (0)10 335 0041

Email: [caroline.ormgard @getinge.com](mailto:caroline.ormgard@getinge.com)

About Getinge

With a firm belief that every person and community should have access to the best possible care, Getinge provides hospitals and life science institutions with products and solutions aiming to improve clinical results and optimize workflows. The offering includes products and solutions for intensive care, cardiovascular procedures, operating rooms, sterile reprocessing and life science. Getinge employs approximately 12,000 people worldwide and the products are sold in more than 135 countries.