

## KRB #2238 – Firsts in Senegal

Na ngeen def (Hello) from Dakar, Senegal

I spent six weeks last year in Senegal as part of our assessment teams and spent many hours working on our plans and preparations and so it is exciting to be here now.

We have already had many **firsts** in this field service here in the nation of Senegal:

**First Surgeries** – started with maxillofacial, plastics and general surgeries – women’s health, pediatric orthopedics and ophthalmic surgeries will start later in the visit. Our amazing Patient Selection Team are going to all 13 regions plus the region of Dakar and providing consultations with the pre-registered patients by the Ministry of Health. Some will be given an appointment to come to the ship for diagnostics and surgeon screening, others go on to a wait list and sadly many we have to share that they have not been selected. Our initial surgical patients have come from those regional capitals we have already visited. Our goal and agreement with the government is for impact in the interior regions and so 75% of our surgical patients coming from the 13 regions – right now we are 96% from interior and 4% from Dakar. One of my **first patients** I visited, Abdou, has already gone home and will return in three months for his second maxillofacial surgery. On Sunday while visiting the HOPE Center, I sat with Fallou who had his surgery on our very first surgical day and with Mohamed who will have surgery this week. Together we tried to sing the song ‘This is the Day’ in the predominant language here – of Wolof – thankfully it is a song that repeats itself alot.



**Photo:** An all-crew photo on the dock here in Dakar

**First Medical Capacity Building** – Courses: Ophthalmic, SAFE Pediatric Anesthesia, Clubfoot and Essential Pain Management for healthcare professionals from 13 of the 14 regions of Senegal. Mentoring for surgeons, anesthesia providers, nurses, and others have started in our hospital and also in the local hospitals. Our Safe Surgery team will travel and offer training over 4 to 5 days in each of the regional hospitals of this nation.

**First Mercy Ministries** – Lere and our two great day crew Sidney and Bertauly have made relationships with new partners for us and have started our Mercy Ministries Visits to two children’s homes, HOPE Center and later to the Deaf School and Women’s Prison.

**First Church Visits** – opportunities to join the Christian believers here in Dakar at their places of worship – some have English translation and for others I try my best in French. Our director hosted some of the pastors on board and look forward to more time with them visiting us on board and in their churches.

First Reports – for our field service, we have 30 different projects in the Hospital, Medical Capacity Building and Infrastructure areas. Each with their own project plan and budget. I have started to publish my first statistical reports on our activities to the local government and partners and to the larger Mercy Ships world.

**Photo:** Pastor Ndour – he was one of our surgical patients in 1994 and now is a pastor in an Assembly of God church here in town.

Prayer Requests:

- \* Our patient selection process continues in the remaining seven regions of Senegal and Dakar – finding the right patients.
- \* Our hospital crew and our patients and caregivers prior, during and after their surgeries.

May together we bring hope and healing.

- \* The right participants for the medical capacity building courses and mentoring opportunities.
- \* Our day crew (250 Senegalese) serving in almost all of our departments on the ship and off the ship.
- \* Health and safety for the entire crew.

Jërëjêf! – the word in Wolof for Thank you – for your prayers and support as I serve.

*Keith*

