



# the doctor is in

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Bringing Modern Medicine  
to Mango, Togo

By LEAH PICKARD | Photography By JUDY BOWEN

# The Doctor is in

Bringing Modern Medicine to Mango

Soon after I stepped off the plane into the sweltering heat, I became aware of two things: my luggage hadn't arrived and the man in front of me was being pick-pocketed. A small smile crossed my face. Welcome to Africa.

With nothing more than what I carried on my back and an unhealthy fear of snakes, I climbed into a weathered SUV with ABWE missionaries, Dave and Doris Totman, and began the bone-jarring journey east across Ghana into the bordering country of Togo.

As we drove through towns and villages, people saw us coming and enthusiastically waved. Despite the 100-degree heat, one man wore a pair of women's furry UGG boots. Another grinned and pointed at his English T-shirt, which read "Baby on Board," with an arrow pointing down to his stomach.

It was 2010 and I was traveling to Mango, a small city in northern Togo, for the groundbreaking of the missions' largest building project to date — a \$6 million, 43-bed surgical hospital and ministry center called the Hospital of Hope. ▶



# HOSPITAL Espérance



*Leah Pickard, director of communications at ABWE, poses with children at a Togolese Christian school on her first trip to the country in May 2010.*



***“After six long years of fundraising, prayer, recruitment, training, and construction, a hospital complex spans across a once empty field.”***

*More than 5,000 people arrive to attend the grand opening of the Hospital of Hope, built in honor of past ABWE president Wendell Kempton, on February 26, 2015.*

*The people of Mango were integral in the planning and construction of the facility and now many locals work on the hospital's staff.*

### **DIRE NEEDS**

While Mango already had a hospital, it was known by the locals as “the place where people go to die.” Each week between 10-to-20 children and adults died in Mango from preventable diseases — and all never having heard the good news. Things were so bad that a government surgeon appointed to serve at the hospital refused to go to Mango.

Government officials began asking ABWE to help — giving us a prime opportunity to establish a powerful ministry in the 10/40 Window — an area known for

containing the largest population of non-Christians in the world. These officials had heard about the quality of care at ABWE’s Karolyn Kempton Memorial Christian Hospital located 250 miles to the south, and they wanted their own hospital in the north.

Good medical care is extremely scarce in West Africa. For every 100,000 people in Togo, there are only four doctors, compared with 256 doctors in the United States. As a result, most people rely on witch doctors or tribal doctors to attend their medical needs — often causing more harm than good.

I witnessed some of these horrors firsthand when I visited ABWE’s southern Togo hospital before traveling north to the groundbreaking. Walking through the hospital ward, doctors pointed out two teenage girls who sat covering infected wounds on their bellies. They had sought help from their local “doctors” after being raped, and instead ended up receiving primitive abortions that, if they survived, might prevent them from ever having children. On a bed nearby, a woman who had been bitten by a dog almost a year earlier was dying of rabies. She hadn’t sought medical attention until it was too late, and now she appeared manic, her eyes darting wildly back and forth as she struggled to live a few more hours.

Soon, another woman arrived looking nine-months pregnant. I watched as doctors discovered a tumor on her uterus that had been growing for almost eight years. It was slowly taking over her abdomen, and her kidneys could no longer function. She grabbed at her husband’s hand as she was whisked away to have a surgery that saved her life.

Never before had I seen such extreme conditions, and I quickly understood why God had called us to this country and these people. Not only were we providing medical treatments by trained professionals in a sanitary environment, but our staff was also praying with, encouraging, and introducing patients to God's love.

The spiritual outcome of the medical work at the Karolyn Kempton Hospital in Togo has been incredible. More than 2,000 patients profess faith in Christ every year and upwards of 40 churches and 16 Christian schools can all be traced back to this medical ministry.

Having seen the success of this type of ministry, we dreamed of the spiritual impact another hospital could have, especially in a Muslim-majority area like the city of Mango.

## A DREAM REALIZED

Fast forward to March 2015. We are now seeing our dreams for Mango becoming a reality.

After six long years of fundraising, prayer, recruitment, training, and construction, a hospital complex spans across a once empty field and 141 trained staff members are on site, serving the people of northern Togo.

From the Togolese students who were dismissed from school early to help haul rocks from the property, to the men who toiled in the sun to dig trenches, haul cement, and build thousands of blocks by hand, the people of Mango had worked hard for this day. But they were not alone. More than 550 North American volunteers donated their time and talents to push the project to completion. And in the face of an

economic recession, ABWE donors rallied behind the project to raise more money than any other project in the mission's history.

When it came time to celebrate the hospital's grand opening, several thousand people poured into the streets, surging toward the hospital complex. Soldiers, brought in to help with the crowd, tried to control the masses as they vied for the best view by climbing on trees and shoulders.

As missionary Judy Bowen took in the scene of the completed campus, one man said to her, "You have brought life to Mango! We thank God!" His sentiment could be echoed by the whole town.

From start to finish, the hospital has truly been a labor of love and an amazing display of God's faithfulness. ►







*The President of Togo, Faure Gnassingbé, greets the crowd at the hospital's grand opening ceremony as a military band plays.*

“As we look over the past five years of construction and preparation, we see that God has been in control of every detail and has accomplished what others might consider to be impossible,” reflected Alain Niles, ABWE missionary and hospital director.

### **OPEN DOORS**

Ever since ABWE missionary and Medical Director Todd DeKryger and the President of Togo cut the ribbon to the Hospital of Hope on February 26, 2015, patients have flooded in. The day the hospital opened more than 200 people were seen, and before noon, clinic appointments were booked for the whole week.

Two months later, more than 3,500 patients hailing from all over West Africa have already received treatment. Babies have been born. Broken bones have been mended. Ten people, who would have otherwise died, have been given anti-venom and saved from poisonous snakebites. Five patients have professed faith in Christ.

One man traveled for three days and arrived at the hospital weathered and exhausted. Not understanding the check-in procedure, he found a bed and lay down. Soon, he was being treated, prayed with, and told the good news of Jesus Christ. ▶



***"If you hadn't told me this news, I would have never found out about Jesus."***

*Above: A patient, raised in the heavily folk Islamic culture of northern Togo, sits with a nurse. Many who have never received traditional medical care are coming to the hospital in search of answers and hope, including the wife of a prominent local Muslim healer. She came to the new hospital after her husband was unable to cure her.*

Down the hall, a woman was told she had a life-threatening illness and asked a chaplain if she could learn to pray. He shared how she could build a personal relationship with God through prayer.

"If you hadn't told me this news, I would have never found out about Jesus," she said to the chaplain. Later, hospital staff provided her with an audio recording of the gospel in her language so she could listen and continue to learn.

Even the wife of a local prominent Muslim healer came to the hospital after her husband was unable to cure her. Missionaries were able

to pray for his wife in Jesus' name and showed them the "Jesus Film." If his village found out he came to the hospital, it could shut down his business, but he admitted to doctors that the power of God was stronger than his powers. Later, hospital staff overheard the couple talking about Jesus and what they were learning.

"The Hospital of Hope has only been open [for a short time], and already there are so many stories coming from the ministry every day," said ABWE missionary nurse Melissa Friesen. "We had thought that the initial flood of patients would die down after the novelty of





## “What kind of place is this where you walk around and pray for patients?”

the new hospital wore off, but the clinic continues to overflow with new patients.”

In fact, even though the hospital’s limited staff continues to work at maximum capacity, they are still forced to turn away more than 100 people a day.

### TRUE IMPACT

It is amazing for me to see that the barren, desolate field where I stood five years ago for the groundbreaking has been utterly transformed into a bustling, modern medical facility that is changing the community of Mango forever. And while the full spiritual impact of the hospital remains unknown, in God’s hands, the opportunities are endless.

As one ABWE missionary reported, “I’ve shared the gospel and prayed with more families in the [first two days of the hospital’s opening] than I had in the past two months. Never have I had such opportunities to enter the lives of families in the community and surrounding villages.”

“It astounds us just how many people say that they have never heard that God loves them, let alone that they can have a personal relationship with Him,” adds Kelli Thayer, ABWE missionary in Togo.

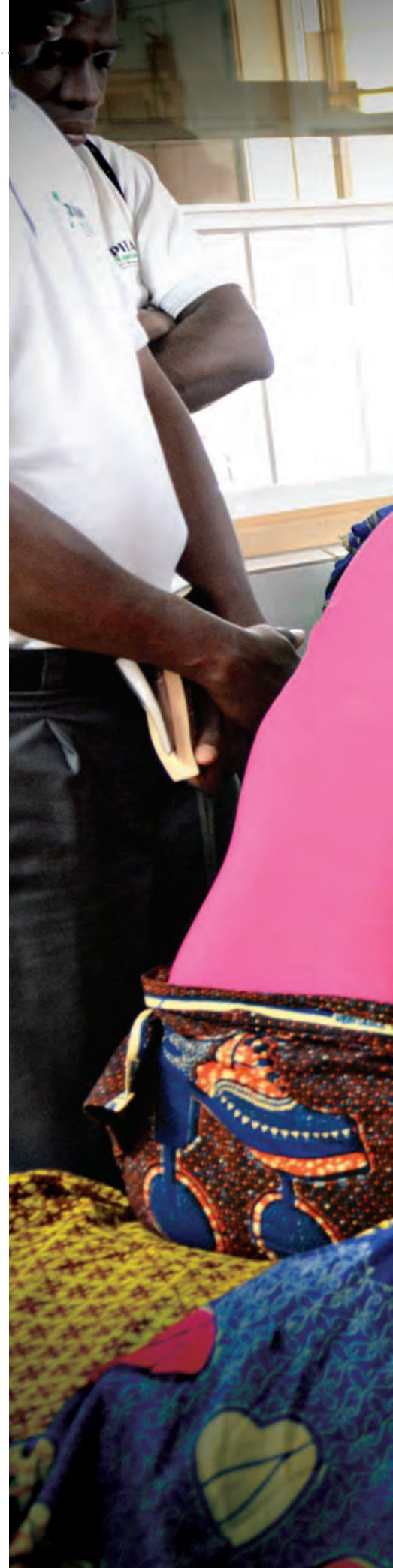
Recently, an older patient approached a hospital chaplain and asked, “What kind of place is this where you walk around and pray for the patients?”

The chaplain smiled kindly and asked the older man what he thought about it.

“I think it is a very good thing,” the man replied. “Can I pray too? And will you come bring this news to my village?”

This is what the Hospital of Hope is all about. And I pray that our efforts have prepared this land for God’s work and make His name known. ■

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: *Staff members and a hospital chaplain pray over the Hospital of Hope’s first patient, Mauwena. She came for medical treatment after an aerosol can was thrown into a nearby fire and it exploded, causing extensive burns on her face, neck, arms, and upper chest. Mauwena could have been killed, but God’s grace and the treatment she received saved her life.*





**LEARNMORE** about serving in Mango at [hospitalofhope.org/serve](https://hospitalofhope.org/serve)

# The Hospital of HOPE

On February 26, 2015, ABWE joined with more than 5,000 Togolese to celebrate the grand opening of our Hospital of Hope in Mango, Togo. The hospital was the product of many years, many laborers, and many supporters who all rallied behind the dream of sharing Christ's love with the people of West Africa.

**1.3 million**  
people live  
in the Mango  
area and will  
be served by  
the hospital

**THE NEED**

**4/100,000**  
doctors-per-patient  
ratio in Togo

**25,000**  
**patients**  
**expected in**  
**the first year**

**200**  
**patients**  
**seen the**  
**first day**

**1,000**  
**patients seen**  
**in the first**  
**10 days**

From Togo, Ghana,  
Burkina Faso, Benin,  
Nigeria, & Ivory Coast

**“We view every patient as a field.**

**FROM SOME WE ARE PICKING OUT ROCKS,  
OTHERS WE WATER, OTHERS WE PLANT SEED,  
AND EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, GOD ALLOW US TO HARVEST FRUIT.”**

*- Alain Niles, ABWE missionary and Hospital of Hope general director*

# 100%

PATIENTS EXPOSED TO THE GOSPEL

**8 full-time &  
12 short-term  
missionaries on  
staff**

**110**  
**Togolese from  
35 ethnic groups  
on staff**

**33 full-time  
missionaries**

involved in planning  
and construction

**6**  
**years to  
plan**

**CONSTRUCTION**

## DEPARTMENTS

- Pharmacy
- Radiology
- Lab
- Men's Ward
- Chaplaincy
- Pediatrics
- Delivery/Maternity
- Woman's Ward
- Operating Room
- Clinic



**15-30**

**Togolese  
employed**

in construction

**230,000**  
hours of labor

**42,000**  
sacks of cement  
used, weighing  
a total of

**46.3**  
million pounds

**5**  
**years  
to build**

**580**

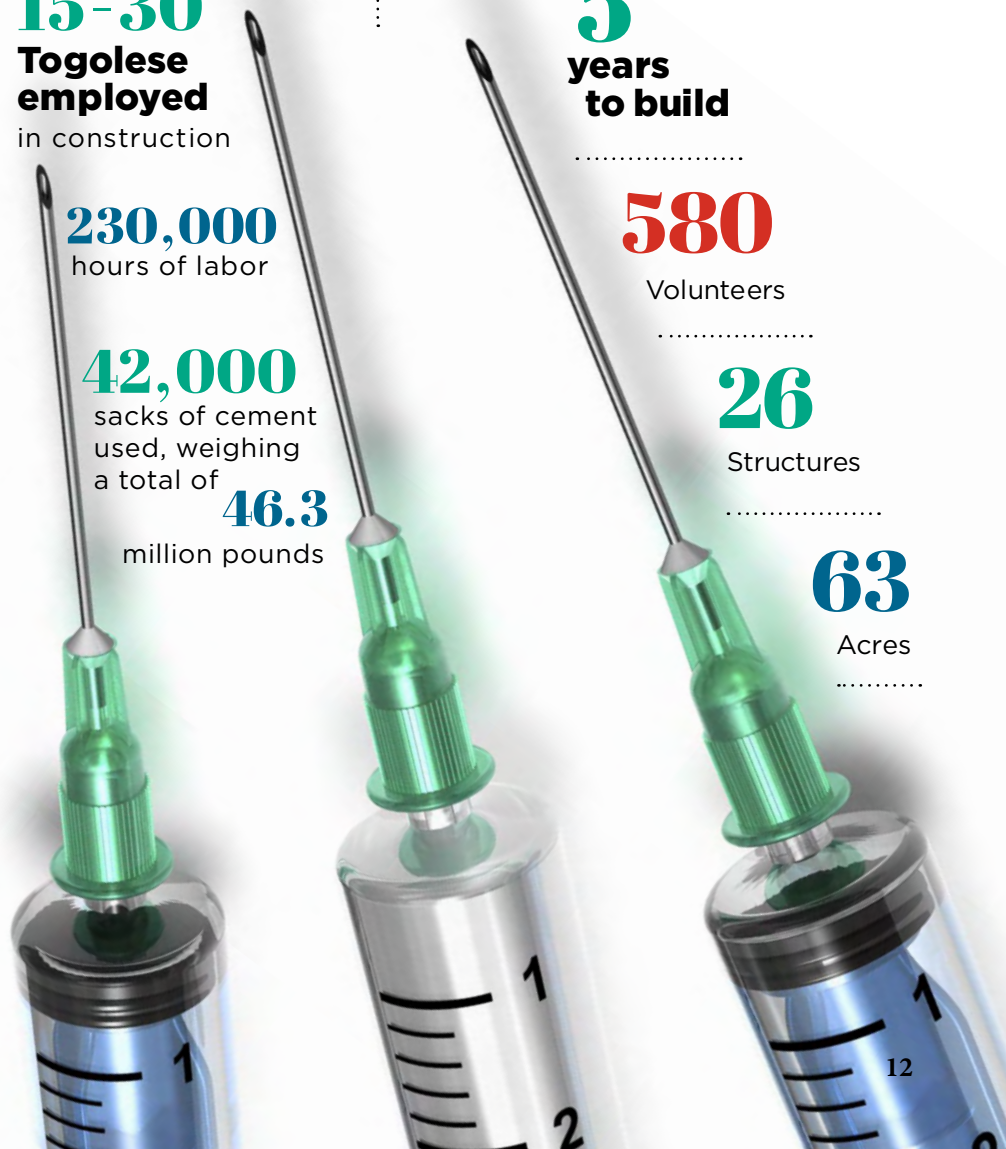
Volunteers

**26**

Structures

**63**

Acres





# Flying Through the Storm

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By **Dan Stoner**

*ABWE Missionary to Togo*

**Through the fog of drugs and chemotherapy, one question kept surfacing in my mind: Is God going to come through this time?**

Becoming a missionary aviator has been my calling and dream since I was 12. After years of work and schooling, my wife and I joined the ABWE family in 2009 with the African country of Togo on our hearts. The opportunity to carry the gospel to unreached people thrilled us and propelled us through the next three years of prefield ministry, and in August 2012, we arrived in France for language school. After a year, our French was improving, and I went on a short trip to Togo to help ship our plane's engine to the US where it would be overhauled and prepared for use. My lifelong dream and our ministry was on the horizon.

But then the clouds rolled in.

While I was in Togo, I had some excruciating stomach pain. Thinking that it was side effects from anti-malarial medications, I went to a doctor when I returned to France and instead was told I had aggressive cancer. We immediately packed up our lives in France, and just three days after receiving the initial diagnosis, I checked in to the Cleveland Clinic. This aggressive form of lymphoma had formed into an abdominal mass that was completely blocking the exit from my stomach and preventing me from eating or drinking. As they began pumping an artificial nutrition and chemotherapy cocktail directly into my body, my view of the horizon was fading away, but I clung to my belief in God's power.

It was a rough five months. My body felt weaker than it had ever been, but my faith grew stronger, and nine months later I ran a 5K without a trace of cancer in my body. I was living proof that God can calm any storm, and when the doctors cleared me, we moved forward with our calling to start an aviation ministry in Togo. Our family celebrated the start of 2015 in Togo with the two other missionary families on our aviation team. Through the generous contributions of many churches and individuals, we were able to order our first shipment of airplane fuel in January and flight testing was scheduled for April. The long-awaited dream of an aviation ministry was finally coming into focus.

But the clouds have rolled in again.

As we were readying the airplane for flight testing, we discovered some unexpected problems — unexplainable, frustrating, big problems. Flight controls needed to be completely rebuilt, major components were corroded and needed to be replaced, and it was clear that further disassembly was required for complete inspection. We had been eagerly counting down the days until our ministry finally got off the ground, but instead, we are now shipping the airframe back to the US.

God's calling remains clear to us, but the pain of leaving Togo to make these repairs is just as real as the stomach pain that would wake me in the middle of the night during my battle with cancer.

It is in these frustrating and incomprehensible moments that I'm thankful for my fight with cancer. I was able to see God work and it taught me to expect the impossible, just like Elijah did on Mount Carmel when he poured water over the offering. I also learned that when God comes through in the midst of the impossible, He gets the glory. My cancer story is a story of God's faithfulness and amazing power, and I believe that the story of the Togo Aviation ministry will be as well. When this airplane finally takes flight, it will be clear that it was not by our doing, but by God's sovereign plan. ■

***“It is in these  
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thankful for my  
fight with cancer.”***



***Dan & Rachael Stoner***

are missionary pilots who have joined with two other families to create the Togo Aviation ministry. Learn more at [www.togoaviation.com](http://www.togoaviation.com).



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## 4 Things God Taught Me During My First Year in Africa

By **Anna Doenier**

*ABWE Missionary Nurse in Mango, Togo*

### 1 It's all moment-by-moment grace.

Often, I try to do things in my own strength, but in Togo, I am regularly pushed far beyond my capabilities. In my helplessness, God's infinite grace is my sustaining breath of life. When sleepless nights, 100+ degree temperatures and the frustration of not having electricity hit me like a wall, I fall on His grace to sustain me. When I feel overwhelmed by the needs all around me and am cloudy from exhaustion, I pray for His grace so that I can care for the patients He has given me. And when I feel that I can't handle losing another patient, I feel His arms of grace wrap tightly around me. It is only by living in God's grace, moment-by-moment, that I have been able to see all that I am in light of all that He is.

### 2 Compassion isn't spoken. It is shown.

In Togo, there are days I can't wipe the smile off my face, and then there are days when all I can do is weep. Through it all, I am reminded that Jesus understands. He's been there. He not only spoke of His love for us, he showed it. He tasted death for our broken, helpless, and hopeless race. I often find myself in situations where I cannot communicate with others through spoken words, but I'm thankful that sometimes no words are necessary — just feet willing to go, hands ready to work, and most importantly, eyes and hearts filled with the love and compassion of Jesus Christ.

### 3 We're resource poor but rich in the sovereignty of God.

In a resource-poor region of the world, there are times when my belief in the sovereignty of God is tested, and my humanity screams out, "Why?!" My human eyes see a death that could have been prevented, but I must remind myself that God knew. He numbered their days even before they took their first breath. So I grieve for a life lost and thank God that He never leaves or forsakes us. Then I return to the hospital floor and pray for the strength to care for the others He has called me to serve.

### 4 The God of the impossible brings hope to Mango.

I recently took care of a Togolese woman who was one of the most hostile patients I've ever seen. But when she learned she had HIV, God used this terrible news to pry open her heart. She began really hearing the gospel for the first time. I have never seen "the old has gone, the new has come" so clearly displayed.

It doesn't seem possible that such a beautiful change could come from such an ugly diagnosis, but I was reminded that God brought us here for this very reason — to do the impossible by bringing His hope. Every day, our God of the impossible is accomplishing great and mighty things in Togo, and I am so humbled to be a part of it. ■





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## *Opening Closed Doors*

At first glance, the old-world charm of Portugal is captivating. But despite its old-world appearance, a new age has taken root and the doors of many hearts are closed to the gospel. Most Portuguese are far more interested in other pursuits, and ABWE missionaries are creatively using these other interests to connect with them. Missionaries are reaching people through community choirs, running clubs, and a bookstore, and we pray Christ will use these ministries to open doors and hearts to His grace.



*Jeff Raymond* | Director of Visual Communications at ABWE

Jeff is passionate about training and equipping missionaries to be strong visual storytellers. He also strives to find ways for creative people to use their skills to serve the Lord in missions. To learn more about his ministry, go to [www.raymond.abwe.org](http://www.raymond.abwe.org).

You've got the  
**FAITH, HEART & PASSION**



We've got the  
**training, expertise & support**

**TOGETHER**

we can share the Good News of Jesus Christ  
around the world.

Let us help you fulfill God's calling on your life.  
**Get started today at [www.abwe.org/go](http://www.abwe.org/go).**