

Dear Friends,

November 2020

What is it like to be blind, and then see? While elaborate eye care (even with lasers) is now routinely available in USA, folks in Congo, and in much of the world, have 'nowhere to go' for affordable eye care. This past month, with Dr. Fabrice's visit to Bandunduville, 135 patients received eye care, and some, blinded by cataracts, saw again! The morning Dr. Fabrice arrived; patients created a veritable traffic jam at the door of the Baptist Hospital. Twelve hours of triaging eye patients, some coming from miles away, started his two week visit.



The city of Bandunduville, a provincial capital, population 200,000, has no eye care. Even for a pair of glasses, patients must reach Kinshasa or Vanga. In 1966, this need led my missionary father, Dr. Dan Fountain, to get training in glaucoma care and cataract surgery. Ever since, ophthalmology services have been available to patients who can get to the Vanga hospital. Eventually, Dr. Makwanga, the first resident in family medicine at Vanga, decided to specialize in ophthalmology. He trained at the University of Kinshasa, with a Belgian ophthalmologist and funding from the "Christ Blind Mission" (CBM) organization. He became an accomplished ophthalmologist, with a passion for increasing access to eye care by training health center nurses to diagnose and treat basic problems and to determine those needing specialized care. Dr. Makwanga's passion and expertise pioneered community based and specialized eye care in Congo.



Dr. Fabrice (left) and Dr. Jean-Aimee.

Four years ago, two senior staff physicians at Vanga took up the baton. CBM sponsored training for Dr. Fabrice in cataract surgery and Dr. Jean-Aimee in general ophthalmology. God inspired these physicians to become instruments through which extending access to eye care, the vision of Dr. Fountain and Dr. Makwanga, might become a reality again and the visit to the Baptist Hospital in Bandunduville is a first step.

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Cataract surgery received by this school teacher will preserve her livelihood for several more years.



Enduring 5 years of blindness, this school principal received sight in his right eye again!

Enthused to be the first partners in this endeavor, the resourceful Bandundville hospital team creatively overcame obstacles to assure Dr. Fabrice's success. Bright "Chinese" flashlights became operating room spotlights. Extra hands assured timely re-sterilization between surgeries to stretch the minimally available equipment. Mattresses strategically placed on the floor aptly accommodated patient overflow. My phone filled with photos and messages of thanks from the staff, elated to have participated in this combined ministry.

On his way back to Vanga from Bandundville, Dr. Fabrice stopped by the Medical Coordination office. Exhausted, but exhilarated by the experience and accomplishments, he shared suggestions, needs, and possibilities for future collaboration to extend eye care to people without access.

THANK YOU for partnering with us, with CBM, with the Vanga Hospital staff, and a host of eager teams in the Baptist hospital network, who, through GOD'S LOVE and your prayers, are doing what Jesus would do in giving sight to the blind.

Katherine Niles



Surgery with flashlight spotlights. Special thanks to White Cross "holy rollers" whose colorful caps, masks, and generous donations for scrubs, OR gowns, and linens support this effort. Be BLESSED.

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