

# WDF and diabetes care in

## Tanzania: *making a difference*

☒ Alette Meyer

*The World Diabetes Foundation (WDF) is dedicated to supporting prevention and management of diabetes in the developing world. Accordingly it funds sustainable projects in education, capacity building, and distribution and procurement of essential medical supplies. WDF creates partnerships and acts as a catalyst to help others do more. Founded in March 2002 by Novo Nordisk, who have pledged 70 million EUR over 10 years for its activities, WDF strives to educate and advocate globally in an effort to raise awareness of diabetes, and to bring care and relief to people affected by the condition. The foundation is governed independently of the company by a five-member board of directors, comprised of experts in the fields of diabetes and access to health, in developing countries. In this article, Alette Meyer reports on a WDF project to open four diabetes services in Tanzania.*



It is the goal of the Tanzanian Diabetes Association (TDA) that everybody with diabetes in Tanzania should receive adequate care. While this objective may seem utopian, even impossible, Dr Kaushik Ramaiya,

based in Dar es Salaam, is not deterred. Often working from early morning to midnight 7 days a week to help people with diabetes, he has strived to improve diabetes care in Tanzania for more than 20 years.

The (WDF) has now provided funding to enable Dr Ramaiya's and the TDA's project to make further progress. Initially, it will involve the establishment of four new diabetes services in different parts of Tanzania.

The size of the problem  
Before initiating the project, Dr Ramaiya and his colleagues visited all 24 regions in Tanzania and interviewed physicians and people with diabetes about the levels of existing diabetes care – if it existed at all.

"As we expected, the result of our survey was disheartening. Only in two regions did hospitals offer diabetes care – but in the same wards used to treat all other kinds of diseases. This meant that we found no specific focus on diabetes," says Dr Ramaiya.

Similarly depressing was the study of patient awareness of the condition. Between 60 and 70% of people with diabetes did not know their normal blood sugar (glucose) level and were unaware of the problems related to high or low levels of blood glucose. They did not monitor their own blood glucose concentration. Despite the enormous challenges, Dr Ramaiya is optimistic, as physicians and nurses were eager to help >>