



Interplast

INSIDE INTERPLAST

REPAIRING BODIES AND REBUILDING LIVES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

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Ground-breaking surgery in Nepal gives Sulochana a new thumb



You would never guess by looking at these photos, but eight-year-old Sulochana was in tears when she told surgeons about how she was relentlessly teased at school because she was born without a thumb.

She also experienced great difficulty when eating, learning how to write, and performing everyday functions.

But today she is smiling because, for the first time in her life, she has a thumb! Thanks to Interplast volunteer plastic and reconstructive surgeons and the local medical team in Nepal, her new thumb was reconstructed from her index finger.

This is the first time this procedure has been performed in Nepal, and it provided vital learning opportunities for local surgeons.

Interplast volunteer surgeon, Mr Damien Grinsell, said Sulochana was delighted with her new thumb and she has been diligently exercising her hand to strengthen her grip.

“Sulochana’s case demonstrates the high level of competency the Nepalese surgeons have for learning complex procedures,” he said.

“I have enjoyed working alongside local surgical teams in Nepal since 2008 and I have had the privilege of watching them grow in confidence to perform most of the complex cases that present to them, when Interplast is not there.”

Damien continues to provide advice to Nepalese surgeons online, sharing photos and advice about advanced techniques.

“The cases they see are of injuries or deformities that have been left for so long that they become far more complicated than what we see in Australia,” Damien said.

“Together, we hope to increase access to early intervention among Nepalese communities, for better health outcomes.”



Sulochana's hand prior to surgery.



FAREWELL TO Professor Donald Marshall

Vale Interplast's patron -
Professor Donald Marshall AM
(August 1934 – December 2018).

Professor Donald Marshall AM knew that Interplast was not for everyone.

"Having spent 50 years in plastic surgery, one is well aware how reconstructive surgery has great rewards, both for the patients and their treating practitioners," Professor Marshall once said.

"The surgeons who become involved with Interplast are fundamentally more interested in reconstructive surgery."

Professor Marshall played a key role in establishing Interplast in 1983 after witnessing the growing need for reconstructive surgery while establishing a training base in Bangladesh.

"Deformity from congenital abnormality or injury frequently means an individual's full potential may not be realised," he said.

"Reconstructive surgery with a few instruments, but with the necessary expertise, and with the support of allied health professionals, can help such people and give them a normal life, and they then can contribute so much more to their communities."

Professor Marshall's approach to development and purpose for Interplast remains true today.

"The key to Interplast's success is respect for our in-country partners...offering to help, but only when invited," he said.

His extensive surgical experience put him in good stead to build solid relationships with partner countries and establish enduring training programs for local capacity building.

Professor Marshall was Interplast's president for 16 years, prior to becoming Interplast's inaugural patron.

Interplast current president and surgeon, Mr Keith Mutimer, said Professor Marshall's passion for helping others through surgery has made a huge impact on the entire Interplast community.

"Every patient, volunteer, local partner and staff member who has ever had the pleasure of working with Professor Marshall would attest to his hard work and dedication to Interplast and the communities in which we work," he said.

Professor Marshall's formal recognition of his illustrious career began in 1997 when he was awarded the Medal of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons, followed by the Member of the Order of Australia in 1999.

Today, his legacy will continue not only in every program that Interplast delivers, but also through the annual Marshall International Scholarships. Founded in 2009, the scholarships support talented medical professionals from the Asia Pacific region to participate in professional development opportunities and clinical placements with world-class experts in Australia and New Zealand.

Interplast celebrates Solomon Islands' cleft repair milestone

Dr Scott Siota is the first Solomon Islander to perform a cleft lip repair in his home country as primary surgeon under supervision by an Interplast volunteer surgeon.

In Australia and New Zealand, cleft lip and palate repairs are a specialist skill performed by plastic and reconstructive surgeons. In the Pacific region, there are only two qualified plastic and reconstructive surgeons who are based in Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

Scott has participated in continuous clinical teaching and practical training by Interplast volunteer surgeons for eight years. Thanks to Interplast scholarships, Scott has attended advanced skills workshops in Samoa and Australia, and participated in an observational placement with Interplast volunteer plastic and reconstructive surgeon, Dr Zac Moaveni, in New Zealand.

"Our relationship with local medical staff continues to build on both a personal and professional level," Zac said.

Zac has been volunteering for Interplast and mentoring Scott in the Solomon Islands since 2015. Zac supports Scott online between visits, building his surgical skills and confidence over the years.

"It's great seeing Scott's improving confidence in taking on plastic surgery cases and performing cleft lip repairs," Zac said.

"Scott is a talented surgeon and shows ample patience and attention to detail, essential to getting the best possible results in plastic and reconstructive surgery."

Scott performed two cleft repairs as primary surgeon under Zac's supervision during Interplast's latest surgical training program in Honiara in 2018.

Thank you to Rotary District 9780 and the Department of Foreign Affairs' Pacific Island Program for generously funding this program.



Dr Scott Siota (right) working with Dr Zac Moaveni (left) performing a cleft lip repair.

Photo credit: Baron Collocott, Unseen Perspective

Inaugural nursing education program delivered in Vanuatu



Blaise Batsary (pictured centre) is a paediatric nurse practitioner in Vanuatu.

Blaise Batsary (pictured centre) is a paediatric nurse practitioner in Vanuatu, living in Port Vila with his wife and three children.

Blaise's early experiences with Interplast were during his time as a theatre nurse when he had the opportunity to work with an Interplast surgical team.

Interplast has been providing plastic and reconstructive surgery in Vanuatu since 1985. But it was in 2018 that Interplast delivered its first nursing education program in Vanuatu.

"I feel very fortunate that, once again, I have been able to be involved with Interplast," Blaise said during the nursing education program.

Blaise is pictured here with volunteer nurse educators, Bree Pilgrim (left) and Pip Tesselaar (right), who delivered the inaugural program.

The program explored topics such as infection control, wound management, pain management and plastic and reconstructive specialty topics including cleft surgery management. Most topics focus on skills that are transferrable to other specialties.

"I have found the wound and burns assessment skills very useful," Blaise said.

"I will be able to use these skills in my paediatric setting which will help me improve the management of my patients."

"Thank you Interplast, you have helped me increase my knowledge of management and nursing skills, and this will help me care for my community and my family," Blaise said.



Interplast's inaugural nursing education program to Vanuatu was supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).

Brian Hodgson: a Rotarian's reflection

Brian is used to being in control of most aspects of his life. But for two weeks, this was going to change.

As the manager of the Rotary International's Global Grant and member of the Rotary Club of Wandin, Brian joined Interplast's volunteer surgical and training team to the Philippines in late 2018, to observe the grant's impact in the Cagayan de Oro community through the Vocational Training Team (VTT) initiatives which he helped to develop.

"Before I left for the Philippines, I was a bit concerned about the security situation in my host city because of recent political unrest," Brian said.

"I could not build a visual image of what to expect, even though Interplast had provided an extensive briefing for the team."

The VTT program delivered two training seminars. The first seminar focused on plastic and reconstructive surgery, anaesthetics and nursing in a clinical context. The volunteer surgical team worked alongside Filipino peers to provide practical, hands-on training with patients in the operating theatre and in the pre and post-operative wards.

"Volunteer surgeon, Dr Kevin Ho, was a great leader," Brian said.

"The entire team worked tremendously well together."

The second training event was a community outreach seminar facilitated by Brian, designed to raise awareness about cleft lips and palates, the importance of early intervention, how it can be treated and pre and post-operative care. The Rotary Club of Cagayan de Oro and the Rotary Club of Wandin worked together to revise a pamphlet about cleft care and translate it into the local languages. Hundreds of pamphlets were distributed, some to the local community health workers to help communicate these important health messages to the people who need it most.

As Brian met more patients, their families and the local hospital staff, his anxiety associated with the security situation dissipated. Instead, his focus shifted toward the overwhelming gratitude of the patients, their families and the local staff, the eagerness of the hospital staff to learn, and how professionally the local staff worked with the volunteer team.

"The theatre staff were excellent, and they were very keen to be there," Brian said.

"The ward staff were extremely helpful, even with heavy caseloads. They took careful notes during ward rounds and they still made time to help translate for me.

"By this stage I knew we were safe and secure. I gradually felt more comfortable with my role and could see that my contribution was having an impact."

The program's increased focus on training was equally successful as the surgical component of the program. Interplast, its local partners and the Rotary Global Grant share in the pursuit of building local capacity through transferring skills and sharing expertise.

This experience has further resolved Brian's commitment to continue advocating for Interplast.

"I plan to share my experiences with others in the hope of increasing awareness of what Interplast achieves and encouraging financial contributions," he said.

"Some of this will be achieved through my membership of District 9810 Interplast Committee and my work as an Assistant District Governor."

This program was supported by the Rotary Club of Wandin and the Rotary Foundation.



Rotarian, Brian Hodgson, works closely with the Rotary Club of Cagayan de Oro, to help plan and support Interplast's programs in the Philippines. Brian (right) is pictured with Cris Parojinog, the Past President of the Rotary Club of Cagayan de Oro, and Cris' daughter.



Interplast Australia and New Zealand is actively supported by Rotarians in Clubs and Districts throughout Australia and New Zealand.



Interplast acknowledges the support of the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



Interplast is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. For more information, go to acfid.asn.au



Gantung's sight is saved thanks to surgery

"I am worried that he will be teased by other children and will not want to go to school," Gantung's mother said.

She finds it emotionally distressing to see the burns on her son, Gantung's, face. She is also apprehensive about how other children will treat him because of his disfigurement.

Gantung was only 14 months old and full of curiosity when he took his first steps. But as this new, exciting world of independence opened before him, this world came crashing down when he fell onto a hot stove.

In Mongolia, open fires and wood-fired stoves are relied upon for heat and cooking in many family households. As the main source of heat, it sits in the centre of the ger (traditional family home) and is the cause many burn injuries, particularly in the rural regions.

The stove's hot surface immediately burned Gantung. He was left with severe burns on the left-hand side of his face. The scarring was permanently pulling down his lower eye lid. He couldn't close his eye, and this significantly increased Gantung's risk of losing his sight.

Interplast's volunteer surgical team first met Gantung in 2017. They were able to give him a steroid injection to soften the scar tissue, allowing more movement to his lower eye lid.

But Gantung was not out of the woods. He returned with his mother a year later for a full thickness skin graft to release the burn contracture and to further reduce the scarring.

"I worry that he will be angry with me when he is older," Gantung's mother said.

Interplast volunteer surgeons worked alongside local surgeons to release Gantung's burns scarring during the last visit to Khovsgol United Hospital in Murun, a remote region in Mongolia's north.

He is recovering well and Gantung's mother has already noticed his curiosity and independence slowly coming back.

"He can close his eyes fully when he goes to sleep," she said.

"And I too can sleep better knowing that his sight is safe and that his future is much brighter."

You can help Interplast continue to send highly qualified, volunteer plastic and reconstructive surgical teams across the Asia Pacific region to repair bodies and rebuild lives.



Before surgery: Gantung was at risk of losing the sight in his left eye from severe burns scarring.

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GANGTUNG AND HIS MOTHER CAN BOTH SLEEP MUCH BETTER KNOWING THAT GANTUNG'S SIGHT HAS BEEN SAVED.



Yes, I want to help people like Gangtung get the surgery they need!

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Interplast Australia & New Zealand

250 - 290 Spring Street, East Melbourne, VIC 3002

ABN: 59 006 155 193