

PLASTIC SURGICAL AID MISSION TO TANZANIA JULY 2006

Dr Mark Lee

Dr James Savundra



Of the leaving class of 1986 four of us went into medicine. (The rest of the year, I think, did Commerce at UWA but hey it was the 80's!) Of the four, two of us have ended up as Plastic Surgeons.

It seems fitting therefore in the 20th anniversary of leaving Scotch College that James Savundra and I, both '86 leavers, both from Alexander House and now both Plastic Surgeons headed for Africa on a surgical aid mission together. We took a surgical team to Dar es Salaam in Tanzania to operate on children with facial deformities, severe burns scarring and other weird and wonderful problems. Tanzania has a population of 20 million and no plastic surgeons. Reconstructive surgery is a luxury the country cannot afford.

The Aid Mission lasted 2 weeks in July of this year and we operated on over 50 kids with a few adults thrown in. The team consisted of 2 plastic surgeons, 3 nurses and an anaesthetist. All were local volunteers. We carted most of the equipment we needed with us so as not to drain their health system. One of the most important aims of these aid trips is not only to

operate on selected cases but to teach the local surgeons and anaesthetists. This hopefully leaves the country with a lasting legacy of reconstructive skills.

The Team



Some examples of our cases:

Atupele Mwakendengi, a 12 year old boy was burnt in a house fire 3 years ago. His burns were left to heal without grafting or splints and the scar contracture was such that he couldn't close his mouth or extend his neck. He underwent extensive scar release and skin grafting.



One week later



Firikini Singaro is another 12 year old boy with a bilateral cleft lip and palate. In Australia this would have been repaired as an infant. He had his lip and nose repaired and was discharged back to his village after 5 days.



One week later



Teddy Ramadhani was 9 months old and lucky enough to have his lip repaired early in life. This will hopefully avoid the social isolation cleft patients can suffer if not repaired until much later.



Plastic Surgery is a wonderfully portable speciality, ideal for aid work. We don't need huge amounts of equipment. Just some fine instruments and a problem solving approach. Between James and myself we have taken teams to Tanzania, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tonga, Kibati and the Philippines.

Interplast Australia has been sending local Plastic Surgeons throughout Asia and the South Pacific for over 30 years; Africa has recently been added. We are indebted to Interplast and all the local sponsors to allow us to undertake such missions. We both plan to be involved with many more.

If anyone is interested in sponsoring such aid work please contact me via my website.

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