2012 Visit to Nigeria

Meet the NHCP Patron – Sir Chief Bode Akindele

On our first evening we were invited to an ‘informal’ dinner at the home of Sir Chief Bode Akindele. The meal and the surroundings topped anything experienced on previous visits. We found our host to be a modest and quietly-spoken gentleman, with a heart for helping others. We are sure that his contacts and wisdom will help encourage Nigerians both at home and abroad to support NHCP as we work in partnership with Methodist Church Nigeria. We learnt that our Patron and Peter Grubb are of a similar vintage so we joked that they could be twins at the formal investiture the following evening in the presence of the Prelate of Methodist Church Nigeria, His Eminence Dr S.Ola Makinde.

Our Patron is a member of the Nigerian Fellowship at Westminster Central Hall when he is in London. We thank Susan Solanke for making the initial approach to him.

A Date for your Diary

Sir Chief Bode Akindele has been invited to join us to celebrate 100 years of Wesley Guild support for health care in Nigeria at Westminster Central Hall on Sunday October 7th 2012. You will be most welcome to join us.
On the morning of Tuesday 6th February, we were up early so that Peter Grubb, Margaret Webb, Jenny Benfield and Barry Weetman – with Dr. Funmi Fashoro, one of the Conference Medical Advisors (‘Team B’) could fly to Abuja to start their tour of the ‘Middle Belt’.

‘Team A’ – David Cundall, Susan Solanke, Tim Rogers and David Laycock – with Dr. Demola Denloye and Dr. Jide Puddicombe, previous and current Conference Medical Advisors, Ronke Oworu the Health Secretary and Very Rev Ezuiku, Estates Advisor, flew to Owerri and the South-East.

Trouble in the North

Following the bombings in Abuja at Christmas and further attacks by the Boko Haram group, Damishi and Galadima Health Centres were excluded from the tour because of safety concerns. Team B met Archbishop Job of Kaduna at Abuja Airport. Barry was able to interview him after they had travelled to Otukpo. We were pleased to hear that Dorcas continues to do excellent work at Damishi but saddened to hear that her baby died last year.

There has been unrest around Galadima after some of the locals attacked and killed some Fulani people in response to attacks elsewhere. The Fulani later killed some villagers in reprisal raids. Thanks to an increase in giving to the Association of Friends, we have been able to allocate a little more money to the Northern health centres. Some of the community health workers in the North are also Deaconesses, their vocation leading them to work in a difficult area.

Both health centres remain open - please remember them in your prayers.

Royal Cross grows, Beautiful Gate stalls.

Team A went to Royal Cross Hospital Ugwueke straight from Owerri Airport, led by Bishop Ekeleme of Uzuakoli Diocese and protected, not only by prayer, but by a couple of armed guards from the Abia State Security Service. We saw the completed laboratory building, to which NHCP has contributed, and the new maternity wing provided by a local donor. A container load of equipment had just arrived from the Irish Methodist Church, as well as a recent donation from the World Church Office in London. Another local donor has been slow to make a start on the promised hostel for student nurses but plans have been made to accelerate the progress towards a School of Nursing and Midwifery.
Royal Cross has healthy accounts so the reduction in NHCP’s giving will not affect the progress here. Dr Hans Corput feels better supported in his work. Dr Origa, the Nigerian surgeon, is halfway through his training and comes back to help whenever he can. There has been some local political opposition to the new building at Beautiful Gate.

**Uzuakoli – remaining PALs move to refurbished houses**

It seems likely that the general hospital on the Uzuakoli site will finally be returned to Methodist Church Nigeria but we await firm news on this. Very Rev Innocent Ekeke showed us the refurbished ‘Rehab Camp’ in the middle of the Leprosy Centre which has been completed using Austrian aid. The remaining PALs all live here now which is safer and makes their care easier. David Laycock was able to show some of the PALs pictures of his daughter Heather who worked there in 1994.

**Lives changed by community-based rehabilitation**

Very Rev Innocent Ekeke is now assisted by Rev Best Okike and they took Team A to see two men whose lives had been transformed by support and loans from the Uzuakoli community-based rehabilitation work. We met and chatted with Eddy Ejike, now working in Uzuakoli market and Anasonye Azubuike, who became blind as an adult but now has a successful drinks retail business.

**Motherless Babies’ Home gets a new minibus**

Mary Corput was proud to show us the new minibus they have bought, using NHCP donations. This will make it easier to visit relatives of the children, raise awareness and funds locally. The priority now is to improve the water supply to the Home.
Thank you Dr. Becky!
For the most of the last three years, Dr Rebecca Onuoha has been patiently building up the work at Item hospital. She will shortly move to Los Angeles to be with her husband and is expecting their second son in May. She plans to specialise in paediatrics. When we visited Item we found a busier unit than previously. The splendid staff quarters, built by the local benefactor are finished and were recently used by a group from the Association of Rural Surgeons of Nigeria. They had done 200 operations in 2 weeks! Dr Becky, and her junior colleague Dr Binuga were still recovering from the intense workload. Tim wasn’t sure he really wanted to see the photos of the ops!

Mental Health Programmes – beacons for Nigeria

Team B were able to spend their weekend at Edawu, a place very close to Peter Grubb’s heart. Edawu is playing its part in the Australian – funded expansion of community-based mental health care across Benue State. This development is led by CBM, an international agency who work closely with all the mental health projects. Very Rev John Angwa continues to lead the centre at Edawu very well. He was delighted to receive a new Bible for the chapel, donated by Tim Rogers’ family.

Agboke, also in Benue State, serves a different ethnic group. It continues to be very busy – there is such a demand for inpatient beds that they are reconfiguring their buildings to cope. It will be great if we can find Agboke a UK mental health partner organisation like Edawu has, but so far we have not been successful. Agboke needs a lot more help from us than the other two mental health centres.

Amaudo Itumbauzo continues to flourish under the leadership of Rev Kenneth Nwaubani. As with Royal Cross, we have had to reduce our funding for Amaudo, but they do have other major sources of funds. They are very pleased with the way that the discharge of residents now works, with intensive training of relatives prior to the very moving discharge service. The Amaudo message of community-based mental health care continues to spread across more Nigerian States. Amaudo Ntalakwa (Amaudo 2) cares for adults with severe learning disabilities and those who have completed their rehabilitation but face challenges to returning to their families. We arrived late in the afternoon but were immediately drawn into the music and dance of the welcome. Ronke is a mental health nurse as well as being a Deaconess.
As 2012 is the Centenary of Wesley Guild support for health care in Nigeria, we made a special visit to Ilesha, where it all started.

Wesley Guild Hospital Ilesha is now a thriving teaching hospital of Ife University. Both Dr Denloye and David Cundall were here as medical students – so it was good to be back - after 35 years! The children’s wards looked much the same – but then we noticed that one of the patients was using her laptop!

The Hospitals in the West – signs of progress.

Ado-Odo has made slow progress, although there was some hope in the shape of a new youth corps doctor with some good ideas. We trust that Dr Jide Puddicombe, who is a ‘son of the soil’ of Badagry, will be able to revitalise the management board. The Lagos Wesley Guilds are taking a close interest in Ado-Odo. We have just heard that Jide has asked the group of rural surgeons (who had such a successful visit to Item) to go to Ado-Odo which is just the sort of boost that Ado-Odo needs.

Omuo-Ekiti have just employed a registered nurse and have the benefit of the commitment and enthusiasm of Bishop Osundina, who is also a member of the Conference Medical Board. Team A worshipped with him at Ayedun Cathedral and we were very impressed that they have been collecting regularly for the medical work. Ekiti State provide almost free health care. The local people left us in no doubt that there was active support for the Methodist hospital.

So often we find that places start to flourish when there are good staff supported by a committed management team. The Association of Friends makes a huge difference by helping to pay staff salaries in places like Omuo-Ekiti.

Igbo-Ora has been through a difficult patch – but we were delighted to meet the new Matron – Debora Abola, who is revitalising the services there. Bishop Olusegun takes a close personal interest in improving the Andrew Pearson Memorial Medical Centre and it will be exciting to see further progress at Igbo-Ora when we visit next time.

Stop Press: MCN Conference Medical Board aim to support medical staffing at the 3 hospitals in the West
More of a Buzz at Bethesda

Team B reported there was much more of a ‘buzz’ about Bethesda Hospital. The ultrasound machine has been a great success – it has improved patient care and generated income for the hospital. Dr Bayo Agboola, ably assisted by Joseph, the Youth Corps doctor, are bringing in more patients.

Sister Comfort Eka, the Matron continues to be a constant presence. Essential repairs have been completed at two of the primary health care centres run by Bethesda Hospital.

Sadly, Rose Adima the midwife has left to join the government service, but Grace Ogbu has stepped into her shoes and Bethesda continues to be seen as the local maternity referral centre. The visitors were very pleased to meet Sir Daniel Okwoche the new Lay President for Igede Diocese, who is also the Provost of the nearby teacher training college (which has 8000+ students). Daniel already has some good insights into ways of improving Bethesda Hospital further and we look forward to continuing to work with Bishop Ngbede, Daniel and the staff.

Fantastic Felicia

Felicia Okanga, Director of the Bethesda Orphan Care Project continues to provide inspiring leadership to her small team of staff. They are currently supporting 133 children in the community. Last year they admitted 41 babies, including no less than six sets of twins, for initial care for six weeks before going back to their villages with a trained ‘nanny’, usually a relative.

There are plans for some of the spare buildings to be used to provide support for single mothers. The rest may be let out commercially for children’s day care.
Drama at Ebenta

The community health worker students at The College of Health Technology at Ebenta inspired Team B with their enthusiasm, commitment, singing and drama. There are signs that the College will get its accreditation and has picked itself up after the tragic death of Albert Onda, the previous Provost.

Jenny Benfield, Margaret Webb, Bishop Ngbede, Peter Grubb and Funmi Fashoro, Medical Advisor, outside the Albert Onda Memorial Clinic at the Ebenta College of Health Technology.

New Ward completed at Ogoli-Ugboju

Team B’s final visit was to the small hospital at Ogoli-Ugboju which continues to develop. The visits from Dr Ella Ogoh, a consultant surgeon from Abuja every three months or so continue to provide a huge boost to the services offered. Everything looks ready for Ogoli to make another leap forward. NHCP Trustees could consider using Association of Friends money towards salaries for qualified staff.

Inside the new ward at Ogoli-Ugboju

There’s no doubting the enthusiasm of the local people for the hospital – shown as always by their fantastic welcome – even though they had been kept waiting for six hours!
Teaching and Training

Helping babies breathe at Bethesda
David Cundall stayed on for a week and was joined by a colleague, Dr Syam Pramod, to train staff from Bethesda Hospital, the surrounding health centres and the College of Health Technology. About 700 babies die in their first four weeks of life each day in Nigeria – and some of these die because people don’t know how to resuscitate babies after birth. We were delighted to find that staff were very receptive to new information and willing to change their practice. Grace Ogbu, from the maternity department, was able to use her new skills the next day to help a baby born by emergency Caesarian section.
We trained 45 people over 4 days and were able to leave behind a set of training materials for the hospital and another set for the College.

Earlier in the visit, David also spent a day with the staff of Project Comfort at Amaudo. The project has recently expanded into a third local government area and work with hundreds of disabled children and their families.
A group of children and their parents were invited along so we were able to work together and share ideas about how best to help.

The Association of Friends
We provide funds to help pay the salaries of staff in frontline situations in rural areas. A doctor may well be the only doctor in a small hospital.
A nurse may be working at a centre for the mentally ill or at a rural clinic and may be the only qualified nurse there. It is always encouraging to see the difference these dedicated people make to the communities they serve.
Regular payment of salaries is the key to maintaining commitment and retaining staff to care for those who need it most.
If you are interested in joining the Association of Friends please contact:
Peter Young, 459 Selby Road, Leeds, LS15 7AX

Best buys for 2012
During our travels we heard about a number of items which centres need:

Bethesda Hospital
- washing machines  £250
- a number of hospitals need
- beds  £120
- ultrasound machines  £2000
- oxygen concentrators  £600
Coll. of Health Technology
- books, computers