

When Faith Moves Mountains: A hospital in Peru lives on donations alone

Even while they were still at school Klaus-Dieter John and his wife Martina, both now aged 48, wanted to study medicine and then work in a third world country, following the example set by Albert Schweitzer. Thirty years later they have been able to realize their vision in the highlands of Peru. The hospital Diospi Suyana opened in the summer of 2007. The genesis of this hospital is unbelievable: it reads like a fairytale. But Klaus-Dieter and Martina John would probably use other words to describe it.

Report by Gabriele Horneff



A sick Indian woman is helped from her horse.



Around 200 patients wait in front of the hospital.



Dr. Martina John, Dr. Klaus-Dieter John

They say: "God writes the script here". Diospi Suyana, the name of the hospital, means "We put our trust in God" in the language of the Quechua Indians. Klaus-Dieter and Martina John had this faith when they decided to tackle the project. In 1991 the couple visited Peru as tourists. They were simultaneously inspired by the beauty of the mountains and shocked by the abject poverty and misery of the highland Indians. These descendants of the Incas face a daily battle for survival. Those who fall ill usually have no access to medical care. The idea to build a modern hospital formed. But how? Klaus-Dieter and Martina John had no money, no connections, nothing.

To begin with, they both worked in a hospital in Ecuador, Dr. Klaus-Dieter John as a surgeon, his wife Dr. Martina John as a pediatrician. This proved to be excellent preparation for their further plan. In 2002 they set up an association with other like-minded people and went public with their dream of a hospital in the Andes. Soon the press began reporting on the project in television broadcasts and magazines. The first sums of money started coming in and in 2003 – Klaus-Dieter and Martina John had now moved to Peru – the idea became tangible. The committee was able to buy a plot of land in Curahuasi, a small town in the Andes at an altitude of 2600, about 1000 km south of the capital Lima. The building of the hospital was expected to take up at least six million US dollars. A mere 800,000 had been collected when the first spade broke the ground in May 2005. Would it be possible to gather enough donations? Often they had to halt construction until the next donations had been raised. Optimism was often necessary to overcome the

many setbacks and varied obstacles. Sometimes their connection to the First Lady of Peru, who had adopted the hospital as one of her charities, was the only thing that helped.

Klaus-Dieter and Martina John never tire of enlisting new sponsors or local helpers. To date they have given almost 1000 talks in many countries. And the miracle has come true: a hospital costing around 8 million USD opened its doors to the first patients a year ago. Since then, the number of patients has doubled. The hospital can care for up to 100,000 highland Indians annually. Patients who are completely destitute are treated for free or can repay the fees by working in the hospital. For everyone else the fees are determined individually, depending on their financial circumstances. The modest salaries of the 70 employees currently working in the hospital are paid by the charity fund. About half of the employees come from abroad, most of them from Germany.

The hospital continues to depend on charitable donations. Dr. John has therefore gone on a lecture tour again this year. On October 14 he visited our company to report on Diospi Suyana. An electrosurgical VIO 300 D unit with a BiClamp instrument and accessories will soon be traveling to Curahuasi. And perhaps they will be followed by Juan Otiniano, our Area Sales Manager. He was so impressed by Dr. John's report that he will be visiting Diospi Suyana when he next returns to spend his vacation in his home country Peru. To everyone else, we recommend that they visit the internet website. Do take a look, it is worth it!

www.diospi-suyana.org