Embangweni Mission Hospital

Embangweni Mission Hospital is a 130-bed capacity hospital located in the southern part of the Mzimba district in northern Malawi. It serves a population of about 100,000 people from 250 villages in a 35-mile radius and sees referrals from as far away as Zambia. Established in the early 1900’s, Embangweni Mission Hospital is one of three hospitals owned and operated by the Central Church of Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP) Synod of Livingstonia. In 2015, Embangweni cared for almost 15,000 outpatients, more than 5,400 inpatients and delivered more than 3,000 babies.

The health services offered at Embangweni Mission Hospital include maternity, pediatrics, HIV/AIDS palliative care and support, male and female general care, dental, X-rays, laboratory services, surgery, orthopedic, and community health services which includes maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS care and sanitation.

A critical process for any hospital is the ability to properly sanitize medical equipment and instruments. Without this sanitation, the hospital can expose patients to cross contamination of illness and disease, which can often lead to death.

In the summer of 2015, the aging autoclave at Embangweni failed and was unrepairable. When operating a hospital in the developing world, it’s not as easy as simply calling a medical equipment supplier and arranging financing. The cost to replace the autoclave would have been more than $15,000 and the hospital was already operating on a shoestring budget. Without the resources to replace the equipment, hospital leadership located a sister hospital in Mzimba—about an hour’s drive away—that was willing to sterilize their equipment. Not only did it cost the hospital more than $250 for each weekly trip, but the time needed to transport the equipment limited the number of procedures that could be done each day. Both the additional cost and the decrease in procedures severely impacted the hospital’s budget and its ability to provide much-needed patient care.

MBF’s U.S. partners responded quickly and with significant support. In March of 2016 a new 130-liter autoclave was installed and is now in full operation. Not did this mean the hospital could now continue to operate full time without weekly interruptions to travel to have the equipment sterilized, but it save the hospital more than $13,000 in yearly expenses that can now be directed to more immediate patient care needs.