

**ECWA Evangel Hospital**  
**Evangelical Church of West Africa (ECWA) and Sudan Interior Mission (SIM)**  
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ECWA Evangel Hospital, Jos is a 180-bed general practice mission hospital located in Jos, Central Nigeria. It was started in 1959 by the then Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) as a health facility catering for the health care needs of both her missionaries and the nationals. It has since grown to become one of the foremost centers in Nigeria for the training of national physicians in general medical practice (family practice). The hospital has since been handed over to the current proprietors, the Evangelical Church of West Africa, who has managed it with a staff strength of 270 of which 6 are foreign missionaries.

The purpose of Evangel Hospital is to glorify God by witnessing to our patients in word and deed the saving love of Jesus Christ, providing a quality and compassionate health care alternative for our community, and training and discipling dedicated Christians to assist the church in meeting her goals. In its fifty-four year existence the Hospital has been able to demonstrate the seriousness with which it takes this mission statement despite the many setbacks and challenges it has encountered. The hospital is famous in Nigeria as the facility from which the Lassa fever virus (a hemorrhagic fever) was first isolated and has remained a referral center for victims of the disease in North Central Nigeria. The general practice training program is highly rated at the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria, helping to produce high quality and godly physicians for the nation's health system. And more recently it is a center of excellence in the treatment and rehabilitation of victims of vesico-vaginal fistula (VVF), a condition still very common in Northern Nigeria, due mainly to certain harmful religious and social practices still prevalent in the region.

The vision of the hospital is to continue to be relevant to the society as a facility that provides caring and compassionate health care providers, who care not only for the body but for the whole person and community. We see ourselves in the future as a referral center not just for other mission hospitals in the country, but to other health care facilities as well because of the quality of our services and the love of Jesus Christ by which they are provided. This vision is achievable as long as the church raises committed, and believing Christians willing to be trained and used in the service of the Lord.

There is a busy outpatient department where the Gospel is presented by video and preaching and chaplains who engage the inpatients with bedside counseling and evangelism. The surgery department offers a range of inpatient and outpatient services and there is a complete obstetrics program from antenatal services through to postpartum care of the mother and child. The pediatrics and medicine departments are also staffed by consultants and residents who supervise the care of patients in the Adult and Pediatric Intensive Care Units. The laboratory, x-ray and physical therapy departments provide necessary support to all of the clinical services.

The general practice training program commenced in the early seventies and has produced a number of quality physicians who have influenced the communities and facilities where they practice. A few now head mission institutions in and outside Nigeria, many practice in mission institutions in other African countries, while others are in private practice in Nigeria and overseas. The program currently has ten residents at various stages of training and ten on the faculty, many of whom are foreign missionaries. These residents and faculty provide the bulk of medical care, counseling and spiritual care for both outpatients and inpatients

seen at the hospital. The program is also involved in the training and development of young men and women out of medical school who serve their internship year at the hospital. Many of them return to be trained in general practice. The program has helped to train and continues to train general practice physicians for both the State and Federal Governments in Nigeria. All have returned to their employers rendering the compassionate and quality care they learned while at Evangel. Finally, the program has continued to assist in a small way the training of foreign medical students who spend their elective posting periods at the hospital learning about tropical diseases and the practice of medicine in the tropics. Funding for this program has been borne wholly by the hospital, with many missionaries and groups assisting with educational and resource materials. The government, which is one of the biggest beneficiaries of the physician training program, has never been convinced of the need to fund and maintain the program.

The vesico-vaginal fistula program was started 11 years ago by a missionary urologist who was concerned about the medical, social and spiritual plight of the victims of this condition. Many of the women were young Muslim girls. Most in their early teens were given out in early marriage and developed this condition as a result of a combination of not being ready physically and emotionally to have babies, lack of adequate and basic health care facilities in their communities, illiteracy, poverty and ignorance. Most of these women, because of the continuous dribbling of urine and the offensive odor about them, become social outcasts and end up driven out of their matrimonial homes. The Evangel VVF program offers compassionate and holistic care at no cost to these women. They are seen, have the surgery to repair the defect and are exposed to the Gospel at the same time. Rehabilitation - physical, social and psychological - has also been a part of the program. The center does about 300 procedures a year with over 50% of them being successfully treated and able to return to their families and homes. Many become believers in the Lord, though a few do so in secret. The funding for this project has generally been from foreign donors. In recent times the local community and charities have been enlightened of the need to contribute and many do so, especially women's organizations.

The hospital maintains a poor fund for the settlement of bills incurred by underprivileged members of the community of all faiths. Poverty is a real issue in the country and many people cannot afford to feed, much less seek and receive quality medical care. This service is rendered with the hope that the beneficiaries acknowledge the love of Jesus as He taught us to show kindness and compassion to the less privileged. Many of the beneficiaries would have remained and died at home, or at government facilities for lack of money.

The scourge of HIV/AIDS has hit Nigeria. Though not yet as dramatic as in other African countries, it is slowly taking its toll on the human and economic resources of the country. The hospital has been slow to develop a policy to fight HIV/AIDS just like many others, especially the government, and is now faced with a crisis. Though late, the hospital has realized the need to take firm measures to fight the disease and is in the process of developing its own program of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of victims. The experience and practices of those who have been at the forefront of the battle are invaluable to us. We have continued to review and learn from the best practices as developed and refined by others all over Africa.

The effect and toll of HIV on our society has become a source of serious concern for the hospital, especially as the government and other agencies seem paralyzed by its rapid spread. We believe that though a medical condition, a holistic approach is likely the best

solution to the disease. The hospital is in the process of, and will require assistance in capacity building across all strata of staff to face this enormous challenge.

Our biggest challenges so far have been funding, leadership, commitment and dedication among staff, and the HIV/AIDS scourge. Funding for the hospital and its programs comes mainly from patients' fees charged for services. There are no grants except for dedicated funds for projects and programs. This has meant that the hospital has continued to struggle for survival as increasing wage bills within the hospital and better welfare packages outside strangle the system. However, many of the staff are committed believers who know that they have been called to this service and are willing to contend with the difficulties for the sake of the Gospel and the love of Christ.

With the church in Nigeria still growing, recruiting dedicated, committed and spiritual personnel, especially for leadership positions at all levels of administration, has been a problem. The poor wages and remuneration turn off many potential employees. Some who make the decision to stay become unfulfilled and frustrated so end up leaving.

Through all of the difficulties and challenges, we have been assured of God's comfort and protection. In the life of the hospital, we acknowledge that "unless the Lord builds a house, the laborers labor in vain." We thank God for all the helpers that have come along the way to support the ministry. Many have remained, while others though have come and gone, they have left their mark on the hospital and the individuals in it. SIM has remained a dependable and formidable partner, continuing to assist with specialist physicians to the training program, and also financial assistance with many on going projects. The body of Christ in Nigeria could do more but seems unsure or unwilling to do so. The hospital on its part needs to show the way and shine the light for the church by demonstrating practical Christian leadership that works. Assistance from any organization in the name and love of Jesus will be highly welcome and appreciated.

