

Case Study

Hospital Staff Empowerment and Cost Savings

Victoria Hospital, Cape Town, South Africa.

GGHH Agenda Goals

- Leadership
- Energy

Hospital Goals

- Empowering hospital staff members to become advocates for reduced energy usage and cost savings within the hospital. The hope is to reduce the environmental footprint of the hospital and promote public environmental health.

Progress Achieved

- **Staff Empowerment through Leadership:** This project was particularly aimed at the cleaners and house keepers who have no management authority within the hospital. They underwent a series of trainings and workshops aimed at improving the level of awareness in terms of energy usage in the hospital. At the end of the workshop, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Hospital - Dr Moodley - through the supervision of the support service manager of the hospital - Mrs Nelukalo - where authorised to carry out the “Switch it off Campaign” within the hospital.
- **Energy and Cost Savings:** This project or goal was aimed at not only reducing the pressure on the grid in terms of dependence on the grid, but also reducing the amount the hospital was paying on electricity. Such funds could be diverted to other pressing issues within the hospital.

The Hospital Background and Issue

Victoria Hospital is a secondary district hospital situated in Wynberg, a Southern suburbs of the Western Cape, South Africa. It is a 184 beds hospital known for its high standard



of care as well as its concern for the population it serves. It provides a wide range of both medical and surgical services and strives to reach out to the community that surrounds it. The hospital building itself is about 11,985m² sitting on a land of about 12, 125 m². The energy consumption of the hospital was observed to be quite high with a total annual kilowatts hour standing at 1,732,981 kwh/yr and the when looked at in terms of the number of beds in the hospital it is between 30 kwh/bed/day. These figures raised concern among senior management staff and once the hospital became a member of the Global Green and Healthy Hospital (GGHH) initiative, they decided to embark on reducing their energy usage and save the hospital some much needed money.

The Sustainability Strategy Implemented

This was aimed at reducing the amount of money spent on energy within the hospital through the launching of the “Switch it off Campaign”. To do this the senior management which included the chief executive officer, support service manager and other senior staff identified the champions for



this project as the cleaners and housekeepers of the hospital. These group of workers were seen to be very useful in that they have access to all parts of the hospital, so they could easily be the eyes and ears of the project on the ground thereby ensuring that unused lights and hospital equipment can be switched off.

Implementation Process

So a workshop was organised for this group of staff, and the project was introduced to them. It was a really fascinating experience for them as they were all keen to get started. Training was conducted by the CEO and Support service manager, during the training the cleaners and housekeepers were

given the authority to switch off unnecessary lights, report wastage to the support service manager. The CEO sent out memo and notices to all staff regarding the project. The sustainability task team was nominated which consist of Clinical manager, two cleaners, Principal Housekeeper, Support Service Manager and two operational managers.

Tracking Progress

This success of this project was measured through a comparison with the baseline information on monthly expenditure on electricity. This showed a drastic decline in expenditure on energy with an average cost saving of about ten thousand rands (R10,000 = approx. USD\$700) monthly. In terms of leadership, the workers took this project as their own and the passion they showed was amazing. They demonstrated dedication to this project and this was felt throughout the hospital as they educated staff and patients on the need to reduce their energy consumption and the impacts it had on the environment as a whole. The cost savings from reduced energy consumption was reported back by the senior management at the regular bimonthly meetings. The savings were used to procure proper outfits for the cleaners and housekeepers.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

It was not a smooth journey all the way as some of the cleaners experienced resistance from other staff members. They could not understand why cleaners have been mandated to go out of their way to switch off lights and other unused devices or equipment. Part of the lesson learnt here was that a proper community awareness strategy was needed to prepare the hospital community for this activity and also to get buy in from all members of staff. This project boosted the morale of the Cleaners and Housekeepers as they felt more recognised within the hospital and this made them to do their job with a smile on their face.

Next Steps

We have also identified wastage of water as one of the issues facing the hospital. This is majorly due to leaking pipes and drains within the hospital.

Our hope is to replace them and monitor the cost reduction too. We also plan on using the waste from the kitchen to develop a food garden within the hospital. This we believe will kill two birds with one stone in that it will help take care of our food waste and create a source of fresh oxygen from the plants in the garden.