Mercy Ships Volunteer Guidebook

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Welcome new crew!

We are excited that you have decided to join the mission of bringing hope and healing to those that need it most.

This guidebook is an important resource to provide additional information as you prepare for your time of service aboard a Mercy Ships vessel. We are here to support you throughout your journey — from application to arriving safely back home after your volunteer service. We are excited to see the impact you make, and how your life is transformed.

Together we bring hope and healing.

Code of Conduct

As an international, Christian organization, our foundation rests on an integrated biblical worldview of service to others and a personal relationship with Jesus. The Code of Conduct's purpose is to ensure the safety of all Mercy Ships personnel as well as protect the reputation of Mercy Ships. As we typically serve in more conservative nations, we take a conservative approach with our Code of Conduct. The following is a summary; however, the full document can also be found here. All accepted crew are required to read and acknowledge this agreement prior to arrival on board. Any violations are handled by the People & Culture (Human Resources) Team on board and may lead to disciplinary measures, including warnings or even a dismissal from service.

Alcohol, Drug Use, and Smoking

All Mercy Ships locations are alcohol-, drug-, and smoke-free environments.

While ashore, at a restaurant, consuming beer or wine in moderation is generally acceptable. Excessive drinking is not tolerated, and crew are not to visit bars, nightclubs, discos, or similar establishments. Crew suspected of intoxication may be asked to take a breathalyzer test. Under no circumstances should crew operate vehicles (Mercy Ships' owned or otherwise) after consuming alcohol.

We are a drug-free organization and have a zero-tolerance policy relating to the possession, distribution, or abuse of drugs, including prescription drugs. Smoking cigarettes, "vapes"/e-cigarettes or similar items is considered taboo in many cultural contexts, so while we do permit smoking ashore, we do ask you find a discreet place to do so, out of sight. Smoking is never allowed on board.

Sexual Conduct and Harassment

Crew are not to engage in any sexual activity outside of legal marriage between a husband and wife. Crew are not permitted to be alone in a cabin with someone of the opposite sex (aside from their spouse or child) after 10 PM. A man and woman who are not married to each other should not travel alone together overnight or share accommodations, nor should mixed groups of men and women share accommodations.

Pornography in any form is prohibited.

Mercy Ships has a zero-tolerance policy regarding harassment (both verbal or physical).

Child Safety

At Mercy Ships, we take child safety very seriously. Our policies are in place to protect both the children of our long-term families as well as local children and patients. These rules are in effect at all times, for all Mercy Ships personnel. All personnel are required to read and acknowledge the Child Safety Policy and Child Safety Code of Conduct, as well as complete a brief training course online.

Dress Code

Modest apparel is essential in community life. All staff and crew are expected to honor each other in their choice of attire. For specifics of the dress code, refer to page 13 in this guide.

Violence

Fighting or attempting bodily harm or injury to any other individual will not be tolerated.

Betting and Gambling

Betting or gambling for monetary gain on Mercy Ships premises is not permitted.

Other

Other offences requiring disciplinary action include destroying or defacing Mercy Ships property, theft or dishonesty, violation of safety rules or common safety practices, misuse of confidential information, and unauthorized use of Mercy Ships property, finances, or equipment.

meet The Kok-Chavez family

Community Life and Expectations

Community of Faith

A Community of Faith is a group of individuals who choose to live, work, and worship together, sacrificially serving a common purpose.

Mercy Ships follows the 2,000 year old model of Jesus, bringing hope and healing to the world's forgotten poor. Shorter-term volunteers (joining for a year or less) come to serve, learn, and grow alongside our Community of Faith that constitutes the core of life with Mercy Ships.

All crew serving with Mercy Ships worldwide are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct and follow our core values:

- Love God
- Love and serve others
- Be people of integrity
- Be people of excellence in all we say and do

It is our goal to see all crew grow in their faith, love, character, skills, and competence, no matter their tenure.

Spiritual Life

While shorter-term crew may not be Christian, all crew are expected to respect and support the mission and core values of Mercy Ships. And while crew come from many different nations and denominational backgrounds, it is important to come together as a community, supporting the mission of Mercy Ships together.

All crew are expected to attend any community and departmental meetings on board, which may include worship, prayer, or Biblical teaching in addition to regular business and organizational announcements. Integrating our love of God with our passion for bringing hope and healing is what makes Mercy Ships such a unique community!

For those with a Christian faith, there will be many opportunities while on board to come together for worship, prayer, and teaching. The vision of Mercy Ships to follow the model of Jesus Christ is at the heart of ship life and will be expressed through our weekly Sunday services, prayer, informal Bible studies, and small group activities.

There are many ways to enrich your own spiritual health while on board, and we encourage all crew to take advantage of these opportunities for small groups, visiting local churches, and more.

Staying in Touch

Phones

Personal calls can be made from your cabin; however, you'll need a phone/calling card in order to make calls outside the ship. Mobile phones may be brought with you, but check with your service provider for network coverage/ availability. Our Ship Shop has calling cards and SIM cards available for purchase, and you may also check out a ship phone to use when going out in town.

The ships use a US-based satellite phone system.

Africa Mercy Phone: + 1 954 538 6110
Global Mercy Phone: + 1 954 932 9800

Internet

Though we have internet cafés on board, crew are encouraged to bring their personal laptops, tablets, or other personal devices with you. Wifi is available on board throughout the vessels.

Connectivity and internet speed can sometimes be problematic depending on where the ships are located. Video conferencing, movie/TV streaming, etc. can sometimes be slow and may be restricted to certain hours to reserve bandwidth.

Mail

This information does not apply to Ghana. All letters and parcels being sent to Crew must first be shipped to the ISC (International Support Center USA) or the EDC (European Distribution Center). Mercy Ships then forwards mail to the vessels. We want to be good financial stewards of our donor dollars, by making wise decisions when it comes to shipping items to Crew.

Crew have 2 options in receiving mail / packages:

Option #1: Shipping Crew Mail by Ocean Container. This is the lowest cost option and has no weight limit due to gift-in-kind partnerships with transportation vendors.

Option #2: Shipping Crew Mail by Air Freight. This is costly to Mercy Ships and therefore has a weight limit of 4.4 lbs. (2 kg.) per shipment for each Crew member. If the package is over the weight limit, Logistics will message the Crew member that the package will be moved to an Ocean Container.

There are country specific restrictions when shipping food. (Once you know what country you are serving in, you can learn these unique restrictions). The cost of sending food to our vessels for short-term crew can be substantial.

We encourage you to enjoy the delicious meals prepared on board and the snacks offered in the ship shop. Long-term crew wishing to ship food, should do so via Ocean Container. This can take 2-4 months to pack and arrive on site, but there is no charge to crew by weight.

Anything larger than a standard envelope sent for crew mail needs to have a detailed list of all contents on the outside of the parcel (otherwise we'll have to open it!). Items we cannot send include aerosols, bleach, poisons, nail polish and polish remover, perfumes, detergent, ammonia, disinfectants, and batteries.

Crew can also send letters home via other crew who are departing. US and UK stamps are available on board.

There will be no shipment of personal goods to Ghana via container or crew mail. Because of Ghana's import requirements and regulations, taxes on personal goods can be significant and can increase the change of additional delays or be denied clearance. Letters, papers and documents can still be mailed via crew mail.

For more details about these restrictions, please see the Ghana Guidebook.

Mailing Addresses

Sent to the International Support Center:
[First + Last Name] – [Department Name]
Mercy Ships – [Ship Name]
Crew Mail – *Ocean Container OR Air Freight
15862 State Highway 110 N.
Lindale, TX 75771-2020, USA

Sent to the European Distribution Center:
[First + Last Name] – [Department Name]
Mercy Ships – [Ship Name]
Crew Mail – *Ocean Container OR Air Freight
Ridderkerkstraat 20
3076 JW Rotterdam
THE NETHERLANDS

***You must select the method of shipping**
Example:
Jane Doe – Chaplaincy
Mercy Ships – AFM
Crew Mail – Ocean Container
15862 State Highway 110 N.
Lindale, TX 75771-2020, USA

Dress Code

In addition to these suggestions please refer to the country specific sections at the end of the guidebook for the country you are serving. Each country is different and there you can find the specifics related to that country's dress code.

- Knees must be covered when standing or sitting.
- Undergarments should never show, nor skin between trousers and top.
- Tight trousers (jeans/leggings) are only allowed under a dress, long tunic, or top reaching mid-thigh; otherwise, trousers need to be loose-fitting.
- Spaghetti-straps and low necklines are not allowed.
- Shorts that reach the knees may be worn outside of business hours, except in reception, during patient interaction in the hospital or during official functions on board.
- Proper footwear must be worn at all times, unless in your cabin or at the pool.
- Tattoos and body piercings can carry negative connotations while in field service locations; therefore, crew are encouraged to keep them covered if possible.

Sporting Activities

For sports on board, clothing may be tighter-fitting than what's allowed for normal wear. Do cover up or change directly afterward.

For sports ashore, clothing should be loose-fitting. Basketball shorts are appropriate, but Lycra/spandex and other form-fitting clothing are not. When travelling to and from the exercise/sport, sweatpants or a long wrap should be worn over shorts.

Pool / Beach Activities

Clothing needs to be worn over the bathing suit/costume to and from the pool or beach (not just a towel!).

Ladies: When swimming, bathing suits/costumes should be a modest one-piece or 'tankini' with no visible skin between the top and bottom.

Men: While swimming, wear boxer or shorts-style swim trunks - no super short or tight-fitting swimwear, please!

Official Functions, Business Meetings, or Church

Ladies: Wearing a looser-fitting dress, top with loose-fitting slacks/ trousers, or a business suit with closed-toed shoes is appropriate.

Men: Wearing long slacks/trousers with a shirt and closed-toed shoes is appropriate. Men with longer hair may find they are better received with their hair tied back or worn in a bun.

Uniform Guidelines

Uniforms for Hospital & Dental

You will be provided with scrubs, but you may want to bring your own for our “Crazy Scrub” Fridays!

Uniforms for Galley & Dining Room

An apron, uniform shirt and trousers will be provided for you on board, though you should bring under-shirts/tops to wear underneath your uniform shirt. If you choose not to wear the issued trousers, you can wear your own. Jeans, khaki style, or cargo pants are allowed (no leggings). They must be black and reach your ankles.

You will also be provided with a uniform cap or hat to wear during shifts.

Non-slip shoes are important! We have a small selection of overshoes on board but cannot accommodate wide sizes or guarantee we will have the appropriate sizes available for everyone. You can purchase non-slip shoes from any retailer as long as they don’t have holes in the top of the shoe.

Uniforms for Housekeeping

A uniform will be provided for you on board. You will need to bring comfortable closed-toed shoes, with a back (crocs and sport shoes with holes in the top are not allowed).

Uniforms for Reception, Purser, & Hospitality

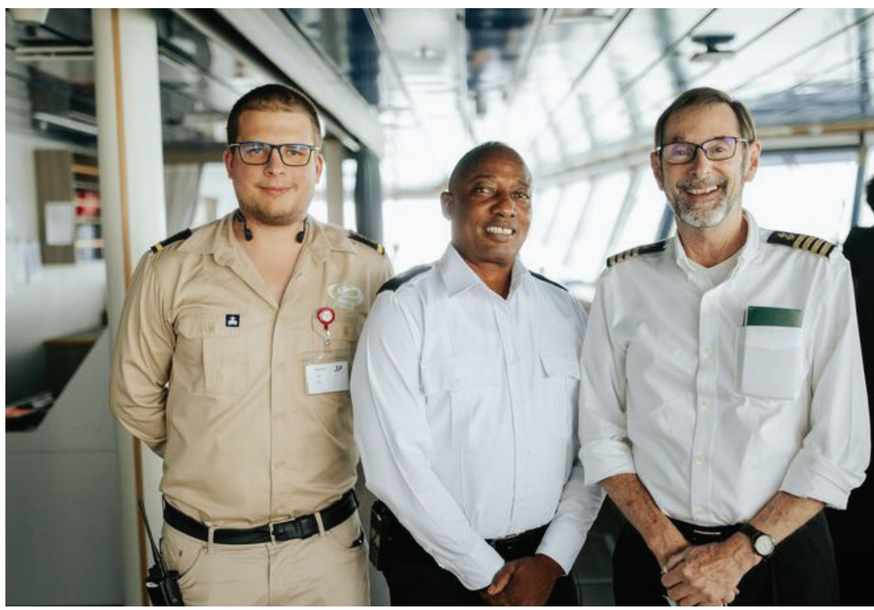
A uniform dress shirt for daily use will be provided, as will epaulettes. Please bring 1-2 sets of black trousers (and/or black skirts that fall below the knee when standing and sitting), and black, close-toed dress shoes. In addition to dress shoes, please also bring a pair of comfortable work shoes that are close-toed and have a strap.

Uniforms for Deck & Engineering

Officers and engineers should bring at least one pair of khaki trousers and a khaki shirt with epaulettes for general work and on-duty days, as well as one pair of black slacks.

There is a selection of coveralls, steel-toed boots, and white epaulette shirts kept on board, but we cannot guarantee we will have the appropriate sizes available for everyone. With this in mind, you may want to bring your own coveralls and/or steel-toed boots with you.

Mercy Ships provides one set of epaulettes for each uniform.



meet Adam Zupko, Able Seaman, Lawrence Adjei, Bosun, and Taylor Perez, Captain.

(Left to Right)

Accommodations

Housing is one of our biggest organizational challenges on board, but we try to utilize this fixed resource to the best of our ability. All cabins are furnished with beds, a small closet/cabinet for each crewmember, and access to Wifi. Crew are expected to clean and keep their own cabin spaces tidy.

Cabin assignments are based on the crewmember's position and length of commitment. Single crew can expect to stay in a multi-berth (bed) cabin with other crew. We do our best to facilitate special needs/requests, but each person is encouraged to rise to the challenge of sharing space with others from different backgrounds, ages, and sleeping habits or schedules. Cabins can be decorated or personalized by hanging pictures or other items with magnets (all walls on board are magnetized) or with sticky tack.

Electricity

Power Adaptors: Crew members are advised to bring their own power adaptors to match the vessel's electrical standards. Devices or appliances that do not come with the appropriate plug will require an adaptor.

Voltage Compatibility: Most laptops and some electronics come with dual power (100V-240V). Please check your device to ensure it is compatible. Devices need to cover a voltage range of 100V-240V to be used safely on board.

Appliances: We strongly recommend bringing dual voltage appliances, as standard adaptors do not work for 110V appliances (e.g., USA-made hair dryers). Transformers are not recommended for use on board due to safety concerns.

Africa Mercy

Families will be accommodated in a 4- or 6-berth family cabin with a kitchenette and living area. The living quarters include a double bed for the parents, and one or two rooms outfitted with bunk beds for the children (depending on the size of the cabin - 4- or 6-berth).

Couples will be accommodated in a cabin with a double bed and kitchenette.

Single crew will be accommodated in a multi-berth or single-berth cabin, depending on their length of commitment and position. Most multi-berth cabins are furnished with bunk beds. (Note: We cannot guarantee bottom bunk requests!)

Most cabins include a porthole or window. Almost all cabins include a self-contained bathroom; with a few single-berth cabins having a shared bathroom.

Acceptable Adapter Options
Universal Travel Adapter, Travel Charger Outlet Converter for Europe UK EU AUS (Type C/G/A/I):

Type G Adapter:

Global Mercy

Families will be accommodated in a 6-berth family cabin with a kitchenette and living area. The living quarters include a room with a double bed for the parents, and two rooms outfitted with bunk beds for the children.

Couples will be accommodated in a cabin with a double bed and kitchenette.

Single crew will be accommodated in a two-berth or single-berth cabin, depending on their length of commitment and position. All beds are twin sized and are elevated off the ground, with storage underneath.

Most cabins include a porthole or window. All cabins include a self-contained bathroom.

Acceptable Adapter Options
Universal AU US UK to EU Europe Plug AC 250V Power Travel Adapter:

C or E/F Adapters are both acceptable

Type C:

Type E/F Plug adaptor:

Crew Bank

meet Prudence Maseko, Payables Accountant

The Crew Bank is a service provided to all crew serving on board. It operates very much like any other bank - you're even able to monitor your balance and spending activity from your computer! However, the Crew Bank is not connected to any outside banking network.

How do I set up an account?

When you arrive on board, you'll check with our Finance team, and an account can be opened for you.

What can you do with an account?

You can make deposits, request cash withdrawals, transfer money to other crew accounts, and pay for purchases made in the Ship Shop or cafe.

In what ways can I deposit money in my account?

- Support from donors, received by Mercy Ships
- Bank transfers (wire transfers or EFTs)
- Personal checks (USD based accounts only)
- Credit card with 3.5% added fee (Visa, Mastercard, American Express, Discover)

Cash (USD, GBP, EUR, or local African currency of current field service country)

Can I cash a personal check in the Crew Bank that is made out to me?

Yes, endorsed, USD personal checks only can be deposited into your Crew Bank account, There are no fees or charges for this; however, if the check is from one of your donors, they cannot be issued a receipt for their donation since the check is not made out to Mercy Ships.

How can I withdraw money from my account?

You can withdraw money by accessing your account online or by going in person to the Crew Bank on board during its hours of operation. You can buy money in the local currency of the nation we are visiting, USD, GBP, or EUR at the exchange rate of the date of purchase.

What currency is used on board?

US Dollars are used for transactions such as deposits into your account, and purchases in the Ship Shop and the cafe.

What to Bring

Clothing

Clothing on board is conservative and casual. You may want to bring some nicer clothing for special occasions and/or church, especially if you're coming for an extended period. A good rule of thumb is to pack enough clothing for 7-10 days.

Shoes

Consider bringing a pair of dress shoes, trainers, flats/casual shoes, and sandals. What you bring depends on your preferences, role on board, and length of service.

Toiletries

We sell a range of toiletries in our Ship Shop, but the selection can be limited and may vary. If you have preferred brands, you may want to bring these with you as we cannot guarantee stock on board.

Remember nail polish, polish remover, hair color, and perfumes cannot be shipped in the post due to hazardous materials regulations - so you might want to pack these in your suitcase if you use them.

Luggage

Africa Mercy

Due to the more limited storage space of cabins on the AFM, we ask that only duffel bags or collapsible luggage are used. Hard-sided luggage cannot be accommodated.

Global Mercy

There is more storage space and while collapsible luggage is helpful, the under bed storage can accommodate hard-sided luggage.

For a detailed packing list see the next page.

Packing List

We provide...

- One bath towel
- One fitted sheet
- One mattress protector
- One duvet with a cover
- One pillow
- One pillowcase

Consider bringing...

- Your Bible
- Notebook or journal
- Laundry bag
- Personal Hygiene items*
- Small flashlight / head torch
- Sunglasses
- Sunscream / Sunblock*
- Mosquito spray/insect repellent*
- Travel mug
- Glass or plastic take-away containers
- Phone card*
- Electrical adaptors* (Details on pg. 9)
- Prescription medications
- Non-prescription/over-the-counter medications*
- Backpack or secure bag
- Beach / travel towel
- Ear plugs
- Magnets or sticky tack* (for hanging items)
- Throw blanket, sweater (the ships can be chilly!)
- A favorite game
- Personal photos, etc. (to personalize your space)
- Hanging storage caddy/bedside organizer (for AFM beds)
- Hair-wrap / drying towel
- Raincoat and/or umbrella
- Slippers
- Phone charger (extra long)
- Small, personal fan
- Note cards / occasion cards (for leaving notes)*
- Compact sleeping bag (ex. Silk one, for off ship trips)
- International Drivers' License
- Snacks/food items (if you have food allergies/sensitivity)
- Dressing gown / bath robe

**Items also sold in the Ship Shop or Pharmacy on board*

Don't bring...

- Large suitcases (hard sided) suitcases (AFM only)
- Large musical instruments
- Firearms or any sort of weapons
- Batteries such as those found in e-scooters, bikes, and hoverboards
- Candles
- Cordless appliances using butane-fuel
- Appliances with visible heating elements (ex. a toaster)
- Small, portable cooktops
- Electronic bikes (e-bikes)
- Products containing bleach
- Expensive jewellery and electronics
- Medical supplies for donation
- Gifts for patients

Pre-departure Checklist

As you travel and arrive on the ship, most likely you will have limited or no internet access. Therefore, it is very important that you have access to certain documents and information while you travel that does not depend on internet. Follow the instructions below to help with smooth travel and embarkation onto the ship.

Print this page and fill in the information so it will be easily accessible while you travel. Do not rely on email.

Complete before departure

Before you depart, you will need to complete the following steps. Because you must have a reliable Wi-Fi connection to complete these steps, they must be done prior to your departure. (Detailed instructions are in your welcome letter from the IT Team.)

- ☐ Change your Mercy Ships password for system access
- ☐ Download the Microsoft Authentication App to your phone.
- ☐ Change the Authentication method from "SMS" to "Authentication app." (very important because there is no SMS coverage in foreign countries)

Once these steps are complete, you will be set up to access the Wi-Fi on board the ships upon your arrival.

Mercy Ships email:

_____

Mercy Ships username:

_____

Items to have with you:

(In your carry on/hand luggage)

- ☐ Passport (physical copy required - printed copy if possible)
- ☐ Individual Invitation Letter* (required; issued by Mercy Ships)
- ☐ Seamans' book (required if applicable)
- ☐ Physical copies of Maritime certificates (if applicable)
- ☐ Printed offer letter/acceptance letter from Mercy Ships (optional but recommended)
- ☐ Medication, Hygiene products, change of clothing, etc.
- ☐ Arrival instructions for your specific country (found in the country specific and/or travel guidebooks)
- ☐ Ship/ Travel Contact Information (on right)
- ☐ Highly recommend the equivalent of 200 USD for potential travel costs (will need at least 41 USD / 35 EUR if in need of a tourist visa)
- ☐ Snacks (for travel, helpful if embarking on a weekend)
- ☐ Travel itineraries

Ship Specific Items

Africa Mercy - Madagascar

- ☐ Letter of Boarding (The Accord d'Embarquement) **printed**
- ☐ Madagascar Protocol* (French & English digital copy)
- ☐ ATM card (or debit/credit card that works with ATMs)

Global Mercy - Ghana

- ☐ Individual Invitation Letter (issued by Mercy Ships, sent to you by your Coordinator prior to travel)
- ☐ WHO Yellow Fever vaccination booklet
- ☐ Printed offer letter/acceptance letter from Mercy Ships (recommended)

For assistance during travel:

Travel booked with Gordian Travel International, contact:

- mercyshipstravel@gordiantvl.com (copy travel@mercyships.org)
- +1 903 405 1311
- or after hours: +1 903 405 1311 (fee applies)

Other travel bookings:

Any travel interruptions such as cancellations or flight delays, call your airline first, then advise the ship.

If it is immigration related, contact the ship first and then your airline if it means you will not make your scheduled flight.

Please copy travel@mercyships.org on any emails to Gordian, and on any immigration emails.

In case of issues, contact:

Africa Mercy:

- purser.afm@mercyships.org (copy travel@mercyships.org)
- AFM Local phone: +261 32 120 2251 (answered 24/7)

Global Mercy:

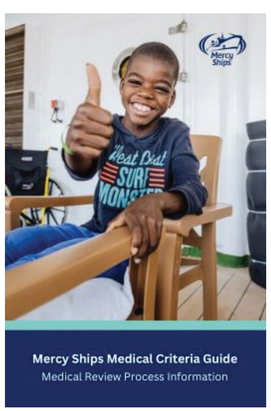
- GLM Local phone: +232 75 986 780 (answered 24/7)
- If you are stopped or asked for any sort of bribe by an official, immediately call the Field Security Officer: +232 76 541 333

Medical Requirements to Serve

Mercy Ships crew live and work in unique operational environments. You will be on board a ship in countries with significant health and environmental risks. There are also limited medical facilities.

Before you begin volunteering with us, it is important our Medical Team learns about your health. All crew are required to be in good physical and mental condition to serve.

To learn more about our requirements, please read our Medical Requirements page.



The Medical Requirements page includes:

1. Crew Health Information Guide

This guide includes information on:
- The required medical examination, vaccinations, and tuberculosis screening process.
- Malaria prophylaxis medication.
- Wellness agreements, medical insurance, the on board pharmacy, and food allergies.

2. Medical Criteria Guide

Read this guide carefully before starting the process, especially if you know of any previous or current health issues. We want to help applicants avoid the disappointment of a medical denial.

3. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Please read through this helpful list of commonly asked questions.

Important: Mercy Ships cannot reimburse any medical costs incurred if you are medically denied.

Any undisclosed condition could affect your approval for service with Mercy Ships. The final determination of an applicant's medical fitness to serve is done on a case-by-case basis. You may be required to provide additional medical information. Any further questions about our medical guidelines may be sent to medical.review.facil@mercyships.org.

CLICK HERE

Thank You!

For your part in bringing hope and healing to people just like Mabouba and her family.

We couldn’t operate without dedicated and passionate volunteers like you.