



Dear PAACS Family

In this 19th volume, we are privileged to highlight the journeys of two esteemed PAACS graduates, Dr. Aiah Lebbie from Sierra Leone and Dr. Audry Banza from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Dr. Lebbie, a PAACS graduate in General Surgery and Pediatric Surgery, completed his training at Mbingo Baptist Hospital in Cameroon and BethanyKids at Kijabe in Kenya, respectively. He has since returned to his home country, faithfully serving the people of Sierra Leone.

Dr. Audry Banza, a PAACS graduate from SIM Galmi Hospital in Niger, served as a faculty member at the hospital for a year following the completion of his training. As of January 2024, he has taken on the role of a general surgeon at ELWA Hospital in Liberia.

As you delve into the inspiring journeys of Dr. Lebbie and Dr. Banza in this edition, let us also reflect on Hebrews 4:15-16. May it be a reminder that we can approach God's throne with confidence and without fear.

Yours in Christ,
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The Power of Christ-centered Compassionate Care

DR. AIAH LEBBIE

Born 52 years ago in the small village of Kangahun, Sierra Leone, I spent my early years attending primary school and helping on our family farm. I had to move to pursue secondary education in the district's central region, then university studies in Freetown. Both of my parents were Christians and at 12 years old I embraced my own faith, remaining dedicated ever since. In 2006, on the recommendation of my late colleague and university roommate, Dr. Martin Salia, I was accepted into the PAACS program at Mbingo Baptist Hospital in Cameroon. Dr. Salia had joined the PAACS program at Bansa Baptist Hospital a year prior. Tragically, in 2014 Dr. Salia succumbed to the Ebola virus while selflessly serving his countrymen in Sierra Leone.

My journey through the PAACS general surgery program at Mbingo Baptist Hospital and subsequently the pediatric surgery program at BethanyKids in Kijabe was transformative. I quickly came to realize that the training and discipleship would forever change the way I conduct myself. It taught me that healing extends beyond physical ailments, emphasizing Christ-centered care. PAACS was unique in the sense that it focused not only on how the surgeon can be trained to provide surgical care for patients, but also to lead patients to Christ.



The Lebbie Family

In Sierra Leone there are an estimated 8.9 million people and 3.6 million are under the age of 14. Currently, I am the sole pediatric surgeon in the entire country. As a Christian surgeon caring for these children that are placed under my care, I strive to honor God by providing the best care to the children entrusted to me. They are one of the most vulnerable groups and without care many may not survive. When the opportunity

arises, I share the saving knowledge of Christ with these young patients and their caregivers. I understand the importance of reaching the hearts of children at a young age.

Beyond my hospital duties, I conduct surgical camps in rural areas. Our work targets vulnerable children whose parents cannot afford to travel for care in Freetown. The surgical camps have given me an opportunity to reach out to more children and their caregivers with the word of God. I cherish many stories of children who received free operations during such surgical camps. The most touching ones are those where the child or caregiver accepts Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Healed in Body and Spirit - A Patient Testimony from Dr. Aiah Lebbie

Witnessing the transformative power of this work firsthand is a constant blessing. One story that never fails to move me involves an 18-year-old boy burdened with an inguinal hernia since birth. Responding to the call for free surgeries at a remote camp, he arrived alone, his eyes filled with a quiet desperation. By God's grace, as we readied him for surgery, and a door opened to share the gospel. He gave his life to Christ right on the operating table. Today, he not only walks free of pain but walks with Christ. Knowing that this work has brought him physical healing and a newfound faith fills me with indescribable joy.

The Value of Being Present

DR. AUDRY BANZA

Leaving my home in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) at just seven years old, I never imagined the path ahead of me. From DRC we moved to Yaounde, Cameroon which gave me the early opportunity to meet and interact with many people from different cultures and religions. After high school, we returned to DRC to the city of Kinshasa where I attended Protestant University of Congo for medical school.

For years, I struggled without a spiritual community to help me truly grow in my faith. In medical school, new friendships led to incorporating prayer into our study meetings seeking God's favor. However, despite having a good family, grades, and friends, I felt a profound emptiness and a yearning for something deeper. **Encouraged to join a youth group, I engaged in prayer meetings, retreats, and Bible studies. These devotional practices deepened my understanding of Christ's sacrifice and the reality of my salvation. They brought me true peace and a growing reliance on God's strength and the Holy Spirit. I now understand that God was preparing me for the path He had drawn for me.**



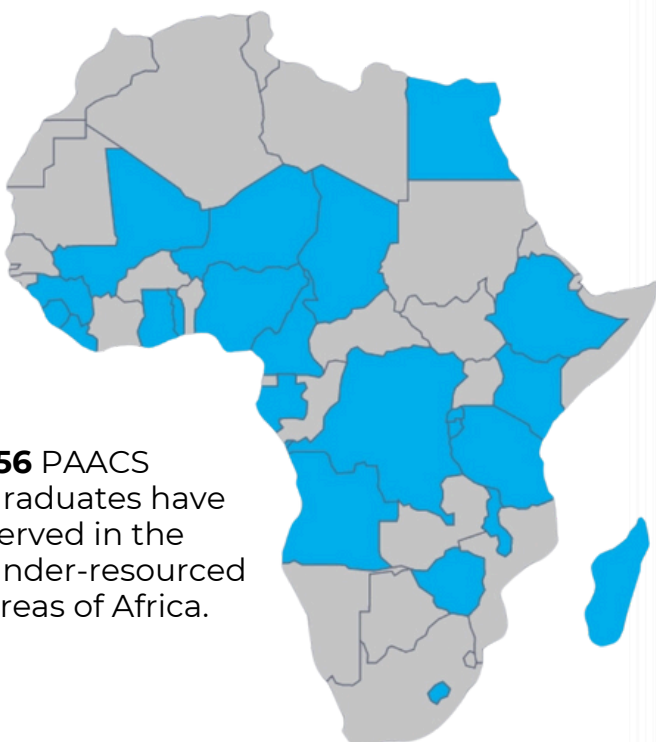
The Banza Family

During my final year internship at Vanga Evangelic Hospital in 2016, I met two missionaries. They recognized my passion for surgery and introduced me to an internship opportunity at Hopital Baptiste Biblique in Togo for 2017. It was there I first encountered PAACS, recommended to me by other missionaries who noticed my dedication. I was drawn to PAACS for its blend of discipleship and advanced surgical training. I joined the general surgery program at SIM Galmi Hospital in Niger in 2018, committed to serving underserved communities. In the country of Niger, over 98% of the population is considered unreached with the gospel. This experience has enriched my journey, allowing me to refine my surgical skills and practice compassionate medicine by sharing God's word and prayer with my patients.

Challenging experiences with advanced illnesses and limited surgical intervention, taught me the value of simply being present with patients. Offering them kindness, compassion, and the hope of a suffering-free eternity in Christ strengthened my faith. I learned to lean on God daily, especially during personal hardships, finding solace in Isaiah 43:19: "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland." This verse has been a constant companion throughout my journey.

I'm grateful to have married my wonderful wife, Gloria, during my residency. Her unwavering faith and passion for service inspire me. Together, we sought God's guidance for my post-graduation path. After serving as faculty at SIM Galmi for one year, in December 2023 we embarked on a new chapter at ELWA Hospital in Liberia. Joining a new team at ELWA Hospital was a blessing, especially collaborating with PAACS graduates, Dr. Juvenal and Dr. Elvis.

23 Countries with PAACS Graduates



156 PAACS graduates have served in the under-resourced areas of Africa.

On December 27th, our planned hospital tour was abruptly cut short by a mass casualty incident involving critically-burned patients. It was not my intent to get involved, but with my PAACS training I was prepared to jump in alongside the OR staff. It was a hard day with so many patients to manage. Yet, it was encouraging to see a diverse group of individuals, many still strangers to me, readily respond to the crisis. The following days and weeks showcased remarkable teamwork and reliance on prayer, with the surgical department, administration, chaplain, families, and Samaritan's Purse team collaborating tirelessly. Tragically, after a long fight, one patient succumbed to her injuries during my call. Despite the team's valiant efforts we knew she likely would not survive. After initiating resuscitation, I took time to pray for the comfort of her family. There was no doubt in my mind that this was the most important thing I could offer at the time.

This experience marked a significant milestone in my journey. **As a medical student, I could not comprehend why a missionary doctor would prioritize prayer over solely relying on medical expertise. Today, as a general surgeon and disciple of Christ, I am now the one who is willing to pray for my patients and share the gospel with them.**