

Zimbabwe Christian Hospital Gets Extreme Makeover

The Sanyati Baptist Hospital in Zimbabwe is a 60-year-old icon of Southern Baptist overseas work that has fallen into serious disrepair as that country's economy has collapsed.

On average, this bush hospital sees about 35,000 outpatients, cares for 1,800 inpatients, assists in 1,800 child births, and performs 1,000 minor surgical procedures and 240 C-sections.

Funds and resources weren't matching the increased patient load, which is putting the hospital in crisis. There has been a limited supply of drugs and supplies while AIDS, TB, cholera, and malaria have risen. Baptist Global Response, partnered with Samaritan's Purse, stepped in and helped provide needed medicines and clean water to help keep the doors open.

However, a malfunctioning water system, leaking roofs, rotting fascia, termite damage, electrical malfunctions, and a set of auto headlights jury-rigged from the ceiling of an operating room presented a significant challenge to the ministry team.

Volunteers are being mobilized from both U.S. and Zimbabwe churches to repair the hospital and portions of the station to working order. Rick Sykes, a retired maintenance project leader for General Motors and member of Pleasant Heights Baptist Church in Columbia, Tenn., was one of the first volunteers who saw the needs firsthand.

Sykes' was at Sanyati to help with the hospital's water problem—the compounds wells and pumps weren't working—but he quickly saw a host of other maintenance issues. The electricity was off more than it was on, which creates life-threatening situations during surgery.

Sykes and his son (an electrician) used their fix-it experience to correct one of the more simple problems. That led to a host of other maintenance issues that needed their skill sets. A brainstorm or two later, and the idea to do an "Extreme Makeover" on the hospital was born.

"The five-year plan for the 'extreme makeover' project intends to restore the hospital facilities to a state where they can be locally maintained," says Mark Hatfield, who directs work in Sub-Saharan Africa for Baptist Global Response.

"God has used Sanyati Baptist Hospital to meet both physical and spiritual needs for 60 years," Hatfield says. "Its ministry extends far beyond the 100,000 or so residents who look to the hospital for medical care. Sanyati is a symbol for the whole country of Christ's loving compassion for the sick and hurting, and I don't think God is finished with Sanyati Baptist Hospital yet."

This is a five-year plan to engage volunteers in making the necessary repairs. This year, they're hoping to have volunteer teams organized to accomplish the following: installing a solar power system, make necessary repairs to the interior and exterior of the chapel, and build a dorm for housing volunteers that will be used for nursing students after the makeover is completed.

In the remaining years of 2013, 2014, and 2015, all of the other work will be completed. This ranges from window repair, ceilings, electrical, plumbing, tile, cabinetry, painting, etc. All told, it will take a dozen teams per year to finish everything up.