

**March 28, 2007**

### **The Hospital Saga Continues**

The first time I went to the hospital, I wrote that enormous saga story of our miserable wait. Well, several locals told me it was an unusually bad day, so I decided we would come back. I packed up a ton of books and snacks, got Phoebe up at 6:30 in the morning, and set out for the hospital to arrive just as it opened.

I won't bore you with all the details. Suffice to say the line was already down the hallway. Then multiple nurses told me to wait in a line. We waited there for an hour, got to the end, and found out we had accomplished nothing. Wrong line.

Then we waited in another line of about 20 people, for about 2 hours. I was staring down the hallway counting the number of staff (two women in pink, three in white, two in blue, and one man in blue. Maybe a doctor, but I never saw one), and the number of patients treated (four, in half an hour, but none of them had stood in line, they were just emergency cases). The baby in front of me would wake up and whimper weakly, then roll its eyes back in its head and drift back to sleep. Another baby down the hallway wailed for fifteen minutes. Then the woman two seats down from me had a seizure and puddle of her pee spread toward my feet so told Phoebe we would go take a walk.

After five hours, Adam needed the car for a meeting, and there were still nineteen people before me (we had moved only one seat.) So I snapped some photos and headed home, where I cut Phoebe's cast off myself with a pruning shears. She's fine.

**March 24, 2007**

### **A Good Day with the Bra-Maker**

Some days I just find I like my job, and it kind of catches me off guard.

Like yesterday, I was visiting a group of home-based care workers. It was supposed to be their third of four training meetings they must attend before they get loans. But as often happens, they canceled. So we arrived, after over half an hour of driving for me, and there's just one lady saying "The others couldn't come." She has a cell phone. Why didn't she call and tell us? Who knows. Usually this kind of thing makes me feel like pulling out my hair and saying racist ignorant things that I should not repeat.

But yesterday I happened to stay there and ask about the woman's business. I discovered her English was quite good, so we could talk freely.

She began pulling out boxes of sewing materials. These included wild polyester prints, lacy black stuff, and rolls of hooks and snaps and buckles.

“I used to just sew uniforms and things, like these.” Out of the box come school uniforms, skirts, and women’s jackets, exactly like those I see worn by every fourth Zulu person. “But now I’ve learned to sew bras.” Hence the hooks and buckles.

The staff person I work with chimes in. “You have to see one of this, Chrissy! She makes them exactly like you’d get in a store! She sews bras!”

So I sit for the next fifteen minutes about what it takes to sew a bra. About a year ago this woman spent 200 rand per day for three days—about \$100 U.S.—on a special sewing training course. That’s an amazing savings investment, considering this was all before she got for her first loan. “But they awarded me best sewer of the group, and the woman liked me so much she gave me 100 rand back.”

“But I used the loan to start buying some patterns and materials.” She runs her fingers over a roll of hooks. “These are expensive.”

She buys them in bulk, and can churn out bras and underwear with her eleven year-old sewing machine that she cleans and oils weekly. She sells the cheapest styles for just 35 rand each, about five dollars. Not a bad price for a bra, and it’s no wonder her neighbors give her business.

“This one for you?” She pulls an enormous black satin bra out of a box and holds it up.

It feels good to laugh.