



Interplast™

INSIDE INTERPLAST

REPAIRING BODIES AND REBUILDING LIVES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

SPRING 2015

"THE SURGERY FRANK HAD WILL ALLOW HIS HAND TO GROW PROPERLY AND HE WILL BE ABLE TO USE IT FOR HOLDING A BALL, OR HOLDING A CUP. HE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO THAT BEFORE."

Dr Frank Lin
Interplast volunteer



Four-year-old Frank suffered burns when he fell into an open fire, and the resulting contractures rendered him unable to use his left hand.
Photo: Dr Frank Lin, Interplast volunteer surgeon

IN FRANK'S HANDS

SURGERY GIVES BURNT TODDLER A BETTER FUTURE

When Cyclone Pam destroyed their village in Vanuatu this March, Frank and his family had no choice but to live outdoors.

There was no power, so many of the newly homeless villagers resorted to using open fires, creating hazards for youngsters like Frank.

In addition to the hardship of being hit by the most intense cyclone in the southern hemisphere this year, Frank had a fall and landed in a fire, badly burning both of his hands.

As time went on, contractures caused his left wrist to flex permanently, meaning he was

unable to use his hand or even straighten his arm.

In November this year, an Interplast team travelled to Vanuatu. On it was first-time volunteer Dr Frank Lin.

The two Franks – patient and surgeon – formed an instant bond, perhaps thanks to their shared name, or perhaps thanks to 'little' Frank's big bright smile.

"He was just such a great kid," says Dr Lin. "He was really open and friendly. He was smiling and chatting with the anaesthetist and playing with him," he adds.



Frank poses with Interplast anaesthetist, Dr Robert Grace, before his procedure.

"I think his life would have been very difficult because both his hands were burnt and the more severely-affected left wrist was flexed at 90 degrees," Dr Lin recalls.

"That had rendered the limb practically useless because he couldn't extend his arm or even hold anything."

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IN FRANK'S HANDS



Dr Frank Lin, who operated on 'Little Frank'.

"I never met his mother but his father accompanied him the entire way. They had travelled for days to get to Port Vila for the surgery."

Dr Lin operated on Frank to release the contractures and put him on the path to regaining the use of his left hand.

The surgery was successful, and Frank bounced back quickly, enthusiastically accepting not one but two of the teddy bears knitted for Interplast patients by Rotary volunteers.

"Frank still needs several operations. But we were able to make a big difference for him," says Dr Lin.

It wasn't only his smaller namesake that touched Dr Lin on his first journey with Interplast. The genuine and unassuming gratitude of all of the patients he saw also stands out in his mind.

"I think most of these patients and their families are just very grateful, they're very friendly and not demanding and they're always showing their gratitude," Dr Lin reflects.

The gratitude remains, even when Interplast volunteers are the bearers of bad news.

"Probably the most telling thing is when you have to tell patients you can't help them, and rather than getting upset – I mean some people walk a long way – they say 'Thanks so much, we'll try again next year.'"



Frank's hand before Dr Lin performed surgery to release his burns contractures.



Frank's hand after surgery, with the wrist now released and able to extend.



**YOUR SUPPORT HELPS US CHANGE
FUTURES TODAY IN VANUATU**

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INTERPLAST IN ACTION THROUGHOUT 2014/15

58

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

ACROSS

26

LOCATIONS

IN

17

COUNTRIES

IN 2014/2015
INTERPLAST CONDUCTED

1,652

CONSULTATIONS

AND PERFORMED

801

MEDICAL PROCEDURES