

Dear Friends,

Sept 2020

“Please PLEASE bring a new operating table!” came the emphatic plea of Dr. Guylain, medical director of the Bandunduville Baptist hospital. An operating table!? I tried to minimize the request without hurting his feelings. An operating table is expensive and how ever would it fit in the back of my jeep?? Last week my medical coordination team made a supervision visit to that hospital, to oversee their first board meeting, and join in the inauguration of a brand new hospital building with a new operating room, conceived and funded by local initiative.



New building at the Bandunduville hospital.



The operating room was a particularly sensitive issue for Dr. Guylain. This increasingly popular Baptist Hospital, located in the capital of the Kwilu province, comes under the scrutinizing (jealous?) eyes of the provincial ministry of health. Six months ago, the old operating room, with a wooden table, was officially “condemned” and closed by authorities, because it did not meet “acceptable standards”. The disgrace galvanized the medical director and his team to construction. How could they now inaugurate a new operating room with the old “primitive” wooden table?

Fortunately, I acquiesced to God’s nudging my heart instead of sticking with the reasons my head offered. Already on countdown to departure, I enlisted a Congolese friend, Faustin, as “body guard” and took a taxi to the part of town that sells (overpriced) medical equipment. Two years ago, Dr. Franc of Kipata hospital, bought an operating table for \$2500 with our project funds. I entered the first small, crowded, store and announced, “I’m looking for an operating table for \$2200.” They had one model, “for \$2800”. The legs looked like a piece of scaffolding. (How EVER would it fit in a Land Cruiser?). “Ok thanks, I’ll keep looking,” I said cheerfully. The next place also had only one model, but less voluminous for \$3500. “I only have \$2,200.” “Ok Madame, for you, we’ll sell it for \$3000.” “Thanks, I’ll keep looking then.” Congo is a marvelous country. As I was closing the store door to leave, the owner said “wait”. Forty minutes later, we headed home in a beat up taxi bus; Faustin riding regally on the table purchased for \$2,200.

How do you transport an operating table a Land Cruiser?



Wayne and Kisungu (our driver) took it apart.



The pedestal fit in the back surrounded by fuel drums, drinking water, IV fluids and eventually our luggage.



The table top, cushioned by mattresses, lay on the roof rack.



A proud team, a new operating room, and a shiny new table.

Thanks to the skill of our driver, and not Congo's roads, the table made it to Bandunduville, to the jubilation of the hospital staff. The cry of their hearts was to restore to God and to the hospital, the honor robbed of them, and to be able to continue to provide quality health care to their patients. On inauguration day, the crowd gathered, including politicians (even the governor) and health ministers. The building, representing this team's resources, sacrifice, determination, hard work, and dedication gleamed in the sun, with the "dream" operating room within, christened with a "modern" table. Pastor Nzikita dedicated all to God, for the healing of God's people.

How glad I am I didn't stick with reasons, but submitted to God's nudging! Thank you for partnering with us in SO MANY ways as we walk beside faithful teams like these, for the healing of God's people. Pray with us that we act reasonably in all things, but are ever sensitive to God's nudging.

Katherine Niles



A great time was had by all.

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