



Interplast[®]

Interplast Sri Lanka Country Program Review: 2001 - June 2017
Report Summary



This is a summary of the evaluation undertaken of Interplast's Sri Lanka country program for the period between 2001 and June 2017. If you would like further detail on this report, please contact the Interplast office (03 9249 1231 / contactus@interplast.org.au)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interplast Australia and New Zealand (*Interplast*) is an organisation which aims to make a real difference in the lives of those with whom it works, by repairing bodies and rebuilding the lives of people across the Asia Pacific region. It achieves this by providing access to surgical and allied health services and supporting the development of the local capacity of partner countries, so they can provide specialist health care services at a national and regional level.

In partnership with the Sri Lanka Ministry of Health, and with support from over 70 *Interplast* volunteer medical professionals, *Interplast* has delivered a range of programs in Sri Lanka over the past 16 years. During this time, *Interplast* undertook 1,837 consultations and performed 762 surgical procedures. Since the first needs assessment was conducted in 2001 through to the time of writing this report, the scope of its programs has evolved from service delivery to advanced training and mentoring; building the capacity of local health providers. It has delivered programs in hospitals in Colombo, Galle and Batticaloa. Over these years, *Interplast* has increased the quantity and broadened the type of programs it delivers, built around plastic and reconstructive surgical mentoring, and hand therapy mentoring. *Interplast* has particularly supported the training programs at the National Hospital and to a lesser extent the Army Hospital. This includes support for the development of the plastic and reconstructive surgical curriculum, plastic and reconstructive surgical training attachments in Australia, and other professional development activities across the region. *Interplast*'s strategy has had a focus on 'training the trainers'.

When *Interplast* established programs in Sri Lanka, there were only six practicing plastic surgeons. At the time of writing this report, that number has increased to 15 trained specialist plastic and reconstructive surgeons, and 7 trainees.

The development of the Sri Lankan plastic and reconstructive surgical training program has led to the emergence of a new generation of surgeons. Local plastic and reconstructive surgery trainees work closely with *Interplast* surgical teams in Sri Lanka, with strong support and backing from their senior management. These Sri Lankan surgeons and surgical trainees work primarily with patients with both congenital and acquired disabilities. There is abundant anecdotal and observable evidence to demonstrate that *Interplast*'s contribution to this program is enabling local medical professionals to play an effective role in treating disability, equipping them with the skills and techniques required to treat common disabling conditions.

Purpose of the review

Following 16 years of partnering with health services in Sri Lanka, in 2017, *Interplast* conducted a formal review of its Sri Lanka program; assessing its successes and challenges, determining its sustainability and strengthening of local capacity, and identifying the future direction of its Sri Lanka programs. This review brings together, and builds on, the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of *Interplast* programs in Sri Lanka which has taken place since programs commenced in 2001.

This review comprises two components; a desktop review, undertaken in Australia, of historical documentation relating to *Interplast's* Sri Lanka program, and an in-country component consisting of five days of site visits and interviews in Colombo.

Findings

1. *The strategy of focusing on supporting training programs at the National Hospital has been very successful in building up the cadre of local plastic surgeons and allied health professionals.*
2. *Interplast's* Sri Lanka programs have enhanced local ownership and promote sustainable development practices.
3. *Interplast's* training programs are a strategic and cost-effective way to build capacity both within Sri Lanka and across the Asian region.
4. *Interplast* programs in Sri Lanka have experienced a number of challenges through the 16 years of program delivery, many of which are outside the scope of influence of *Interplast*. However, close partnerships with local partners have largely addressed these challenges.
5. New areas of support have been identified and if reinforced would serve to increase local medical capacity in Sri Lanka.

These findings are further explored in the body of this report and have informed a number of key recommendations. The review's recommendations have been incorporated into *Interplast's* three-year Country Strategy for Sri Lanka (2017-2020) and will inform the activities which are planned, in consultation with local partners, in the annual Country Program Plans.

Recommendations¹

1. To continue surgical and allied health mentoring programs in Sri Lanka (as per specific needs identified by local partners) and support regional capacity building in these fields.
2. *Interplast* will provide support to plastic and reconstructive surgeons based in teaching hospitals in regional areas.
3. In partnership with local partner hospitals and governing organisations, *Interplast* should extend invitations for its training programs to all plastic and reconstructive surgeons across Sri Lanka.
4. *Interplast* to incorporate new areas of mentoring identified as needed by local partners.
5. *Interplast* to continue to support staff from specialist hospitals, so that improvements to their skills and knowledge benefit the wider population.
6. *Interplast* to support Sri Lankan surgeons to become regional leaders in plastic and reconstructive surgery, and support the development of Sri Lanka as a 'regional training hub'.
7. *Interplast* to formalise partnership agreements with its local partners as necessary and develop a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health in Sri Lanka.

¹ All program activities recommended are subject to available funding, and to meeting the ongoing needs of local partners.