

**Report on DENTAID session**  
**Speaker – Jill Harding**  
**Chaired by Joan Hatchard**

Jill is the Communications Director of the international dental charity Dentaaid. She told us that only 70% of the world population has access to a Dentist. During a very stimulating hour-long session, she showed us some of the work carried out overseas by Dentaaid and its volunteers.

Dentaaid was founded 21 years ago. It was started in the Ukraine in 1995, when the UK charity “Hope Now” was approached by a Ukraine prison governor. His inmates were in urgent need of dental care and a local dentist had agreed to come to the prison if a surgery could be set up. Now the charity has massively expanded. It provides basic dental treatment and oral health education projects to many deprived communities. Help is currently offered in Uganda, Kenya, Morocco, Cambodia, Moldova and next year also plans to work in Zambia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Bangladesh.

The charity’s 4 key messages are – Treat, Train, Educate and Equip.

Dentaaid ships out highly portable boxes on wheels. These carry essential dental equipment. Volunteers spend 1-2 weeks in deprived communities such as refugee or jungle camps. They offer basic dentistry alongside that country’s Dentists. Dental Nurses are an essential part of the team. Often, they work in difficult conditions, as sometimes there is no electricity or water supply. Often, up to 170 people a day need to be seen. Additionally, OHI and toothbrushing programmes are provided in schools and clinics.

**Benefits of being a volunteer?**

- Welcoming the challenge of a life changing experience.
- The opportunity to make new friends.
- Enabling dental team members to give something back to a needy community.
- Experiencing team spirit with hard work.
- Getting the satisfaction of relieving discomfort and pain.
- Seeing the world.
- Gaining an insight into the issues facing the provision of dental care in poorer communities.
- You do get days off! You can then get to look around the area you are working in.

**How much would it cost to become a volunteer?**

Currently, this is £1200 - £2500, so fundraising will be necessary. However, support and advice regarding fundraising is given by Dentaaid.

**Is training given?**

Dentaaid organises a training day under a team leader, then the team flies out together. Accommodation could be a hotel, guest house or sometimes a tent.

At the end of the session the audience asked numerous questions which Jill was happy to answer.