

# What is capacity building?



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*"I applied to the fellowship to better understand the act of surgery. I left with the understanding that clinical impact can only scale as far as education, storytelling and partnership can carry it."*

## Context

Five billion people lack access to safe surgery, and West Africa is among the worst-served regions (Lancet, 2015).

The West African College of Surgeons (WACS), founded in 1960, is the postgraduate surgical college for the sub-region. Its UK Forum, inaugurated at the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS England) in 2008, brings together diaspora surgeons, nurses and anaesthetists together for surgical education, training and services across the region.

## Reflections

**Signs of progress.** Candid debrief brought visiting and local surgeons together, with new models for targeted pre- and post-outreach skills work discussed.

**Strengthening the model**  
Priorities for the next mission are matching case selection to local capability, securing equipment ahead of arrival and agreeing escalation pathways for anaesthesia.

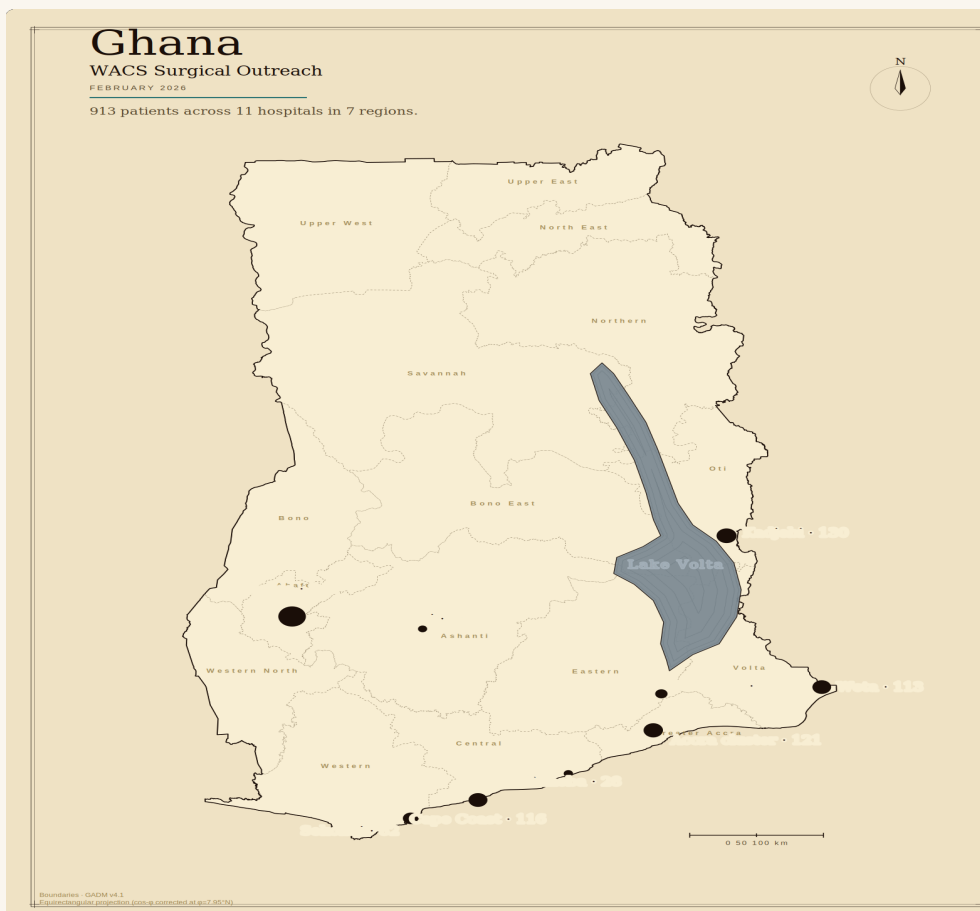
## Future direction

**Clinical.** Complex, training-rich procedures agreed in advance, with open cholecystectomy as a proof of concept.

**Educational.** Making the Laparoscopic Skills workshop a fixture at WACS conferences, working toward an RCS-accreditable simulation centre in West Africa.

**Storytelling.** A full-length documentary, and a paper on outcomes and patient-economic savings.

**Strategic.** Continuing to work on championing the role of diasporans in capacity building in West Africa.



913 patients

11 hospitals

89 volunteers

936 operations

7 days

## The work

### Clinical



#### Team and patient selection

Twenty-five international visitors worked with sixty-four local volunteers across eleven hospitals. Host teams selected and assessed patients four weeks ahead, with case complexity agreed in advance and no fees charged.

### Educational



#### Training in high demand

A Basic Surgical Skills workshop ran with Prof Bill Thomas and WACS UK faculty. A Laparoscopic Skills workshop with Prof Bijendra Patel drew forty applicants for fourteen places.

### Storytelling



#### Documentary with Lily Shepherd

Conversations recorded at four of the eleven hospitals reached RCS Council members and the President of WACS, with photography by Francis Kokoroko.

### Strategic

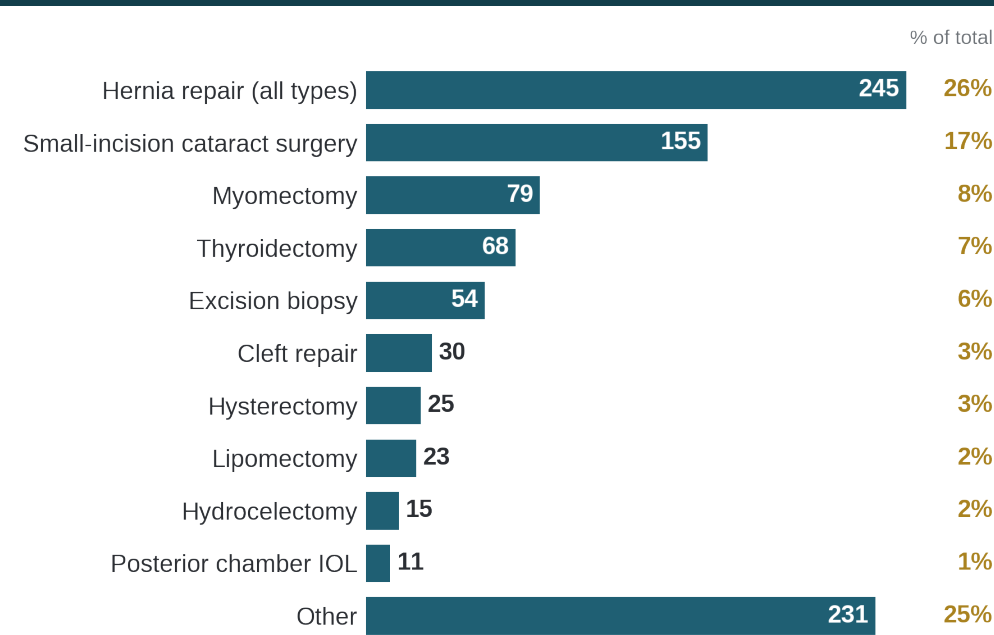


#### Institutional relationships

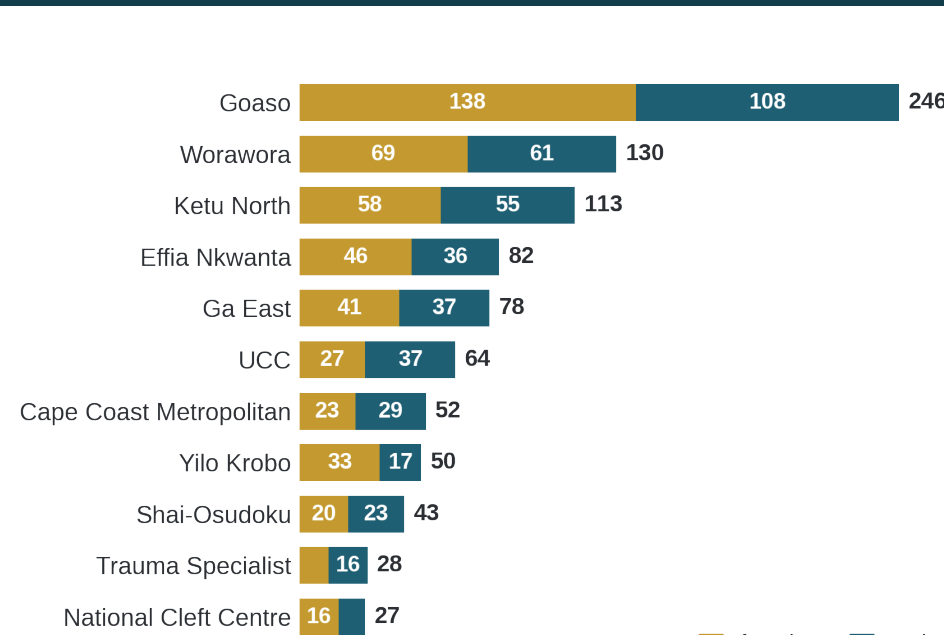
WACS UK authored Outreach Guidelines for WACS Council. An RCS panel addressed Collaboration for Capacity Building, with a joint dinner of the Presidents of RCS England and WACS.

## Outreach in numbers

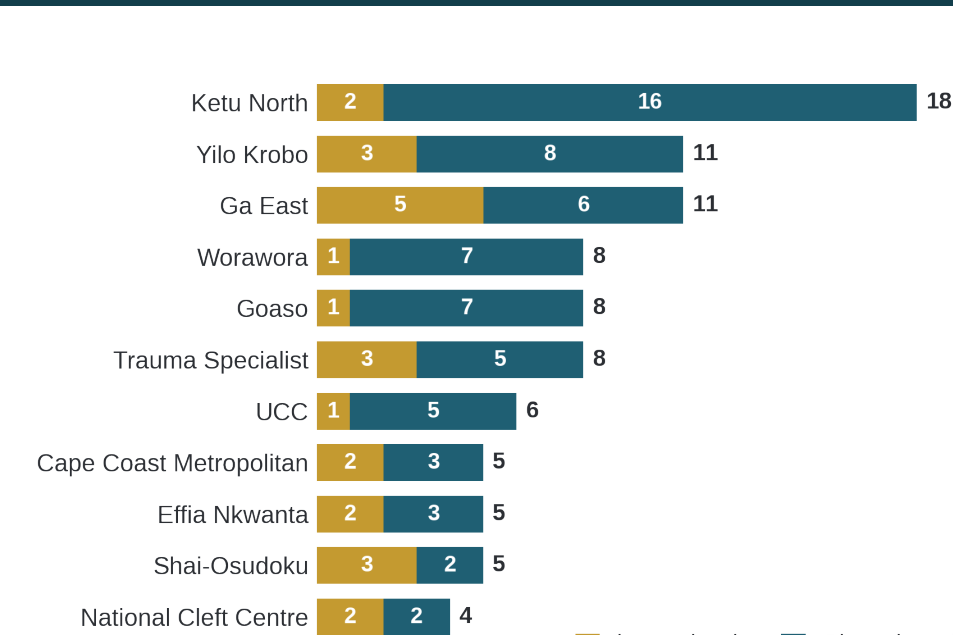
### Top procedures



### Patients by sex, per hospital



### Volunteers per hospital



## Moments from the outreach



### With thanks

