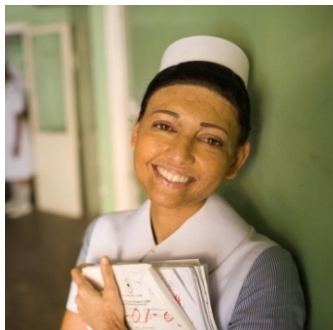


The Faces of the Forgotten Global Health Crisis of Burns



Burns are the only kind of injury that happens more to women than men—mainly because of domestic chores on open fires but, tragically, often because of domestic abuse. Nearly 4 million women fall victim to a severe burn from fire each year—the same number who are diagnosed with HIV/AIDS every year.

Women in Southeast Asia who survive burns **lose more productive years from fire burns than from malaria and HIV/AIDS**. But disabling burns happen to children and men too: more than 6 million people in the world's poorest countries suffer severe burns each year. Burns can cause debilitating contractures that restrict crucial functions, like bending an arm or walking, and left untreated can **leave one disabled forever**. In the Global South, that often translates to leaving victims **stigmatized** and without income. **Reconstructive surgery can make a lifetime of difference, restoring patients' abilities** to use their hands to eat, to use their legs to walk to school/work, or to use their arms again to care for their babies. It opens educational, social and economic opportunities once closed to impoverished children and adults with disabling burns. It improves productivity and alleviates some of the economic burden on developing countries, one patient, one family at a time. What follows are some **courageous stories** of patients and their healers.



Interplast partner **Dr. Chandini Perera** (shown above) is one of only six plastic surgeons in Sri Lanka and head of the country's burn care facility. She **heals and empowers abused women with disabling burns** (mainly from **acid burns** and self-immolation; **70 percent of her patients are abused women**).

Patients like Kanchana, whose boyfriend threw acid on her in anger of her leaving the village for nursing school. She is now a nurse at the National Hospital.

Iresha used to make her living as a model, until she became a victim of an acid burn. With her modeling career no longer tenable, Iresha is now trying to open up a salon, so she can help make others beautiful.

And Kumari, a young mother beaten and abused for so many years, that she lost all hope and set herself on fire when she became pregnant as a result of marital rape. Now, she has started life again, caring for her new baby.

Abused women comprise 70% of the burn patients at Sri Lanka's National Hospital of Colombo.





Dr. Goran Jovic is the **only plastic surgeon in Zambia** and an Interplast outreach director. He flies to rural clinics all over Zambia healing children with disabling burns, helping them regain mobility and return to school. Unfortunately, 800,000 Zambian **children** have lost one or both parents to AIDS, and others are **left to care for themselves** because their parents have to work in the fields. As a result, Jovic is seeing many more children with burns from open fires.

There is only one plastic surgeon in Zambia performing burn surgeries to help children return to school.

Like Mateo, age 7. He fell into an open fire while under the care of his barely older sister. He went untreated for two years, his head and neck fusing together. Jovic recently performed surgery so his spine will grow properly; he can move his head and neck now and has a chance of becoming the banker he dreams of being.

Burn injuries in **Nepal** result in a disproportionate loss of productive ability; **84,000 years of productivity are lost annually due to burns**. Poverty, coupled with few physicians (2 per 10,000 population), leads to high health and economic losses. Interplast partner **Dr. Shankar Man Rai** and his team provide more than **1,000 free burn surgeries a year**, helping patients regain mobility and increasing the country's productivity.



In Nepal alone, 84,000 years of productivity are lost annually due to burns.

After Usha was burned as a baby, her foot attached to her shin and she could not walk. Following reconstructive surgery at age 5, she now walks and goes to school.



Mosquito nets are valuable for preventing malaria, but unfortunately some also are very flammable. Interplast cares for tragic burns as a result of mosquito net fires.

Babor, age 6, was studying one evening when he heard his baby niece crying. He took his kerosene lamp to go check on her. The baby was under a mosquito net and as Babor approached, the flame of his lamp touched the netting and started a fire. Even at 6 years of age, he had the presence of mind to remove the mosquito netting quickly so that the fire would not harm the baby. But the netting caught his clothes on fire and he received a very severe burn on his right arm and right side of his body. Because of his quick thinking and courage, the baby was not harmed. Interplast released his burn contracture; restoring his ability to raise his arm.

Interplast has transformed lives for 40 years. The first organization of its kind, Interplast provides free reconstructive plastic surgery for the poor in developing countries. Interplast treats children and adults with clefts, disabling burns and hand injuries. Unlike many other organizations, Interplast's focus is to train and to empower developing world doctors to perform surgeries on their own for generations to come. Interplast is committed to transforming as many lives as possible, allocating nearly 90 percent of its budget to medical programs. Interplast: 857 Maude Avenue, Mountain View, California 94043, 650.962.0123.

Most photos are by Phil Borges.

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