



White Cross Visit to Cameroon

Field Director Cal Hohn ('87) (centre) stands with Dr. Keir Hammer (centre left) and JJ Williams (centre right), the Directors of White Cross Canada and White Cross USA, respectively. Keir and JJ traveled to Cameroon to visit their counterparts at the invitation of the Cameroon Baptist Convention. Also pictured are Bridge publisher Tim Willson (right) and the team's driver, Tata Dieudonne ("Dieu").

Cameroon 2014

Report on White Cross Trip

by Keir Hammer, PhD

At the invitation of the Cameroon Baptist Convention, a small team from White Cross visited Cameroon in the spring of 2014 to meet our counterparts and to gain a better understanding of the current ministry needs and opportunities. I was there as Director of White Cross Canada along with the Director of White Cross USA, JJ Williams; Taylor's Director of Communications, Tim Willson, was also on the trip as a writer and photographer.

We were in Cameroon for ten days, on the road almost every day traveling to various hospitals and

health centers, meeting with the leadership and staff of Cameroon Baptist Convention Health Services (CBCHS). It was a revelatory experience: although we were familiar with the names of facilities and people, it was an entirely different thing to see the extraordinary medical work that is touching so many lives in West Africa.

Consider that this work began about 60 years ago with a single medical facility. It now comprises 6 hospitals (two of them with over 250 beds), 26 integrated health centers, and primary health facilities in over 50 remote villages. Thousands of employees work at CBCHS, and over and over again they were happy to recite their mission statement off by heart: "To assist in the provision of care to all

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Exchanging Greetings

White Cross volunteers in Edmonton signed greeting cards for the team to take to Cameroon. These "Greetings from Canada" were warmly received, and CBCHS staff returned their own "Greetings from Cameroon." Dr. Keir Hammer was able to present these greetings as we traveled around Cameroon, including at Mbingo (*above*), Mutengene (*left*), and in Bamenda to CBCHS Director Dr. Tih Pius (*bottom left*); JJ Williams of White Cross USA is on the right. BELOW: Tim Willson of Taylor presents the greetings to Marie Klemp of Onway Baptist Church, who estimates that she has rolled over 10,000 bandages over her decades of volunteering. *Greetings from Cameroon* are being mailed to participating White Cross churches.



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who need it as an expression of Christian love and as a means of witness in order that they might be brought to God through Jesus Christ."

Everywhere we went, we saw facilities that are bursting at the seams, and with new construction in many places that was often being used even as it was being built. At Mbingo Baptist Hospital, a former leper colony in a gorgeous mountain setting, there are 15 full time specialty-trained physicians on staff along with 20 resident physicians and a support staff of 600. Almost one hundred specialist physicians volunteer at the hospital each year, providing additional specialty services. Mbingo has become one of the leading training hospitals—and referral hospitals—in west Africa.

CBCHS also runs a pharmaceutical production/distribution plant, training schools, residency programs, programs to fight TB and cervical cancer, Burkitt lymphoma research, disability care, promotes family planning, offers a Palliative Care Program, a chaplaincy program and more. CBCHS also operates a vast HIV/AIDS program that works in prevention, education, care and treatment, and much more.

It was impossible not to be impressed with this effort, which has been on pace to treat more than one-million patients in 2014.

Cameroon is a developing country, scenic and fruitful, with fresh food in abundance. Roughly three-quarters the size of Alberta, and with a bustling population of over 20-million people, it nonetheless faces numerous challenges, including transportation, education and poverty (Gross Domestic Income per capita is roughly \$1,300 per year). It is easy to see why the ministries of compassion run by the Cameroon Baptist Convention are so important and transformational.

RIGHT: Nurses being trained at Bango Baptist Hospital head to classes in a construction zone – the only space available. As more and more patients come for help, CBCHS is expanding many of its facilities. We saw construction in most of the places we visited.



White Cross Shipments from Canada, by the Numbers

Number of 40' Shipping Containers sent from Taylor to Cameroon between Dec. 2011 and Oct. 2014: Nine

Total weight of shipments: 159,218 lb. / 72,220 kg. (almost 80 tons)

Items shipped included the following (some items listed with total qty/weight):

- Surgical Microscope
- Retinal Cameras
- Baby Layettes (blanket, diaper, jacket) – 8316 lb.
- Rolled Bandages – 15,508 lb. (310,160 bandages)
- Hospital Beds – over 250 beds
- Hospital Mattresses – over 300 mattresses
- Hospital Gurneys with mattresses
- Hospital Linens – 18,935 lb.
- Medical and Surgical Supplies – 17,670 lb.
- Theological Books
- Secondary and Post-secondary textbooks
- Devotional Booklets
- Walkers
- Wheelchairs
- Crutches
- Surgical Equipment
- Used Eyeglasses
- Weigh Scales
- Missionaries Supplies
- Solar Power Equipment
- Dental Chairs and Supplies
- Office Equipment
- ...and much more.

Beautiful Children



Maternal health is a priority for CBCHS, and is one of the shining examples of their success.

For years, the 'layettes' (baby blanket, a diaper and a jacket—all hand-made) which are given to new mothers have contributed to the sense in the community that the CBCHS hospitals are *the place* to have a baby. We met numerous people throughout the CBC system who claim that the care they received in a CBC hospital was a significant factor in them joining the organization as adults. One good example is Nathan Wanyu, who heads up the drug (pharmaceutical) production division; he was born at Banso Baptist Hospital, where his mother (now retired) was a midwife. Sixty-five people now work for him in one of the largest chemical production facilities in west Africa. Even more impressive is the progress made through the Life Abundant Primary Care facilities. The LAP program focuses on work in four areas: Hygiene, Nutrition, Mother-Child, Community Development. In the areas where LAP has been working, the rate of death in childbirth fell dramatically.



1980: 2800 deaths per 100,000 births

2013: 123 deaths per 100,000 births in 2013

Infant mortality rates also improved dramatically:

160-240/1,000 births in 1980
6/1,000 births in 2013

(figures from LAP villages only)

There was also a reduction in home deliveries and a significant reduction in fistula cases.

TOP: Newborn with a White Cross blanket at Banso. MIDDLE/BOTTOM: Children stop for a photo on the playground near Banso Baptist Hospital.





Cameroon Baptist Theological Seminary

We were blessed to visit CBTS at Ndu. ABOVE: Students attend a special year-end Chapel Service (at 7:30 AM) where academic awards were handed out.

LEFT: A special treat was a visit with Taylor alumni Nseimboh Johnson ('08), who returned to his native Cameroon after graduation from Taylor Seminary. He now serves as Academic Dean and Vice-President, and teaches courses in pastoral counseling. BELOW: Our team met with CBTS President Rev. Mbonko George Tanya (left of centre, yellow tie), and administration and faculty



Receiving a Shipment

During our visit to Mbingo hospital, workers had just received a part of a recent shipment from Canada. It was interesting and helpful to see how packing and labeling goods at our end of the process affects the receipt and use of these items at the other end.

MIDDLE, Right: A nurse at NKwen Baptist Health Center opens a drawer to grab White Cross bandages – something that is done many times a day in these busy clinics. BELOW: Two men whose wounds have just been treated stand together at Mbingo Baptist Hospital. BELOW, Right: A young man receives another of his daily wound dressings after suffering a puncture wound weeks earlier (which got infected). Moments after this photo was taken, a White Cross bandage was wrapped around his leg – and a verse of scripture that had been tucked inside fell out and was handed to him. Unable to read it, the nurse read it to him “You received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” (Romans 8:15).





The small rolled bandage – a symbol of White Cross

White Cross ships many items from North America: hospital equipment, pharmaceuticals, baby layettes, and much more, all of which costs a lot of money to ship – and that means White Cross is now doing more fund-raising than ever. But the one item that is emblematic of White Cross is the small cloth bandage, usually cut out of old bed sheets. In hundreds of churches across Canada and the United States, volunteers make these bandages and provide them along with money to ship them to Cameroon. BELOW: Volunteers at Zion Baptist Church in Edmonton roll bandages in May 2014, and one of them was taken in the team's luggage directly to a patient at Nkwen Health Center in Bamenda, who came in for a regular change of dressing for an open wound on her leg (*above*). These items are indispensable for the work in Cameroon.





Donation of a special operating microscope

With the help of the Emmanuel Foundation in Edmonton, White Cross Canada was able to secure a high-end microscope for eye and ENT surgeries. We had a chance to visit Mboppi Baptist Health Center in Douala where that piece of expensive equipment is now in use. Hospital administrator Nfor Daouda, who started his career working with Betty Mantay, is at left (*above*).

Dr. Jude, the ophthalmologist, was excited to show us this wonderful gift, installed and functioning well (*below left*). BELOW: Dr. Emmanuel Tambe is a leading eye specialist who heads up eye care at Mutengene and throughout Cameroon.



To read more about the 2014 trip to Cameroon visit: www.taylor-edu.ca/wahlcentre/whitecross/cameroon

