



# KRB Update #2222 – Cameroon

Keith R. Brinkman with Mercy Ships

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Greetings from the *Africa Mercy* as we are safely sailing from Las Palmas where we completed our drydocking and all required repairs and inspections to Douala, Cameroon for our first ever field service to this nation. Our overall summary statement is: "During the *Africa Mercy's* 10-month stay in the port of Douala, Republic of

*Cameroon, Mercy Ships plans to provide 3,112 to 4,148 life-changing surgeries for adult and child patients onboard, to treat over 8,000 at a land-based dental clinic, and provide holistic healthcare training to Cameroonian health care professionals. Mercy Ships Medical Capacity Building Programs foster transformational development within the healthcare structure of the host nation. These projects have been specifically developed to impart knowledge and skills, while modeling and encouraging compassion and a professional work ethic. These projects incorporate one-on-one mentoring opportunities and internationally recognized courses for groups in the Africa Mercy hospital and ashore."*

My first visit to the nation was in March 2014 as I joined our government liaison as we presented Mercy Ships to the Prime Minister and many of his other government ministers. This was during the pre-protocol period – the protocol being the signed agreement between the host government and Mercy Ships. Various ship leaders have made many other visits as together with the government we planned this field service. I continue to be the Advance Team liaison on board and supporting the team there in all ways possible. Currently we have 22 crew members already in country ahead of our arrival.

### Information about the Nation and People of Cameroon

\* 153 out of 188 on the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) [www.hdr.undp.org](http://www.hdr.undp.org) according to the 2016 report – ranking according to life expectancy, expected years of schooling, adult literacy rate and per capita income. The higher the country score, the more developed they are. Mercy Ships works with countries that are in the bottom third.

\* The country has had only two presidents since independence in 1960 – Ahmadou Ahidjo and the current president Paul Biya in power since 1982.

\* Their history has involved the French, English, Portuguese and German.

\* The flag contains the vertical Pan-African tricolor with a bright yellow star in the center – green stands for hope and the southern forest, red stands for unity and yellow for sunshine, prosperity and the savannahs in the north.



\* Geographically, the country is at the crossroads of West and Central Africa and sometimes referred to as the hinge of Africa because it borders six other countries: Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea.

\* Cameroon has ten regions and we trained doctors to go all ten regions in search for suitable surgical patients for our field service from the extreme north to the far east.

\* The population of 275 ethnic groups comes to over 24 million people. Primarily Bantu at 70% and then 10% each to Fulani, Kirdi and Other.

\* Our home will be Berth #10 in the Port of Douala in the largest city, but not the capital city which is Yaoundé. Douala's population is over 3 million.

\* Unlike the United States and Europe with four seasons: winter, spring, summer and fall – Douala's weather is Dry season from November to February 21°C to 35°C (72 F – 100 F), March to May Light Rains and Rainy season from June to October. During the rainy season up to 12 feet of rain (3,600 millimeters).

Many thanks to Steve who shared his research at our first country briefing, I will share more in future KRB Updates.

### Prayer Requests:

Finding additional women in the rural areas who need obstetric fistula surgery – campaigns are currently underway

Finding blind people who need cataract surgery

The healthcare professional participants to receive mentoring and attend training courses

Patient and caregiver's travel from all over Cameroon to Douala to receive their healing and hope restored.

In regards to my mother – I made an unexpected visit to Indiana in late June to spend time with her in the nursing home and with my father and family.

Two of our crew members have died recently – one while visiting family in the United States and another who left almost a year ago and returned to her nation of Liberia. Prayers for their families and friends left behind.



PS – no news yet on when the eight episode series of the 'Surgery Ship' with National Geographic will be airing in the United States or Canada – I will advise when I know something.