

LIBERIA



Population: over 5million

Dentists: seven

Dental therapists: a handful



... here's how you can help

The Dental need in Liberia

Liberia is one of the few countries in the world that does not have any dental training facilities. The acute shortage of dental personnel in the health system poses a serious public health problem.

The effect of oral disease for most people in Liberia is profound, causing pain, discomfort, disfigurement and even death. The impact of poor oral health is far reaching across the population and has severe consequences for health, including the economic and social development of Liberia.

Importantly, most oral health conditions are largely preventable and can be treated successfully in the early stages with access to basic and regular dental care. In addition to this, the burden of oral disease can be reduced in the population by effective community prevention to promote oral health awareness, key prevention messages and self-care.

The current situation

Trinity Dental Clinic was established in 2008 at ELWA hospital in Monrovia to help meet these needs. In 2019, the clinic expanded to a new purpose-built facility with 8 clinical rooms and currently has 20 staff including:

- 1 Liberian dentist – trained in the Philippines
- 1 dental nurse practitioner
- 4 senior dental assistants who extract teeth
- 3 hygienists
- 2 denturists
- 2 expatriate missionary dentists.

In 2018, the Clinic sent one Liberian staff member to train at Nairobi Dental School, Kenya. He already had several years clinical and administrative experience, but no formal dental qualification. He is due to qualify in December 2024 and return as the team leader. It is planned to send a second staff member in 2022. These two will be fully qualified Liberian dentists.

The Clinic also periodically sends out teams on short, 2-3 day, dental outreach trips to rural areas, where there is no dental provision. **But would it not be better if there were dentally trained people, spread around Liberia, able to provide dental care on a permanent basis?**

We've made good progress but we want to do so much more

Your help will enable us to:

1 Continue the next phase of development, a formal two-year Dental Therapist training course, starting in September 2022. By July 2024 we hope to be graduating our first four Dental Therapy Practitioner (DTP) graduates.

- Graduates will have completed a 2-year diploma course, approved by the Liberian Ministry of Health. This will be awarded by Cuttington University, a private University in Liberia and supported academically by Peninsula Dental School, University of Plymouth, UK.
- They will be licenced by the Liberia Medical and Dental Council.
- They will be returning to their home towns around Liberia, where they will work, fully equipped using, Dentaaid supplied, field kits.
- They will be clinically supported, meeting dental needs, and generating their own income. At the same time, we plan to also graduate our four Senior Dental Assistants.

2 Provide training for more students in a bespoke Therapist School building adjacent to the existing Trinity Dental Clinic. This will have an additional 6 clinical rooms, a waiting area, 2 classrooms, offices and changing facilities.

Artist's impression of the proposed Therapist Training school, on the right of the existing Trinity Dental Clinic.



We anticipate that the first four students will start the course in September 2022 at the existing facilities on the ELWA site.



To run the training programme and build the dental school, we need your help!

Neither the dental therapist students' fees nor the patients' charges are nearly sufficient to establish and run the Dental Therapist School, and so **we need approximately £0.75 million** to fund our five-year development plan.

By Easter 2022 we have raised a third of our total. This is where the money goes:

Trinity Dental Clinic & School (£000's)	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	TOTAL
Student Fee Income	1.4	4.8	8.2	10.9	13.0	38.2
Fees to local university	2.7	7.5	9.6	10.9	13.0	43.6
Equipment for clinic & school	15.2	49.2	0.5	2.5	0.8	68.1
Equipment for graduates	0.0	17.0	0.0	12.7	17.0	46.7
Rental, staff & operating costs	12.1	23.9	20.3	20.2	20.5	97.0
Building works – school & dormitory	68.2	181.8	45.5	0.0	0.0	295.5
General contingency	11.7	29.5	9.2	4.5	5.0	59.8
SIM services charges	20.1	44.2	14.0	4.7	4.9	87.80
Dentist training: two leaders abroad	21.3	22.8	25.8	9.2	12.0	91.0
Total Costs	151.2	375.8	124.7	64.6	73.0	789.4
Net expenditure	149.9	371.1	116.6	53.7	60.1	751.2
Number of 1st year students*	8	6	8	10	10	42
Number of 2nd year students*	0	8	6	8	10	32

* first cohort includes four current team members

The project is led by **Dr Simon Stretton-Downes OBE BDS**, who has been the Principal Dentist at Trinity Dental Clinic, as a volunteer, since 2017 and led the construction of the new clinic in 2019. He qualified in 1983 from Newcastle University, and his dental experience includes eight years in Ethiopia with SIM, eight years as a civilian dentist for the UK Armed Forces and 16 years as a partner in practice in England. He was awarded an OBE for services to dentistry in Africa in 2021.



The Trinity Dental Clinic and Training Centre is a project managed through SIM Liberia, part of the Serving In Mission international Christian charity; training and treatment are offered to people of all faiths, and none. **Due to the challenges of transport to Liberia, we are seeking support only in the form of cash donations which may be made via our website: www.ldts.org**

For further information, contact us at strettondownessimon@gmail.com

Patron: Her Excellency Dr Jewel Howard-Taylor, Vice President of Liberia

