

Dear Friends,

Nov 2018

The culmination of three years, my medical coordination team and I are implementing a project initiated by the head doctors of twelve Congo Baptist Church (C.B.CO) hospitals.

Unlike other places in the world, where hospital directors are hired and supported by a Board of Directors, a deliberative body of ‘wise men’, Congo has “chief” culture. The chief decides all. No one questions him. This arrangement is detrimental to running a hospital, particularly when it is not clear *who is* the Chief. Disorder happens quickly and is aggravated by geographic and intellectual isolation, realities for so many hospitals here.



“Road building” on the way to last month’s Moanza hospital board meeting.



Kikongo Hospital board members: Dr. Loko in the plaid shirt.

My team is taking final steps towards official approval from C.B.CO leadership for a “*Procedure Manual for Administrative and Financial Management of Baptist Hospitals.*” Written in faith, this manual is an innovation for C.B.CO and springs from our rich history of Christ centered care. Early International Ministries missionary physicians built their medical work on this solid foundation and incorporated biblical values in their training. To serve well, hospitals need relevant boards of directors to preserve the foundation on which they were built.

In Congo, the wisdom and insight of age lend credibility and stability. So, we reached out to Administrator Kakumba and Dr. Loko to be members of the newly structured Kikongo hospital board. Dr. Loko trained at Vanga in 1980. Administrator Kakumba cut his professional teeth serving the Kikongo hospital before moving on to an important position in Congo’s Ministry of Health. After many years outside the C.B.CO medical work, both of these “patriarchs” relished the opportunity to return to Kikongo and wade with us into the challenges of shaping **best practices**. At the meeting’s conclusion, we had minutes with progressive and actionable recommendations to guide the hospital Director team.



Dr. Kipasa, in blue, with members of the Moanza hospital board.

Another “patriarch”, Dr. Kipasa, also trained at Vanga in the 1980s and rotated between mission hospitals including Moanza, doing surgery and teaching post-op care. Now a prominent physician in the Kwilu Province, he eagerly chaired the first Board for the Moanza hospital. His leadership encouraged current medical director, Dr. Miché, in the challenges of running a hospital serving a very poor population. Afterwards, Dr. Kipasa couldn’t resist gathering Dr. Miché and the maternity team to walk them through a new protocol for managing difficult labor and delivery.

Years ago, the investment made by International Ministries missionaries rooted these “patriarchs” in Christ centered health care. Today, Dr. Loko, Dr. Kipasa, and Administrator Kakumba are models in our pursuit of **best practices**. Will International Ministries rise to the on-going challenge of bringing up the next generation of “patriarchs” who model Christ-centered health care in Congo? That depends on us. If we follow best practices in **God’s** procedure manual, it should be possible “Go into all the world,” “What you heard from me .. commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others,” “Whatever you do for one of the least, you do for me,” “Follow me”.

In this season of Thanksgiving, we say again THANK YOU for your prayers, and for financial gifts from generous hearts which accompany us in the pursuit of **best practices** in Congo.

Katherine Niles