

# **Project C.U.R.E. Aids Seaboard Corp.'s Mission to Give Back to the DRC Community**

**By: Sandy Muller**

On August 9, 2010, two screams rang out in a room at the Centre Medical de Matadi, a hospital nestled among the steep hills of Matadi in the DRC (Democratic Republic of the Congo) in Central Africa. But this time, in a country with a history of war, tyrannical control, and a struggle for independence, the cries were not in response to all that had gone before but a declaration of new life about to begin.

The cries were from twin babies taking their very first breath in the modern new maternity ward of the Centre Medical de Matadi, which is recognized as the best medical facility in Bas-Congo. The quality, cleanliness and service of the hospital where the children let their existence be known is comparable to that of a hospital in the States—and for that, the local parents of these babies (the first to be born in the maternity ward) can thank, believe it or not, a corporation based in America 9,000 miles away.



The Seaboard Corporation, headquartered in Merriam, Kansas, operates a flourmill called MIDEMA in Matadi, the chief seaport of the DRC. In the Congo, it is required by law that businesses provide medical care to employees and their families. Usually, this medical care is already available, but in the 1970's, when Continental Grain opened their flourmill (which Seaboard later bought), no viable healthcare options existed in Matadi, so Continental Grain started a small clinic of their own. After Seaboard bought MIDEMA from Continental Grain in the 1990's, they began to enhance the clinic for its workers. Over time, the clinic expanded to include an operating room and a laboratory. Later, when Harry Bresky, the Chairman and CEO of Seaboard, observed the lack of proper healthcare in the Matadi community, he started the Bresky Foundation and opened the doors of the employee-only medical clinic to the community at large.



Incubator in use before PROJECT  
C.U.R.E.'s help

In 2006, Seaboard went a step further, creating a health-focused non-profit organization called CCLD (Corporate Commitment for Local Development) to manage the clinic, headed by Congolese National, Dr. Paul Mihigo. In 2008, after recognizing the critical need for professional natal care, CCLD started construction on a new 40-bed obstetrical wing for the medical clinic named after the late Mr. Harry H. Bresky--then approached Project C.U.R.E. for help furnishing the new wing.

After assessing their need, Project C.U.R.E. was happy to help. Within the next year, it provided four containers of supplies for the maternity ward, worth over \$1.4 million. This included everything from basic supplies such as syringes, epidural needles and OB/GYN surgery packs to ultrasound equipment, operating room tables and lights, and an anesthesia machine.

“Without shame I can say that Project C.U.R.E. is the best experience we have had when it comes to sourcing equipment and materials for our clinic in Matadi,” praised Greg Stough, a founding member of CCLD and Managing Director at MIDEMA. “We have been disappointed in the past with other organizations, but the spirit of altruism and conviction of the Project C.U.R.E. staff members is truly commendable. They have a genuine interest in helping people and came through with even more than we expected.”



Incubators now available

For Stough, the clinic project in the DRC is particularly personal. He comes from generations of a family of missionaries who first came to the DRC (then called the Belgian Congo) in 1922. His grandmother died in the Congo due to a lack of sufficient medical care. She had a bacterial infection that could have been easily cured with penicillin had it just been available. Even now, the health situation in DRC is in a sad state—a result of years of war, corruption, extortion and poor governance. Very few have adequate access to quality health care and proper nutrition. However, the CCLD plans to change that, starting in Matadi.

“This clinic is fulfilling the commitment and vision of the late Harry Bresky and his son, Steve, the current CEO and Chairman of Seaboard Corp,” says Ralph Moss, Seaboard’s Vice President of Governmental Affairs. “Seaboard would like to replicate this medical project in other of its overseas locations in Africa and Latin and South America. It views Project C.U.R.E. as a solid and vital partner in this and future endeavors.”

The Matadi community and local government are grateful for the well-equipped, well-staffed ward. At the launching ceremony for the new obstetrics wing, Simon Mbatshi Batshi, Governor



of the Bas-Congo Province, cut the inauguration ribbon and gave an emotional speech thanking MIDEMA and Seaboard for their continued efforts of economic investment in the Bas-Congo Province. Also present were the mayor of Matadi and other members of the provincial government as well as the Ambassador of the United States in Congo and other members of the US Embassy.

“To see the Bresky Foundation contribute from its own resources to ensure that a project like this comes to realization touches me deeply,” says Stough. “We are hoping that other companies and people committed to this great country will undertake projects similar to ours in order to be a positive example of what can be done when there is a commitment to give back to the communities in which we live and operate.”

Project C.U.R.E. agrees. It is because of socially responsible corporations like Seaboard and other generous donors that people who would not otherwise have access to quality healthcare now do—including two healthy twin babies loudly christening a new state-of-the-art maternity ward in a city on the Congo River.

