

## SUCCESS STORY



### **Mercy Ships Switzerland Installed by Solutions KLÄY**

Mercy Ships was founded in Lausanne in 1978 with the aim of working with host countries to close gaps in their health systems in a targeted and sustainable way. To date, over 100,000 people have been treated on Mercy Ships' hospital ships around the world. Around 600 staff from over 60 countries volunteer with Mercy Ships. The newest hospital ship, the Global Mercy, has been sailing in West Africa since February 2023. It has six operating theatres and around 200 beds.

### **Mercy Ships has been using peoplefone since 2019. Why did you decide to switch to peoplefone at that time?**

We needed to replace the old telephone exchange at our headquarters in Lausanne, but many offers were out of the question for us. They were either too big and too expensive or contained the wrong functions. With the installation company Solutions KLÄY, we had a very good partner at our side with whom we could examine the different offers. The fair price/performance offer from peoplefone finally convinced us.

### **You yourself used to work in the telecommunications industry for many years. What are the most important aspects for you that a provider must bring along today?**

I think that the requirements have changed compared to back then. Today, customers often want everything to come from a single source and, for example, Microsoft Teams to be directly integrated. In 2019, for us it was primarily about taking the step from a traditional, analogue system to a VoIP solution. Important for us were "ordinary" telephony functions such as group calls, an answering machine, and the possibility to forward calls. Integration with our IT was also essential, so that we could transfer contact data from Outlook, for example.

### **And what specific requirements does Mercy Ships have for a telephone system?**

Since our employees are on the road in Switzerland and abroad, the telephony must work regardless of location. In addition, the people must always be reachable under the same number - provided, of course, that they have internet access.

### **What about the connection on the hospital ships?**

Our ships spend ten to eleven months a year in a port in Africa. There, the internet connections via the respective land networks are now very good everywhere. So, our staff can make phone calls via VoIP without any problems.

### **How do you imagine communication on the ships and between ship and shore?**

Within the organisation, a lot is done via Microsoft Teams or Skype. The employees appreciate it when they can count on visual support when communicating with their colleagues and can share the screen, for example.

**Are there any plans to switch to peoplefone for the telephony solution at the Swiss office in Berne in the near future? Another solution is still in use there.**

That's true. In autumn 2016, we opened an office in Belp and opted for Swisscom's PME Office solution, as we were a small team at the time. The next step will now be to link the Belp team to the Lausanne office. Nothing has been decided yet, but it's clear that we're going to do it with peoplefone. So far, we're very happy with their solution - it works perfectly in every situation.

**How do you experience the collaboration between the installation partner Solutions KLÄY and peoplefone?**

Solutions KLÄY is a small integrator that understands the needs of small businesses. Prior to the changeover, they gave a lot of thought to Mercy Ships' requirements and prerequisites. This global vision gave us a good feeling. As a humanitarian organisation, we don't have our own IT specialist, so working with trusted partners is very important to us. What impresses me most about peoplefone is the commitment of Danette and Christophe Beaud, founders of the peoplefone Group. They are interested, open and want to give something back to the company. At our 45th anniversary gala, they supported Mercy Ships with peoplefone. It's a pleasure to work with such personalities.

**Your hospital ships have been sailing for 45 years. What is your wish for the future of Mercy Ships?**

That in 45 years' time we won't be needed. Our aim is always to leave something of our commitment and expertise in the countries we have visited. We want to develop the people who work in local healthcare and give them the means to take on more responsibility for surgical care in their countries.

*Interview conducted with René Lehmann, Director of Mercy Ships Switzerland*