



Children of Fire

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www.firechildren.org

Newsletter

No. 3 2008

An infomercial campaign steadily moves on

Children of Fire's latest campaign for fire safety and burns prevention has adopted a new dimension: television and DVDs.

Children of Fire (ChiFi) is producing ten different infomercials, each setting the scene of a common cause of burns injury followed by a safety message about prevention. To be broadcast across South Africa and other African countries from 2009, these infomercials can raise awareness of everyday dangers and reduce the number of fire-related injuries and other causes of burns across the continent.

Topics include a paraffin stove explosion, illegal electrical wiring as well as the necessity of having several escape routes out of a building. Aimed at all demographics, the idea is to *show* the consequences of carelessness and negligence instead of just giving the message in words. Sometimes people will not believe a problem, until they see it.

Early links were filmed at Joe Slovo squatter camp in Coronationville. ChiFi intends to work with an agency on finessing the raw footage shot so far. Nicky Makgamathe of Matshipi Communications has enthusiastically lent his skills above and beyond paid time on the project, with help from Joyce Makoeng and teenage television student Pete Jones from Manchester, UK. It has been a steep learning curve,

not least that Global Stunts and Special Effects's "cheap" rate for an explosion was R6500. And that sound effect was negated by the young location selector not taking note of the noisy factory fans nearby that need to be turned off before filming began! But Global promised another small explosion when we re-shoot and with 25 years' experience in the stunt industry it helped obtain the necessary permits for special effects and fire effects to be used on set. Technicians and stuntmen also worked at reduced rates.

Greenside High School pupils fundraised to cover part of the costs of one infomercial and two pupils have already been used for filming. ChiFi held auditions at the school for "wannabe" actor-pupils and found much budding talent. Greenside Teacher Fiona Rankin was crucial in organising the auditions and fundraising.

Margot Bell assisted with contracts and indemnities for actors, Damien Lagan at Chubb Fire Services in Midrand helped with a location for safe filming and Cape Town Disaster Management, Cape Town Fire Brigade and Msunduzi Fire Brigade gave advice on topics needing to be filmed.

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Top left: Salome Aphane...a Hammanskraal babe



Children of Fire—Africa's first burns charity



Experienced cameraman Nicky Makgamathe was assisted by Joyce Makoeng and teenage volunteer Pete Jones.

Sunday Library for squatter camp kids continues

For at least eight years, every Sunday morning, Children of Fire volunteers have gone to a local squatter camp. They help the children with reading and writing and teach them life skills from road safety to brushing teeth and understanding xenophobia.

Donations of books and drawing materials as well as volunteers are welcome and would help support the children in need.

Nitric acid attack, haemangioma, birthmarks and fuel block explosions, all disfigure faces

Eish! How! are South African expressions of amazement or horror (not a question as in conventional English usage). If your face is badly burned or scarred, they are voiced reactions that you almost become used to. But never so used to, that you wouldn't love it if people stopped exclaiming in this way.

Tolerance of disfigurement is an ideal. But for God's sake, why should one just be "tolerated". You *tolerate* the bad behaviour of a tired toddler. You *tolerate* gross manners from someone of a different culture, where the concept of manners is different. But to *tolerate* your disfigurement...? Clearly a lot of people need to be better educated.

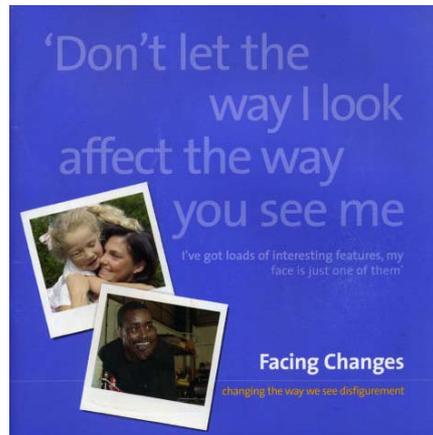
You are who you are—unblemished or scarred. Your face is not "you". You are your mind, your life, your actions, your upbringing. The smiling frowning visage is just the veneer to you.

But scratch, twist or warp that veneer and suddenly you find out just how important it is to other people's acceptance of "you".

James Partridge, a long term friend of Children of Fire, wrote about his experiences as a car fire survivor many years ago. From his coming to terms with his new outer image, the charity Changing Faces evolved. And one part of that UK-based charity's work is to produce posters and publications to make people think about their tolerance of disfigurement—their reaction to disability. There's a great booklet called *Facing Changes*. It's a good read. Get one for yourself. Get ten for your waiting room. A hundred for your hospital. Even people whose second or third language is English, will pick them up and benefit from them. ISBN 1-900928-26-4 see www.changingfaces.org.uk

In a similar vein, a book was published in May 2008 in Taiwan, called *Impressions of Happiness*. Supported by the Minister of the Interior and

produced by the Sunshine Foundation, it has been translated fairly well from Chinese into English. The stories of burns survivors and some others with different types of facial disfigurement, cover all

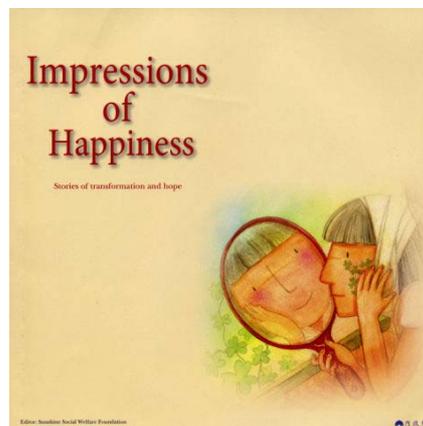


stages from the confusion and fear of tubes, bandages, pain, to the worst part of the burns injury: discharge from hospital and having to face the real world. Imagine a badly burned grandfather going home and his own grandchild shrieking in fear at his appearance and running away from him. Chong-Chong wrote: "Because we have

only one chance to live our lives, everything is precious."

Huei-Ju lost her sight through burns. She said: "Before the accident I took too much pride in my beauty and was so full of myself; the accident taught me humility and I like the way I am now." She can still "see" the ocean and "see" the beauty of the night.

Of another burns survivor, Sun He-Chen, a counselor,



wrote: "The first time I saw her, my heart tightened in shock." The woman with 70 per cent burns was depressed and non-functioning for years. Sun said: "I think of her still. She was like a kite cut loose from its string; she could only go where the wind took her, heading towards no direction in particular."

It takes one-and-a-half hours to read *Impressions* but each gently-illustrated chapter is a stand-alone story. A kind and thoughtful book that works well in other cultures. ISBN 978-986-01-4188-7

See also www.sunshine.org.tw

Maybe now is the time to be more than simply *tolerant* of disfigurement but to start to stop noticing it at all. After all, if all our faces were perfectly symmetrical—no spot, blemish, freckle, mole... if all our smiles were Aquafresh-white and stunningly even..., well we'd look as dull and insipid as the sort of women whose faces appear on the sides of soap bar packaging. Eish!

Turtle protector's daughter gets foot surgery in Kenya

When our volunteer Simon Pike went on holiday to tranquil Lamu off the coast of Kenya, he noticed island girl Habiba Mahmud's badly burned feet. Habiba (14) was burned in 1994 at the age of one year. The first-born of four children, she was just learning to walk and she stumbled into the remains of the coconut coals on the ground outside her home in Matondoni village. People in Lamu cook on fires on the ground.

Habiba's mother Hawa Gobu was out and a neighbour was in charge of the little girl. The burns were accidental not intentional.

Habiba was admitted to Lamu Hospital for three months, but there was no appropriate expertise to help her there. Often the X-ray machine is not working in Lamu and people must travel to Malindi instead. Visits to the island from specialists are few and far between.

In 2003 Operation Smile took her to Coast General Hospital in Mombasa. She spent two months there but has no paperwork to explain what was done, nor any contact details for a doctor. Her family only knows that Dr Odour was in charge of her surgery. Operation Smile is one of many charities that help children in Kenya. They go to the country once a year with surgeons who donate their time and mainly help children with hair lips.

It is easy to assume that charities operate free of charge, but when asked why Habiba did not have more surgery, the answer is that her father Hadji Mahmud did not have enough money for more procedures.

Habiba is a Standard 6 pupil with ambitions to become a doctor. She turns 15 on 20th November 2008. She is the daughter of Mahmud the turtle protector in Peponi. In 2007 Mahmud had asked hotelier Carol Korschen if she could source some shoes for the child's damaged feet. [We've been down that road in Johannesburg and could not find any helpful podiatrist for veld-fire survivor Thulani when he needed shoes.]

Simon came back and asked if we could, and if we would, help. It just so happened that we've been in long term communication with American surgeon Dr Louis Carter. He swiftly warned that it might be possible to make the feet look better but for them to become functionally worse. Deformities secondary to a burn are very hard to reconstruct. The fact that Habiba is now a teenager and the injuries occurred when she was a toddler, made the

scenario even less optimistic. So we booked her to travel from Lamu to the Nakuru/Kijabe area on mainland Kenya. Korschen explained: "This is not a trip done regularly by the local people. They would leave Lamu for Mombasa in the morning, get to Mombasa 7- 8 hours later. Then take the night bus from Mombasa to Nairobi which is another 8-9 hours and then the following morning will take the bus from Nairobi to Nakuru a further two hours."

An *in loco parentis* document was drawn up and the hospital insisted that a responsible adult must stay with the child at all times. Also that some 32 thousand shillings be paid in addition to the costs of the journey.

Sadly there was some confusion at one or other of the hospitals and so Habiba and her father travelled all the way to Kijabe and back to Lamu without getting any treatment. Atwa Salim the Coordinator of Lamu Marine Conservation Trust wrote: "It is to my expectation that you will be able to do something of help to the daughter of my turtle protector and all of your efforts will not be in vain."

Once the confusion cleared and lots of transport money later, they returned and the child had two operations by Dr Tim Mead, Medical Director at AIC Cure Hospital in Kijabe. It was also found that buses from Mombasa go to the Nakuru area and the extra journey via Nairobi was not needed. Dr Mead regularly cares for children with burned extremities. Habiba could walk "surprisingly well" before surgery according to Korschen.



Habiba's foot before surgery (left) and after. Her severely contracted big toe was successfully realigned. Thanks to Dr Carter and Dr Mead.

Check future newsletters to see what beneficial changes Habiba has had in the long term. We're glad to know of the good surgery in East Africa.

[AIC Cure International Children's Hospital](#)

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Victims of xenophobic attacks receive disaster recovery bags

Disaster Management in Alexandra township, Johannesburg requested help from Children of Fire following the eviction of 80 households along London Road on 12th May 2008 —a result of xenophobic violence that spread across the province and then the country in the days to come.

Foreign residents quickly grabbed what they could and fled to Alex police station on 15th Avenue where they slept that night. Most refugees were later transferred to camps in across Gauteng.

Children of Fire's UMashesha (quick mover) team responded immediately and, with the help of Pick & Pay (Campus Square) which arranged a significant donation of bread and cakes, prepared emergency items to give to the refugees that same evening. However the police requested they wait until dawn, because shooting had broken out across the area and it was unsafe for the volunteers to enter.

At sunrise the following morning the UMashesha entered Alexandra police station and met many of the evicted families. Director Pharafi, who managed the station at that time, tried to ease anxieties and control the situation. Pharafi said that one thousand people slept at his station that night, and more rioting was anticipated. Many people left the station in the morning to go to work or to rescue more possessions as well as find family members, but returned later.

Children of Fire distributed its famous red disaster recovery bags including wash things, stationery and saucepans, along with blankets, clothing and food. Surplus was stored for anyone who came later.

UMashesha volunteer manager Christopher Wilson said: "Normally we assist in Alexandra when there is a fire, at the direct request of the community or of Disaster Management. However under our community safety mandate, when we have resources, we



A bakkie-load of disaster recovery bags, blankets, clothes and bread was taken to Alexandra Police Station on 13 May.



Men and women queue for the goods that were handed out by ChiFi volunteers.



Volunteer Christopher Wilson gives out bread and jam to hungry refugees.

can also assist at times like these." GT Trading provided transport and UMashesha Marietta Neumann, Louis Rutstein, Pete Jones and Bjinse Dankert distributed the donations.

Thanks to Pick n Pay, Tiger Brands for 50kg of jam and regular donors for clothes and blankets.

Hands and noses, eyes and hairline

Doreen Msimanga's dexterity was impaired by webs of scar tissue at the bases of her left hand fingers. On 22 May 2008 the webs were released at the hand unit at Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital. This improved function of the hand as well as appearance. She now aspires to catch up with her best friend Katrina's piano playing skills.

Simamkele Hlanzela (7) had contractures released on both his eyelids. He also had an operation on his



Doreen Msimanga (10) after surgery on her hand (left); Shirley Seqhobane needs tissue expansion

hand for contracture release and straightening of his fingers. He is booked for an operation on his other hand and his eye at end September 2008.

Sizwe Hlophe (7), a regular at Carstenhof Clinic, had the shape of his left nostril enlarged as it was much smaller than the right nostril, but his right ear shape suffered in the process. Thanks to Dr Alastair



Sizwe Hlophe on the operating table

Drakensberg, Dolomites, the Alps ... burns survivors without borders

Twenty burn survivors, fire fighters and volunteers were to set off on an adventure in the central Drakensberg mountains from 28 June to 4 July 2008. At the last moment, one Zulu girl badly burned by ethanol gel fuel, was forbidden to go as her father feared she would wear trousers! The rest went and had a splendid time, thanks especially to two Children of Fire volunteers, five brave Msunduzi (Pietermaritzburg) fire fighters, and Durban fire fighter Tristan Jones. Coming soon on the website: *the Drakensberg 2008 outreach*, by psychologist Michelle Daniels. The adventure was made possible with help from Imperial Car Hire, Dragon Peaks Mountain Resort and many others.

Now Feleng Mahamotse's epic journey (*see also page ten*) took him to **Inselspital** in the city of Bern, Switzerland, hoping to see the surgeons who had worked on a Russian forester some years before. The unfortunate Russian had had his face bitten off by a bear but the team at Inselspital rebuilt him astonishingly well. The key surgeon had since retired and while still of steady hand and keen intellect, he is denied the right to operate in Swiss state hospitals above the age of 65. (In Germany the age restriction is 67 years old).

Some emails had gone astray so no one wanted to see Feleng at that hospital—the little boy wondered at the rather unfriendly tone but donated a colouring book gift for them, designed especially for children in burns wards in Canada. It is always good to share ideas with colleagues in other countries.

Lamont for doing the operation, Linda Blezovsky who was the anaesthetist, and Life Health Care of Carstenhof Clinic for covering Sizwe's stay and theatre costs in its beautiful hospital.

The mother of a five-year-old boy Samkelo Somi contacted Children of Fire in early 2008 to ask for help with his burn scars—he had been playing with an older boy who made him hold paint thinners and then set them alight. Samkelo had his first chin keloid removal at Johannesburg Academic Hospital in mid-September 2008. He will require two or three operations some months apart.

17-year-old Shirley Seqhobane was promised tissue expansion to reconstruct her hairline in March 2008 but the operation was suddenly cancelled. At last she was rebooked for December 8th and hopefully will not be cancelled again.

Then on to the **Universitaets Hospital** in Zurich where three surgeons were very kind and might help at some stage. They did not maybe absorb how short of surgeons South Africa is and that the charity's previous experience with a bony deficit in a burns survivor was not good. We were—and still are—looking for the very *best* answer for Feleng. And the last thing we want the little boy to be, is someone's guinea pig—especially if someone else already has experience in such complex surgery.

A visit to **HUG** (what a nice hospital acronym for the University Hospital of Geneva) left us in little doubt that Professor Brigitte Pittet-Cuenod had skills and empathy. Just what the doctor ordered (as it were). The patience and thought she took with her examination over two days, assisted by her colleague Dr Rilliet, assured us that if only viable friendly accommodation can be found for Feleng for six months in Geneva, he would be in very good hands indeed. The technical details will be published, as soon as we can get a good graphic artist to draw them.



Sorry

to everyone who tries to help us, wants to help us, needs our help. We have not been achieving what we wanted to achieve this year because of the despicable behaviour of a local politician and her cohorts.
See Defamation on www.firechildren.org

The good news

While we estimate it will take the rest of 2008 to try to undo the damage wrought by Ms Sabbagh and Mr Alzayeem, we will consider taking on new long-term children from November 2008. People should submit their photos, medical histories and the urgency of their needs, and we will consider them

on a case-by-case basis. The most effective way to communicate initially is by email. It is cheaper and prevents wasting people's time because sometimes by looking at a photograph or reading notes, we can offer a solution much closer to children's homes than bringing them to Johannesburg.

Adult volunteers need to be tough and resourceful

Skilled adults aged from 18 to 80 are welcome.

BUT...Volunteers need to be tough, bright and resourceful to be useful here. Foreign school leavers and graduates generally do better because the ones that travel this far have had the good fortune to have good education—which gives them initiative etc. Foreigners have the advantage that they are not bogged down with old SA prejudice/fear of other colours/cultures/geographical areas. But when volunteers' personal problems outweigh the help that they bring, no one here has enough spare energy to be sweet about it. It is exhausting and we

wish it were easier for all involved—but that is not likely to change in the near future. We urgently need five extra competent people on a full time basis, *that someone has the time to train.*

What you gain as a volunteer

A CV of skills that you could never have imagined that you could have, before you came. Dinner conversation to make you the life and soul of any party for years to come. Unbelievable anecdotes. Seeing real Africa first hand—not shallow tourist glitz. Africa is its people, stunning scenery, wild animals—but first and foremost you get to know its people.

Reaching out to the rest of Africa

Children of Fire (ChiFi) North Africa is gaining strength as its first beneficiary was helped in May/June 2008. Sudanese refugee Rachid Dahiye, who was sadly denied adequate medical treatment in South Africa, was sent to our newly established base in Tunisia. Accompanied by his grandmother and initially by African Outreach Manager Lindiwe Ngwenya, he had his first operation a few days after arrival; thanks to Prof. Amen Allah Messadi, head of the burns unit at Aziza Othmana Hospital in Tunis for making the arrangements. More about Rachid's voyage will be published in an exclusive newsletter.

Meanwhile British volunteer Chris Wilson is in the planning stages of his trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to set up Children of Fire Central Africa there in October 2008. He has already made the disturbing discovery that there are neither plastic surgeons nor a burns unit in the DRC *at all*. He has also been in contact with the South African embassy in the DRC and with legal experts.



Children of Fire's reach extends across the African continent. The charity has been involved in Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Nigeria, Mozambique, Tanzania, Kenya, DRC, Cameroon, Gabon, Sudan, Rwanda, Chad and Tunisia.

Draft FCB develops awareness campaigns for Children of Fire

A team of ten Sandton FCBers were assigned to assist Children of Fire by designing and implementing awareness campaigns. Our ideas ranged from 'fiery hot sauces' over Children of Fire toy fire engines to national polls on the 'Hottest South African'. Their initial feedback was:

Hottest South African (Heat magazine): "We met with Heat's Editor and presented the idea of the "Hottest South African". She seemed very impressed with the idea and wanted to share it with the rest of the team to see if it is suitable for the publication. Davelin the marketing director has not yet responded."

Flame Session CD: "We contacted the SABC (CSI radio) and briefly took them through the Flame Session Idea. Up to end May we had not managed to get a presentation meeting."

Way Forward: The team decided to work on an amusing set of designs of "before" and "after" plastic surgery adverts for outdoor boards where

the person did not actually have surgery but just went from subdued to smiling.

Alistair, Michael et al decided to work on some radio spots, and to continue with plans for the flame session CD, possibly working with the University of Johannesburg. The first radio spot was aired on 30 June 2008 and on SABC in September 2008.

PLEASE send in song lyrics that contain the word "fire" to inspire the bands that will be involved to: Michael.Wilson@draftfcb.co.za cc'ed to firechildren@icon.co.za



Some of the Draft FCB team meet over hot fiery sauces to discuss ideas for awareness campaign.

Research projects for medical students

Volunteers with medical ambitions or a medical background are often given research projects that are significant to the charity's work as well as help them improve their research and paper writing skills. These are some projects still open for future volunteers:

1) Comparing ear-reconstruction and prosthesis

In a significant percentage of the children that are burned in South Africa, their ears are damaged. Burning of the ear can involve disappearance of the cartilage and merging of the ear with the skin behind it. The procedure that is commonly used to



Digitalised image of the prototype of an ear prosthesis

To compare the results of both procedures in means of cosmetic outcome, duration of hospital stay, complications, the patient's satisfaction with the result, and costs.

rebuild a lost ear is through a cartilage transplant and skin grafting. An alternative is an ear prosthesis, which is attached to the head through an implant.

Research objective:

2) The effect of AIDS on the morbidity and mortality of burn patients

Aids is one of the most severe health problems in South Africa. 20 per cent of the population are infected with HIV, which leads to Aids. Because Aids affects the immune system, one can expect that persons who suffer from Aids and get burned, will have a higher chance of infections, and therefore the morbidity and mortality will be influenced. Since HIV-care is improving, one could also expect a decrease of morbidity and mortality in HIV-positive burn patients.

Research objectives: To compare the morbidity (complications, length of hospital stay) and mortality of burn patients with and without HIV.

Such research has already been done in Zimbabwe and in the US ([Thombs B.D.](#) et al.), but not yet in South Africa to our knowledge. One could also investigate if there is a change in morbidity and mortality of HIV-positive burn patients over the past 10 years.

References: [Thombs BD](#), [Halonon J](#), [Diallo A](#), [Milner SM.](#), Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD, USA. brett.thombs@mcgill.ca

3) Grafts versus artificial material

If burn wounds do not heal, skin graft operations are often performed to close the wound. Skin grafts taken from the patients' healthy skin as well as artificial material can be used. A commonly used artificial material is Integra. However, use of artificial material is often too expensive for South Africa, and only seven surgeons are trained to use Integra.

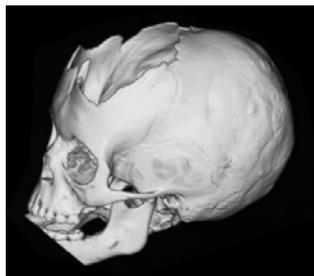
Background questions: How long have artificial materials such as Integra existed? Is there a difference between Integra and other artificial materials? Are artificial materials commonly used in other (more developed) countries?

Research objective: To compare results from graft operations using skin and using Integra.

4) Bone damage from burns/re-absorption of bone

Questions: At what temperature is bone reabsorbed? Why and how is bone reabsorbed? In what percentage of burn patients does bone reabsorption occur? Does the age of the patient influence bone reabsorption?

What are the possibilities to reconstruct the bone? Which procedure is mainly used and why? Which procedure is best?



*Computer tomography of a skull with bony deficit.**

Ireland had one lunatic for every 178 people: what level madness in South Africa?

Welsh Broth by Thomas Jones C H was published in 1950 but covers a much earlier time period in three countries. The observant professor wrote of a period in Ireland that had many parallels with South Africa today. There was a skills shortage; tuberculosis had an "obstinately high" prevalence; emigration "became a habit". This led to a population skewed in age and ability. Dr Jones wrote: "One other shadow I must insert. The number of lunatics in Ireland in 1901 was four times as great as fifty years earlier, although the population had fallen by one-third. A doctor at a Dublin conference put the situation thus: there is one lunatic or idiot in Ireland for every 178 of the present population and one public house to every 176. Some of this was attributable to an emigration which left behind the old and incapable; some to the return from the States of emigrants broken in mind and body; some

5) Malnutrition in South Africa



Rossen Makoloko and Thato Serumule enjoy the treat of a salad.

Malnutrition is still a problem in South Africa. Children that grow up in squatter camps often do not get enough food or not enough nutrients. As a result they are too small for their age and may show other signs of malnutrition such as impaired intellectual development and low immunity.

Research objectives: To compare the height and weight of children in several squatter camps in greater Johannesburg to the norm for children of that age.

Other projects:

- Play therapy for burn survivors
 - Occupational therapists in casualty for burn survivors
 - Dietary needs for burn survivors
 - Splinting in fresh burn injuries
- * Feleng Mahamotse (6) was burned at age one month. Most of his forehead was reabsorbed and needs to be reconstructed. A detailed literature study on using cadaver skull bone in demineralised strips to replace bony deficits would be most useful.

In Slovo squatter camp there's probably one liquor outlet for every 200 people. To our experience though, the madness is more prevalent in the suburbs than the shacks.

So why this elaborate and lengthy preamble?

Because with some consecutive six months of inconceivable behaviour, we came to the conclusion that

the people who destroyed our chance to help Rachid Dahiye in the way that he deserved to be helped, must have been mad or close to it. As to those who believed their tall tales, we'll let them look inside their own minds and determine if they need medical assistance. We have met more than our fair share of madmen; it might be as high as one in 178.

Media coverage—click on Sizwe's page and hear his thoughts

Christopher Wilson was interviewed on *Radio 702* about the charity's assistance to the Zimbabweans, Mozambicans and others chased out of their homes following the xenophobic attacks in Alexandra township in May 2008. He was also interviewed on a later visit by *SABC2* television, screened on 20 May, and *Beeld* newspaper. Marietta Neumann spoke on *Bayerischer Rundfunk* in Germany on 20 May 2008, also about the xenophobic attacks. Marietta's article on breast surgery was published in the *Aesthetic Surgery/ Medicine Magazine* of autumn 2008 and her article on burns statistics and record keeping at Johannesburg Academic Hospital was published in the *Emergency Services* magazine in April 2008.

A thank-you visit to the Department of Foreign Affairs was covered in the *Pretoria News* on 18th July 2008. Mittah Lebaka, Michelle Daniels, Thapelo Phore and Feleng Mahamotse were filmed on 18th

July for a short news item on the dangers of fire screened on SABC TV News on Sunday 20th July 2008. American visitors Kima Douglas and Jette Hooper were in the Northcliff Melville Times in July 2008. In early July 2008 on Radio 702 the charity met the annual request of fire safety tips in a short interview .

Mittah was also interviewed on SAFM on the evening of the 6th of August 2008 regarding her experience with the charity. Sizwe Hlophe appeared in the *Sunday Times*, 17th August 2008, as part of a multimedia slideshow done by photographer, James Oatway called 'The Definition of beauty' (www.multimedia.thetimes.co.za/photos).

On the 18th of August 2008, *The Star* covered Feleng Mahamotse's trip to Switzerland in search of a solution for the bony deficit in his forehead. Feleng and his caregiver were also interviewed on SAFM on the 20th of August, live from Zurich.

Young electrical burn survivor returns to help other children

My name is Mittah Lebaka, I'm 19 years old and I live in Dobsonville, Soweto, with my family. This year I re-wrote Matric, then as soon as I finished my school I started working for Children of Fire in May this year, and I will be here for the next six months.

I was severely burned on my neck, torso and thighs when I was eight years old after my jersey caught on fire while warming my hands on the stove. The charity has been seeking reconstructive surgery for me since 2005, when I first came to know them. I finally had my surgery in June this year.

I am currently doing my internship at Children of Fire until I start university. My job is to do office work like typing, faxing, photocopying and making and receiving phone calls. The charity helps burn survivors with different things like getting surgery for them which is very expensive. Some children have family problems and some have no parents and homes. The charity caters for those children for free and they make sure that they do not fall behind with their school work.

The nicest thing that I love about my job is that I meet different people and I get to help make children's lives better every day. It is also fun seeing them enjoy different outings and activities like singing, dancing, painting etc. Every day when I go to visit the children at the charity's partner school, it is good to see how energetic and confident they are because I know from personal experience, that this is probably the only place they had ever found real love despite their looks.

Mittah Lebaka



Sincere Condolences
Our thoughts are with the Lebaka family. Mittah lost one sister in July to Meningitis and one who died in her sleep in early September

Size Seven Slippers take away the winter's chill for old and young

We were given rather a lot of size seven hairy yak-style slippers in June by Dis Chem pharmacies and some blankets too.

Only a small number of our children had the requisite foot size so we shared also with volunteers at the main charity and the school. Then we sent 15 pairs to the King of the Amangwane and some nice blankets for his impoverished subjects, as part of our rural outreach in the Drakensberg mountains.

Link to kidney dialysis and child diabetes charity

Children of Fire and Marang House have helped each other in an *ad hoc* arrangement for several years now. The number of children at Marang House is consistently very small—just six to ten kids—but they are lucky enough to have 24-hour nursing care.

Most of the children are on kidney dialysis and in need of donor kidneys.

If you don't already carry an organ donor card, maybe this is the time to get one?

After all, you can't use it when you're gone and you might help restore quality of life for just one of these children—or those who follow them in the years to come.

Via UMashesha Richard Walls, we sent 60 pairs to the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg that takes in so many refugees in need of help.

Sizwe and Seiso helped deliver 60 pairs to the Jordan Old Age Home in Sophiatown.

A dozen pairs went to Marang House in Northcliff, 40 pairs to other charities via Ian McLean and some 40 pairs to residents of the Joe Slovo squatter camp, via Busi Mbanga and others.

Six children were on the Marang site in June 2008, with another two back with their families for the holidays and one girl Tsulu not set to return. She had leukaemia and had gone to spend her final days with her nearest and dearest.

The boys with kidney problems: Kgomotso (14), Linda (14), Philemon (12), Innocent (10) and Siphamandla (9) were happy recipients of furry slippers. Diminutive little Maria a six-and-a-half year old girl also has kidney problems could not wear them yet but two other children who are diabetic—a girl Anna (14) and a boy Gift (14) will have snug feet this southern hemisphere winter.

Marang House can be reached on 011 476 6698

Special thanks to young actors in London



The Picnic Basket Production of Much Ado About Nothing by William Shakespeare was organised by Ms Livvy Bradshaw and friends from her school, Godolphin & Latymer, and Westminster, in London,

UK in aid of Children of Fire and the Starlight Children's Foundation - in July 2008. The cast are depicted above. Their kind efforts brought in £300 to the charity. Thank you!

In August, Feleng Mahamotse (6) spent ten days travelling in Switzerland in search of a solution for the bony deficit in his forehead the size of a saucer. More details to follow in future newsletters. A few people were especially helpful in making this trip possible and minimising the cost to the charity considering the high cost of living in Switzerland:

Milan Sulc and his daughter Kari — for help with arranging tickets, medical appointments and hosting them in Oleyres and in Zurich.

Paul Roulliard — Pastor from Melville Junction Church who arranged links to Lee and Anne Cowles — who in turn led to Pierre and Elaine Morel — short-term hosts in Geneva.

Fire detection systems for shacks must not “cry wolf”

Physicist Vincent Watters met with the charity in July 2008 to explain his concept of a temperature-rise-system to monitor safety in shacks. Children of Fire has previously worked with smoke detector installation in shacks with some success, but the unit at that time imported by Telemux with a stated five-year-battery-life, had a much shorter battery life than expected.

Smoke detectors can alert people to shack fires but the confined space in a shack and the varying cooking methods used, can lead to too much smoke triggering an alarm too often. Detecting heat alone is not enough. In some areas of South Africa the temperature inside a shack on a hot summer's day can be 40 degrees Celsius. In countries like Sudan and Chad, temperatures of 46 degrees Celsius are not unusual. Most people do not put ceilings into shacks either due to the cost or to ignorance. Ceilings would warm the home in winter and cool the home in summer.

Detecting a rapid heat rise of x degrees per minute would alert a shack owner or their neighbours to the home being on fire. Similar technology could be used in shacks that are prone to surprise flooding. A vertical pipe in the ground could have a table-tennis-ball placed in the pipe as its water-level monitor.

The complication and cost are all in the microprocessor which has to be programmed to recognise and

react to the rise in temperature (or rise in water). This can then be attached to a warning horn and batteries should be made that are unique to the device, so that they will not be taken out e.g. to run a radio instead. The rectangular long-life nine volt batteries could be made with totally different terminals to those used by any other product. The alarm would typically be a 112 decibel “ZP755” sounder horn. Watters was recently teaching at a Lagos, Nigeria, school in a swamp. He said that the water rise in homes there could be rapid and silent— warning devices for such people and for many riverside communities are essential.

The ideas are developments of existing technology rather than new inventions. Watters previously worked with Dave Denoun-Stevens and Mark Nussey on the project.

Municipalities might be persuaded to fund such initiatives from capital expenditure but replacing batteries each year would come from an operational budget. The joint manufacturing plant for Duracell and Ever Ready in Port Elizabeth could be encouraged to make the special shack-pack battery to arm the alarm.

It would take less power than a smoke sensor which is continuously running an L.E.D and could, say, be set to respond to a five degree temperature rise in one minute before triggering a warning note and then the full alarm.

Choosing gel over paraffin might not help your planet

Source [Civicus newsletter and Global Call to Action against Poverty \(GCAP\)](#): GCAP representatives of ten countries present at meetings in July 2008 were deeply concerned at how out of touch with reality the G8 seemed to be on the main issues related to ending poverty. The lack of any real discussion on biofuels in relation to the food price crisis is appalling. "This Summit has been another betrayal of the poor and citizens of G8 countries. The outcome

shows a lack of understanding of the heart of the issues causing hunger and desperation in many countries already. We hope the citizens of these eight countries will put more pressure on their out-of-touch leaders. The planet is burning while the G8 is fiddling," said Kumi Naidoo, Co-chair of the GCAP. For more information: www.whiteband.org/media/press-info/g8-fiddles-while-world-burns/

Software one day....

In early May 2008 we took some of our surplus aged computers to Bernard Isaacs Primary School in Coronationville. We have others that we will happily pass on as Deloitte and Touche might yet put software in some computers it donated two years ago.

If you run a charity that can use old computers, let us know— email firechildren@icon.co.za, subject line 'Computers wanted'.

Gaynor Grace checks out hand treatment for burns survivors

A University of the Witwatersrand medical student Gaynor Grace put her mid-year holidays to good use, by interviewing various medical specialists in greater Johannesburg about the best treatment for burned hands in casualty. Read her shocking findings in a future newsletter or on the research section of our website www.firechildren.org

Beyond the call of duty: sixty unsung working years

Professor Gerald Gavron has been working at the University of the Witwatersrand Dental Department for 60 years.

He is now 84 and beyond the sadly too-common older male complaint of prostate cancer, is the personification of healthy mind, healthy body. Mentally sharp as a pin, straight backed and most essen-

tial to good medicine, a compassionate heart—one wonders why the mainstream media don't sing the praises of such heroes?

He told us in July that he had at long last found a successor; Dr Mistry. "Bright, enthusiastic...it took me 40 to 50 years to find the right person," Gavron said.

Notice Board

Bye Bye George—Children of Fire wishes former Johannesburg General head of plastic surgery George Psaras well, on his return to his native Cyprus.

Dr Elias Ndobe is taking over as Acting Head of the department assisted by Dr. Tim Christofides.

Bye Bye Graham—Graham Pitcher, Head of Paediatric Surgery at Chris Hani Baragwanath hospital is moving to the USA in January 2009 to work there. The loss of his skill to Africa's children in need is too severe to quantify.

Interesting visitors included **Sagie Pillay**, Chief Executive Officer of Johannesburg Academic Hospital and the Head of Nursing and the Hospital public relations officer (July 2008) and representatives of the **Smile Foundation** (end July 2008).

Thank you to emergency nurse Kima Douglas and her 19-year-old granddaughter Jette Hooper from the U.S. for bringing the children self-made quilts from *More than Warmth* as well as a spray we are not sure that we can use.

Community Service Kids :: We are happy to take community service pupils from Greenside High School, Johannesburg, because the school liaises effectively with Children of Fire. We are *not* happy for the other schools within about a 10 km radius (there are a lot of schools in that circle) to simply allow their pupils to arrive on our doorstep with no prior request from the school...

Adieu to Pete Jones (19), a volunteer from the U.K. who loved guitars, wires, Michelle and cake. He rarely ate anything healthy but he survived



Condolences

on the death of Martin Kelly in May 2008.

Kelly ran *Facing the World* in the United Kingdom and undertook lots of *pro bono* work on children from all over the world who had severed facial disfigurements.

There is, however, another excellent reconstructive surgeon also called Martin Kelly, still working in South Africa at Sunninghill Hospital, Gauteng and also working in Ireland.

Looking back :: We would like to get in touch with some of the former volunteers. If anyone knows the whereabouts of Felicity Sereme, from the Daveyton/Benoni area, who used to work for Metrorail—ask her to get in touch, please. And people who offered to help but who then lost contact e.g. Selwyn Mokoka, a car fire survivor who worked for Computing SA.

Visitor comments

"I appreciate that you arranged for me to visit the children at school. It was very sad to see the harm caused to the children—especially when one realises that some of them were hurt intentionally.

But at the same time, it was heart-warming to experience their enormous spirit—despite the tragic circumstances of their young lives.

A lesson for young and old! Grateful thanks.

Janis Chapman, July 2008.

[Janis is a burns survivor]

Volunteer excuse: "I overslept because I was dreaming of jellyfish's teeth and open aeroplanes without seatbelts."

Maybe it is the six-day-weeks and long hours that drives them to these odd hallucinations.



Sparkles and Skunks

- Fiona Rankin for help with the infomercials.
- Journalists overseas who write stories on health charities without verifying their facts.
- Dr. Rita Nathan from George Mukhari Hospital for sourcing Drakensberg candidates .
- The would-be thieves who wrecked Michelle Daniels car door and the pickpockets who took Chris Wilson’s phone... again!
- Ian McLean for continued help with broken bookshelves, doors, windows, concrete ramps and more, and for helping with transport and with delivering donations to others.
- The man who stole all the doors from a neighbours’ bonded house and then bought it as a “derelict building” at a rock bottom price.
- Swiss Air for helping Feleng

Thank You

Louis Grobler of Top Security for signing up Children of Fire.

Alastair Lamont of Carstenhof Clinic for improving Sizwe Hlophe’s (6) left nostril; Linda Blezovsky the anaesthetist for Sizwe’s operation, and Life Health Care at Carstenhof Clinic for sponsoring the surgery.

Baby Joe for chicken and hugs!

School (weekend) volunteers Rose Chirongoma, Jean-Paul Mubima and Themba Khabazela

Simon Pike for visiting our children in hospital and for taking them for appointments

Lauretta Edeling of Ad Outpost for hosting the new billboard on the Soweto Highway during April, May and June.

Margot Bell for continuing help with research, errands candle holders, glass jars, the Drakensberg out-reach and more.

Thanks for help from Andre Azel, Sylvester Subramany, Ian Jacobs, Steven Coetzee, Jayanta Moodley, Santhum Moodley and Sudakar Moodley. Also from the staff of one section of Liberty Life: Nicola Garbutt and colleagues. And to Samantha of Promoworx.

Mr Price and Edcon (Edgars) for donating clothing for the Drakensberg trip

Slam Pool Care for help throughout the year

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