



MISSION REPORT – Rwanda, Nyanza 31 May - 4 June 2021

- Another **successful SwissLimbs** Mission!
- Trained **17 orthopaedic technicians**
- Restored the mobility of **11 amputee patients**

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The mission

SwissLimbs' first training mission to Rwanda took place at the HVP Gatagara Orthopedics & Rehabilitation Hospital in Nyanza, the capitol of the Southern Province. 17 participants from 10 orthopaedic centres throughout the nation attended the training.

SwissLimbs dispatched its largest team yet for this mission. In addition to the three members from Switzerland - the President of SwissLimbs, Filippo Nishino, the Executive Director Roberto Agosta and the Operational Officer, Nicole Rossi - four orthopedic technicians joined the team from African based projects supported by SwissLimbs. Two came from Gulu in Uganda; Emmanuel Kalanzi, the SwissLimbs ambassador for Africa along with his co-worker Nicholas Kiiza. The other two technicians came from Tanzania; Claude Mushi, orthopedic technician from Mwanza Prosthetics & Orthotics Workshop, and Nsengiyumva Magogwa an orthopedic technician from Bukoba, Tanzania who will start work in the SwissLimbs hospital in Kibaha in August 2021.

The 5-day program was very intense as they had much to teach the participants. Thanks to the large number of trainers, the participants had the opportunity to be individually mentored as they practised the various techniques they were learning.

"Do your work with love, because without it, your work has no worth". This was the message with which the SwissLimbs ambassador, Emmanuel Kalanzi began the week of training, emphasizing how important it is to pay each patient one's full attention and treat them with empathy.

On Monday, May 31, during the first day of training, casts were taken from seven patients: six transtibial amputees and one transfemoral amputee. Most of the patients come from the school located in the same grounds of the Gatagara Rehabilitation Hospital. This school was established so that children with handicaps did not need to be disadvantaged due to their disabilities from an early age.

The initial planning prepared for the treatment of 7 patients during the mission but once underway, word spread and four other patients came with requests for help, two transradial amputees, a 12-year-old small transfemoral amputee and for the first time on a SwissLimbs mission, a trans-humeral amputee. In total, 11 people with disabilities were therefore able to benefit from this mission.



The objective of the mission was to provide participants with a broader vision of cutting-edge prosthetic technologies which have been designed with the needs of those in Sub-Saharan countries in mind. These technologies must be economical and durable, but at the same time guarantee the maximum possible comfort and mobility for patients suffering from disabilities. These innovations include Monolimb, Amparo technology and Myoelectric hands.

On Tuesday 1 June, the trainees attended a lecture on Amparo technology, provided by Claude Mushi the orthopedic technical trainer at the SwissLimbs project in Mwanza, Tanzania. The practicality of this technology sparked the enthusiasm of several Rwandan technicians as an oven is included in the mobile-friendly Amparo kit, making it possible to manufacture the legs directly at the patient's home.

Key meetings

Filippo Nishino and Roberto Agosta took advantage of their time in the country to attend meetings at the Rwandan Ministry of Health. On Wednesday 2nd June, they travelled to Kigali where they met with various health directors to discuss the most critical orthopedic needs in the nation. Their goal over the next 3 years is to procure orthopedic materials and equipment with the aim of establishing an orthopedic centre equipped with a mobile clinic. The health directors responded with great enthusiasm as there is a critical and urgent need for such services. At the end of the meetings, the parties agreed to draft a Memorandum of Understanding to formalize the collaboration with both state and local partners. The Rwandan Ministry of Health will provide a panorama of the needs in the nation along with their proposal of a location for further training locations and the establishment of such an orthopedic center.



Training times

Gallery of photos, which show our training week in Rwanda.



Certification ceremony



At the end of the training week, the 17 participants received a certificate which attests their participation and acquisition of the professional knowledge they gained during the week. Our organizer, the Rwanda Society of Prothetists and Orthotists also asked us to conduct a written exam - to the delight, or not, of the participants - in which they had to demonstrate what they learned during the training week. The exam was a real success, with an average score of 89%. We then proceeded with the delivery of the certificates, in the presence of the General Manager of the HVP Gatagara Orthopedics & Rehabilitation Hospital, Dr. Kizito Misago. It was a very festive moment, where the enthusiasm was palpable.



The SwissLimbs technicians



Emmanuel Kalanzi - SwissLimbs Ambassador for Africa, orthopedic technician and head trainer from Gulu, Uganda.

Emmanuel is a certified orthopedic technician, committed and passionate about humanitarian causes and projects. He works for AVSI Foundation Uganda at the Gulu Regional Orthopedic Workshop "GROW" and has over 40 years of experience in the profession.

He is the representative of SwissLimbs in Africa and responsible for the implementation of the training modules for orthopedic technicians of the SwissLimbs projects.



Nicholas Kiiza - Orthopedic technician from Gulu, Uganda

Nicholas graduated in orthopedic technology from the Mulago Paramedical School in 2013. Since 2014 he has worked as an orthopedic technician in several rehabilitation centers and as a part-time lecturer in the school of orthopedic technology at the Uganda Institute of Allied Health and Management Sciences in Mulago. Since October 2016 he has been employed by the AVSI Foundation as an orthopedic technician at Gulu Regional Referral Hospital. This was his first mission with SwissLimbs.



Claude Mushi - Orthopedic technician and manager of the Mwanza Prosthetics & Orthotics Workshop (MPOW)

Claude holds a bachelor's degree in prosthetics and orthotics from Kilimanjaro Christian Medical University College in Tanzania. He has a background in project management, marketing, and administration. He is a SwissLimbs trainer in new technologies and the manager of MPOW, which SwissLimbs established in 2018.



Nsengiyumva Magogwa - Orthopedic technician from Bukoba, Tanzania

Nsengiyuma graduated with a degree in prosthetics and orthotics from TATCOT (Tanzania Training Center for Orthopedic Technology) in Moshi in Tanzania in 2014. He has worked in the field of prosthetics and orthoses and in the conservative management of orthopedic cases for seven years, both in hospitals and rehabilitation centers in Tanzania. From August 2021 he will be employed as an orthopedic technician at the SwissLimbs rehabilitation hospital in Kibaha, Tanzania.

The 17 participants



Heritier Gasore
Inkurunziza Orthopedic
Hospital



Isaac Rukundu
HVP Gatagara
Hospital Nyanza



Christophe Niyibizi
Rilima Orthopedic
Hospital



Grace Umuhzo
Gihundwe District
Hospital



Simeon Subika
Centre Hôpitalier
Universitaire de Kigali



Agnes Kubiwimana
Rwanda Society
of Prosthetists
and Orthotists



Joséphine Niyodusenga
HVP Gatagara Gikondo



Phocas Hakizimana
Ruhengeri Referral
Hospital



Jean-Pierre Hakizimana
HVP Gatagara
Hospital Nyanza



Eric Ruzindana
Gahini Rehabilitation
Center



Emile Niyonkuru
HVP Gatagara
Hospital Nyanza



Brave Mbamumana
HVP Gatagara
Hospital Nyanza



Jean d'Amour Uramutse
National Union of
Disabilities Of Rwanda



Modeste Niyongombwa
Centre Hôpitalier
Universitaire de Kigali



Robert Hakorimana
Rwanda Society of
Prosthetists and
Orthotists (president)



Fulgence Bucybaruta
HVP Gatagara Gikondo

Eric Habimana
National Council of Persons
with Disabilities



The beneficiaries

Esther Tuyizere, aged 16, a transtibial amputee since 2013



When Esther was 8 years old she broke her left leg when she fell out of the orange tree she was picking fruit from. Her injury was not properly treated and two weeks after her premature release from hospital she contracted an infection, which resulted in the amputation of her leg. This is her fourth prosthesis as a growing child needs to be refitted more frequently than an adult. She was happy with the comfortable prosthetic she was fitted with during the mission, as the previous one had become too tight for her. Esther is a resident secondary school student at HVP Gatagara, but she dreams of the day she can return to live with her parents and 3 siblings and work the land as her parents do.

Patrick Kagaba, aged 53, a transtibial amputee since 1993



Patrick lost his leg in 1993 after stepping on a landmine while on active duty in the Rwandan army. The explosion pulverized the lower part of his leg. Getting him to the hospital was complicated by the fact that they were in a rural area, far from any hospital. Upon arrival, what remained of his leg, was amputated. Patrick is a father of seven children and recently became a grandfather. This is his 6th prosthetic since his amputation, which was made during the demonstration exhibiting the before-mentioned Amparo technology.

Grace Uwiduhaye, aged 18, a bilateral transtibial amputee since 2016



Grace, a girl with a contagious smile, was 13 years old when she contracted malaria. Left untreated her condition worsened until she slipped into a coma. By the time she came around, both of her legs were in such an advanced state of gangrene, they needed to be amputated. Grace dreams of becoming a doctor. She is presently a boarding school student at HVP Gatagara and returns home to her family during school holidays. She has 8 siblings. This is the fourth time she has been refitted since her amputation.

James Yumvagusenga, aged 17, a transtibial amputee since 2010



James is a smiling and helpful boy who, due to a congenital disease, was born with one leg shorter than the other. As he grew, the shorter leg became more cumbersome. When James was six years old the doctors decided that - to avoid further problems - his left leg should be amputated. James lives and studies during the school term at HVP Gatagara and reunites with his parents and four siblings during the school holidays. His dream is to become a doctor. The prosthetic he received on this mission made use of the Monolimb technology and is his 5th fitting. The previous prosthetic had become very tight, causing him much discomfort.

Frank Mizero Shema, aged 12, a transfemoral amputee since 2010



Frank is a sweet, cheerful child who attends the boarding school that makes up the HVP Gatagara project. His parents and six brothers live in the Southern Province, not far from the center. Frank's leg was amputated above the knee before his first birthday due to complications caused by a congenital disease. During this mission, he received his first modular prosthesis, equipped with a super-performing seven-axis knee.

Sharon Tumusiime, aged 47, a transradial amputee since 2005



Sharon is a mother of 4 children and works in the administration of the center at HVP Gatagara Rehabilitation Hospital. Her perpetual kind smile belies two tragic events from her past. As a 5-year-old she contracted polio and lost the use of both legs. Then, in 2005 she was involved in a car accident in which she sustained injuries leading to the amputation of her right hand. A prosthetic hand that had previously been constructed for her was too short and of low quality. Sharon was incredibly happy to receive a Myoelectric transradial prosthesis during this mission.

Nadine Irasubiza, aged 12, a transtibial amputee since 2020



Nadine is also a student boarder at the HVP Gatagara educational facility. Fortunately, her family lives nearby so it is easy for Nadine to join her parents and her two brothers during the holidays. Born with a deformity caused by a congenital disease she was 11 years old before the doctors finally made the decision to amputate her leg. The years leading up to the amputation and the time spent in rehabilitation afterwards meant that Nadie missed several years of schooling. Nevertheless, she loves going to school and dreams of a happy and bright future. This the first prosthesis she has ever been fitted with and she is delighted that she is finally been able to walk again.

James Ndori Kagabo, aged 38, shoulder disarticulation amputee since 1995



James is the first patient SwissLimbs has treated whose arm has been amputated above the elbow. It was never understood why his arm was amputated at the shoulder after he was taken to hospital in 1995 with a forearm injury sustained during a car accident. James is a happily married father of twins and works with communities in the prevention of infectious diseases, such as AIDS. Before the SwissLimbs mission, he had never had a prosthesis, now he is the proud owner of a transhumeral prosthesis. He tells us with an excited smile: "How nice, now I can take my twins in both my arms."

Rosine Iridukunda, aged 12, a transfemoral amputee since 2020



Rosine is another resident student at HVP Gatagara . Her parents and two of her brothers live far away in the Northern Province so like many others, she only travels home during the holidays. Rosine loves going to school and dreams of becoming a laboratory technician in the health field. She is a radiant, happy person yet struggles to talk about the circumstances leading up to her amputation in 2020. The unsuccessful treatment of a tumor in her leg meant it needed to be amputated above the knee. The transfemoral prosthesis received during the SwissLimbs mission is her first prosthesis, and the joy of walking again was clearly evident in her face.

Albert Nikibikora, aged 15, a transtibial amputee since 2006



Albert was only two weeks old when his left leg was amputated on the account of a congenital disease. The leg fitted during this mission is his sixth prosthesis and he claims it is the most comfortable one he has had thus far. Due to the shape of the patella of the amputated leg, the orthopedic technicians needed to create a bespoke prosthesis suitable for his situation. Albert is the eldest of 6 siblings but like many of the other patients on this mission, attends boarding school at HVP Gatagara. He dreams of becoming a doctor and works hard at school to achieve this goal.

Honorine Gaju Mukandanga, aged 11, a transradial since 2010



Due to a congenital disease, Honorine was born without a section of her right forearm. She is the eldest of 3 siblings and also a boarding school student at HVP Gatagara. She loves studying and her dream is to become an orthopedic doctor, in order to help people with disabilities. This is Honorine's first prosthesis and was she was delighted to finally be able to have a hand, even if this temporary one is too large. She was one of those who came for help once the mission had started so they did not have the correct fit for her. A more appropriate sized hand will be sent to her as soon as possible.