Malabo Adventist Dental Clinic

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In 2019 the Adventist Clinic in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, celebrated 18 years since its inauguration on December 11, 2001. It is the first dental office ever created in the country. This article reflects the various testimonies of the clinic staff throughout the years and the personal experience of the author who worked in the clinic since its second year of operation.

The Beginnings

The foundation of this clinic was laid a few years earlier by Pastor Jeanniton Alcega and his wife, Americans of Haitian descent. These missionaries initially thought of providing simple dental hygiene services. Inspired by the Adventist Dental Clinic in Yaoundé, Cameroon, they asked Pastor Rodolfo Segorbe if he had a child interested in training as a dental hygienist. Eventually, his elder daughter, Sefora Segorbe, committed herself to on-the-job training in this profession at the Adventist Dental Clinic in Yaoundé, and she returned to Malabo in order to serve in the Malabo Dental Clinic that was yet to be opened.

At the end of the 1990s the Adventist Dental Clinic of Yaoundé, Cameroon—highly recognized by the Cameroonian government and international organizations—carried out a need assessment in Equatorial Guinea, with the purpose of opening a dental clinic in Malabo, the capital of the country, along with a dental care mobile unit. As a result of the study, the following priorities were identified, especially among children:

- Frequent dental or buccal infections due to severely damaged teeth and root remains not treated properly
- A high prevalence of dental caries and of periodontal diseases (gingivitis, periodontitis, etc.)
- The lack of a dental office conveniently equipped in the Insular Region (Island of Bioko)
- The lack of mobile units for the dental care of the populations in areas of difficult access
- The absence or precariousness of an oral prevention education program for the school population

Information about dental health needs of the population of Equatorial Guinea was obtained. Subsequently, thanks to the coordination between the Adventist Dental Clinic of Yaoundé, Cameroon, ADRA Equatorial Guinea, and ADRA Spain, the Malabo Dental Clinic was started, even though the general population had limited economic resources.

The need for a dental clinic was further buttressed by surveys conducted by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the government of Equatorial Guinea in 1991 and 1998. The report of these surveys was published on February 8, 1999. According to the report, dental care providers in the country were limited to four stomatologists, four dental technicians, and 23 assistants, a total of 31 professionals. The report also said that 85 percent of the school population of students aged 6 to 12 years suffered from dental diseases and this was due to lack of adequate dental care in the country. The few professionals provided dental care to only urban dwellers, leaving the rural population uncared for.

Pastor Janiton, taking advantage of free space at the Adventist College in Malabo located on a central axis of the city, erected a small building that would serve for the dental clinic which was officially inaugurated on December 11, 2001.

The initial construction, material, and clinic equipment at the time of the clinic’s inauguration were funded by the Spanish local governments of Madrid, Valladolid, Terrassa, Sagunto, Alcoy, and Albacete for a total amount of 293,083.88 Euros (192,263,025 FCFA). Out of these funds, the local government of Madrid covered the bulk of the amount which was 200,919.42 Euros (131,803,140 FCFA).

Malabo Dental Clinic

If founders of this dental clinic were to be named, it would surely be the Janiton couple. Following them, Pastor Francisco Gavin from Spain next supervised the operations of the clinic as president of the mission, serving at the same time as director of ADRA Equatorial Guinea.

Malabo Adventist Dental Clinic today has about ten employees. It actually started in a humble way. ADRA Spain contracted Dr. Edouard Garcia (an Argentinean dental technician and dentist) with his wife for the installation of dental chairs and other dental equipment. Dr. Garcia was assisted by Paciencia Garcia, the first local nurse to work there, and Martin Losoha, a security guard. These three employees were those who actually started the clinic. They were later joined by Sefora Segorbe, who had completed her training in Cameroon, as well as Angel Micha, who served as cashier/receptionist for several years. Of this initial team, Paciencia Garcia is the only one left who is still serving as a dental hygienist.

Dentists

After Dr. Edouard Garcia, several dentists contracted by ADRA Spain, mainly of Latin American origin, and essentially Colombians, worked with the Dental Clinic in Malabo. Among them were Dr. Walter and Ximena Torres (Colombian), Dr. Alvaro Quintana (Colombian), Dr. Kinkaid Hunter (Honduran), Dr. Myriam (Honduran), Dr. Sandra Cecilia Mejia Fernandez (Colombian), and finally Dr. Monica Dumitrescu (Romanian).
The table below shows the various doctors who worked at the Malabo Adventist Dental Clinic since its creation. Dr. Eduardo Garcia, Walter Torres, Kinkaid Hunter, and Monica Dumitrescu have doubled as dentists and general managers of the clinic.8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dentists</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Eduardo Garcia</td>
<td>Argentine</td>
<td>2001-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Walter Torres</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>2002-2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Ximena Calderon (Mrs. Torres)</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>2002-2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Alvaro Quintana</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>2003-2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Myriam Caballero</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>2004-2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Katia Perez</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>2005-2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Sandra Cecilia Mejia</td>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Monica Dumitrescu</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>2007-present</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Development**

Since 2007, Dr. Monica Dumitrescu, who is the only European to have been part of the team of doctors, was hired by ADRA Spain with an initial 12-month contract like the other dentists. Dr. Monica had made a vow to give one year of her life to God, and she accepted the position during a casual conversation with Pastor Rafael Calonge, then ADRA Spain Executive Director, in the Adventist Church of Castellon in Spain. That one year has become more than 12 years, making her the longest serving general manager of the clinic. She married a native and has become a visionary developer of the clinic. As soon as she took over, she began a series of gradual investments to change the physical aspect of the clinic, modernize the facilities, and diversify the patient care, including bringing in experts for delicate treatments such implants.9

Thanks to the vision of Dr. Monica, her pragmatism, and excellent public relations skills, the Malabo Adventist Dental Clinic, which until her arrival only had two dental chairs in a single common room, now has three modern individual cabinets, a surgical room used for dental implants (a revolutionary treatment in the country), and a new small building next to the small initial building.10

In 2007, after seven years of operation, the ADRA Dental Clinic (former name of Malabo Adventist Dental Clinic), which had been operating thanks to funding by ADRA Spain, became an institution of the Equatorial Guinea Adventist Mission. A few years later it became the Malabo Adventist Dental Clinic and Dr. Monica Dumitrescu was given International Service Employee (ISE) status by the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Prior to this time, she was just a volunteer. This change was not without challenges at both the administrative and financial levels, but the institution managed its challenges over the years and regained stability.11

**Spiritual Contribution**

The clinic staff have essentially been Adventists and have contributed fully to the activities of the local church. During their stay, Dr. Edward’s wife, Esther, was a pianist in the central church of Malabo. Dr. Ximena Torres was also a
church pianist, in addition to creating a children's choir called “Voice of Heaven.” Doctors Walter and Alvaro participated in the church choir and as soloists. There has been support in various ways, including evangelization through the printed page by Christian literature always available for distribution within the clinic. To this purely spiritual contribution must be added social acts such as the full care of a few persons, some of whom were sent to Spain either to have appropriate treatment or for academic purposes at the personal expense of certain doctors.

**Relations with the Authorities**

The Malabo Adventist Dental Clinic has always enjoyed good relations with state authorities, some of whom, along with their families, are long-time clients of this institution. Among them are the General Director of National Security, the General Delegate of Security, the Minister of Home Affairs, and the Minister of Mines and Energy. The family of the head of state, Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, have also been patients of the clinic for many years. One of them, the current Minister of Mines and Energy, donated $60,000 to the clinic in 2010, which helped purchase new equipment to replace previous equipment that was becoming obsolete. On the other hand, the presence of the security officials, and the presidential family, has facilitated granting visas for the church administrators coming to Equatorial Guinea, and also facilitated obtaining other official documents over the years which are generally difficult to get.

Malabo Adventist Dental Clinic has laid a strong foundation for the work of Adventist health services in Equatorial Guinea.

**SOURCES**

“Construction and Implementation of a Prosthetic Laboratory in the Dental Clinic of Malabo and Dental Care for the Population of the Island of Bioko,” prepared on April 29, 2005, Malabo Adventist Dental Clinic archives, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.


**NOTES**

1. Personal knowledge of the author as a former employee of the Dental Clinic.

2. Information from Sefora Segorbe Samba, one of the first dental hygienists of the clinic and daughter of Pastor Rodolfo Segorbe, June 19, 2019, in a phone interview, Paris, France.

3. Records of Adventist Dental Clinic, Yaoundé, Cameroon.

4. This information is drawn from the document in Spanish titled “Construction and Implementation of a Prosthetic Laboratory in the Dental Clinic of Malabo and Dental Care for the Population of the Island of Bioko,” prepared on April 29, 2005, Malabo Adventist Dental Clinic archives, Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

5. Ibid.


7. Information provided by Victoria Mueba Buika, one of the first staff of the clinic and current Equatorial Guinea Mission Schools finance manager. June 17, 2019.


10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.