

A PROFILE OF THE APOSTOLIC HOSPITAL BANGA BAKUNDU

("The Gateway to Orokoland")

By Fred Bebe



A Spatial View of the Apostolic Hospital - Banga Bakundu

INTRODUCTION

The Apostolic Church in Cameroon was the second Christian denomination to establish in Banga Bakundu (after the Presbyterian Church). This was in the late 1960's, and its first mission post in the then federated state of West Cameroon. A decade later when the Apostolic Church decided to embark on a Medical Mission Banga-Bakundu was short listed as a possible location. Thanks to the efforts of late Iya Hannah Diale Bebe, then Council woman with the Mbonge Rural Council and Vice President Mbonge Subsection for the Cameroon National Union (CNU) political party.



Highway Signboard

In 1973 the Apostolic Church started her first Medical Mission in Banga Bakundu, Cameroon as a Health Center with only a consultation, maternity and outpatient departments. At that time, Banga was the only medical outpost between Muyuka and Kumba – a distance of 40 miles (64 Km).

In 1998 (25 years later) the Health Center was transformed or upgraded into a full-fledged hospital as the patient population grew exponentially due to the expertise of its medical staff in maternal and child care, outpatient, clinical and preventive services.

EXISTING STRUCTURES

Today, the Apostolic Church Hospital, Banga Bakundu has several functional departments or services: Outpatient, Clinical and Laboratory, General and Plastic Surgery, Maternal and Childcare (Pediatrics), a Pharmacy, a Nursing School and Staff and Administrative Services.

1. The **Outpatient Department** (the largest in the hospital) comprises several services such as Family planning, Hypertension and Diabetes Clinic, Dental Clinic, HIV-AID clinic (see “[scoph-exchange-project-cameroun](#)”; “[givemilkstopaids project](#)”), and free Vaccination and Tuberculosis Treatment. The hospital consults over 10,000 patients on an outpatient basis annually. However, the dental clinic lacks critical equipment, while the waiting room is small; patients stand in line outside waiting to be called up.



2. **Clinical and Laboratory Services** (a critical department in the hospital) consists of a diagnostic lab, an x-ray unit, an ultra sound equipment, a number of small centrifuges and a uv/vis spectrophotometer. However, (though functioning) most of these are outdated, and at the time of the author’s interview visit, the x-ray machine (the only one in the hospital) needed repairs or indeed replacement due to age of the unit. A hospital of this size should boast of at least 2 x-ray units.



*Top left: Lab Technicians at Work
Bottom left: X-ray Unit*

3. The Apostolic Hospital in Banga Bakundu has become well-known in the region for its **General and Plastic Surgery Department**. In fact, the Chief Medical Officer Dr. Sammy Oben is a well known plastic surgeon whose services are sought after in Douala and Yaounde reference hospitals. Apart from general and plastic surgery, the hospital also specializes in gynecological and pediatric surgery, as well as amputations where medically necessary. However, the present surgical facility looks old and below standard.



A Recovering Amputee



Nurses' Station at the Childcare Unit

4. A **Maternal and Childcare Department** (one of the oldest in the hospital) has been exemplary in terms of the positive results it has achieved over the years. Indeed, the success of its prenatal and postnatal services has been critical in the reduction of infant mortality in the surrounding towns and villages. The maternity's official capacity of just 15 beds is currently limited and often overflows into other wards. About 300 babies are born at the hospital each year and over twice this number is seen on an outpatient basis. Today, the cultural practice of giving birth at home has become a thing of the past.

5. A **Hospital Pharmacy**, an important component in the overall functioning of the hospital, especially in the treatment and care of patients. As a rural hospital, it relies heavily on its inventory supply of drugs and clinical accessories. However, it is very small indeed and is often short of critical life-saving drugs. It is currently staffed by a well-trained and experienced pharmacy technician. A new central pharmacy facility is currently under construction. On completion, it will be headed by a Pharmacist.



A 1-shelf Pharmacy Unit



6. A **Nursing School**. With the opening of a Nursing School in 2001, the Apostolic Hospital Banga Bakundu currently serves as a training center for junior patient care medical staff. The school trains Certified Nursing Assistants in one year for students with the General Certificate of Education (GCE), A-Level or in two years for students with GCE, O-Level. According to the director of the school, the ultimate aim is to move into a 3 year diploma program in nursing with an expanded facility and curriculum base. The school currently has 27 students and graduated its 10th batch this summer.

Left: The School of Nursing

7. A trained **Medical Staff** that includes 3 resident doctors, 60 nurses and technicians and an **Administrative Staff** of 11. The Medical Staff is headed by a Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Sammy Oben and a Matron, Sister Grace Nabila Ntugwen. Rev. Pastor Nicholas Kolle Alobwede amongst the many the reporter interviewed heads the Administrative Staff.



Right: Hospital Administrator and Matron



EXPANSION OF SERVICES

The growth of the Apostolic Hospital Banga Bakundu has certainly been very significant. Currently, the hospital is the headquarters of the Apostolic Church Medical Mission in Cameroon. It has extended its services to other urban and rural communities. There is the Banga Hospital Annex in Youpwe (near Douala, the country's economic capital). Clinics specializing in HIV/AIDs have been established in Kumba, Munyenge, Foe and Bole. A Central Pharmacy building, Surgical and X-ray facility and Wards are currently under construction though on a slow pace. The slow pace of the current construction effort indicates inherent financial difficulties based on my field findings. The hospital, according to the Administrator has plans to begin the construction of a Mortuary next year.

Left: Pharmacy, Surgical and X-ray Facilities under Construction

PROBLEMS

Lack of Reliable Potable Water Supply System to match the growth of the hospital – Presently the hospital and the village community have no direct access to clean drinking water. Rainwater or contaminated groundwater from unprotected wells is commonly used. Water for hospital use is currently suctioned from a numbers bore-holes (or wells) into a storage facility where it is treated before being piped into the hospital. For a city and its surrounding communities with over twenty thousand people and a major hospital with no pipe-born water is a problem that needs immediate attention.

Lack of Modern Medical Equipments – Most of what are in use are outdated and require replacement like x-ray, ultra sound and monitoring machines; spectro-photometers; and centrifuges. The wards and dental clinic lack modern standard use and specialized beds and equipment to meet the increasing patient influx.

Right: An X-ray Technician Standing by an X-ray Machine in Need of Repairs.



Inadequate supply of essential drugs – The hospital is experiencing a shortage in the steady supply of life-saving drugs. Because of this, petit medicine stores have sprung up in the village community. Many of them carry expired drugs putting the health of community members at risk.

Lack of Funds – The hospital lack adequate funds for the expansion and renovation of current infrastructure, especially the maternity and child care units.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

The administrator was optimistic about the future of the hospital. He said that the Apostolic Hospital in Banga Bakundu could become a major regional medical center if it is supplied and equipped with modern diagnostic and surgical equipment, and the present structures renovated or given a face-lift. More so, the population of the area is expected to double in less than 20 years.

The Apostolic Hospital Banga-Bakundu.
P. O. Box 93, Muyuka, Cameroon.
Interview Report by Fred Bebe , June 9, 2011.