



PRESS RELEASE

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Foundation gives new hope to children with life-threatening heart defects

Parents are willing to move heaven and earth to save their child's life, but if your child is one of the 1 in 100 children born with a congenital heart defect, your options can be limited.

Congenital Heart Disease (CHD) is approximately 60 times more prevalent than childhood cancer and about 25 times more common than cystic fibrosis.

South African children born with CHD are placed on surgical waiting lists which can be up to 1 000 patients long. Without adequate financing, often this can result in years of waiting before they receive the surgical treatment they need, if there is still time...

Despite the fact that CHD's, once diagnosed, are mostly treatable, more than 3 000 South African children die or remain disabled each year while waiting for surgery. For the rest of Africa, there are an estimated 335 000 annual CHD births, half of whom will die within a few years of birth.

Professor Robin Kinsley believes no child born with a congenital heart defect should ever be denied treatment simply because they cannot afford it. After spending the past 50 years in paediatric cardiac surgery and conducting more than 15 000 open heart surgeries, he decided to continue his legacy to help the countless children in South Africa and Africa by founding the Children's Cardiac Foundation of Africa.

"The heart has always been a symbol of love. A symbol of affection and care. It represents all that is good in life. It represents hope and happiness. The fact that there is still such a high heart-related death rate when it comes to children living on my own continent, is unthinkable to me. My journey has been tough, but so rewarding. I've learned a lot along the way, and some of my greatest teachers have been children," says Kinsley, "Now I believe it's the time in my life to do something really good. All over Africa today there are children who desperately need life-saving heart surgery – and we can give it to them. My dream is to save the lives of children. To heal their broken hearts. To watch them grow up and kick a football around. To grow hope and happiness. And I believe in this dream...with all my heart."

An incredible team of selfless individuals have joined Professor Kinsley on his mission to help realise the foundation's vision: to save the lives and improve the health of children born with congenital heart disease in Africa by raising funds for heart surgeries and by training specialists and support staff in the field of paediatric cardiac care. The trustees include; Dr Maurice Goodman (Chief Medical Officer, Discovery Holdings), Prakash Devchand CA(SA) (Chairman, Lenmed Health), Edith Skweiyiya (former Deputy Director-General in KwaZulu-Natal's Department of Health) and Renita Venketsamy CA(SA) (CEO of the Foundation).

This NPO has also partnered with Lenmed Ethekwini Hospital and Heart Centre and together with the 5 state paediatric cardiac units have the goal of treating 300 cases over the next two years.



“Through this private-public partnership initiative, continued partnership with corporates and everyday South Africans, the Children’s Cardiac Foundation hopes to mend the hearts and hopes of the next generation of African children to reach adulthood and contribute to our thriving country,” said Renita Venketsamy, CEO of the Children’s Cardiac Foundation of Africa.

Throughout the African continent, CHD and acquired heart disease has been largely been left to non-government organisations like The Children’s Cardiac Foundation of Africa to address. This is due to the challenges around cost, technology, availability of trained personnel, and the expertise required to affect change.

Dr Maurice Goodman, Trustee of The Children’s Cardiac Foundation of Africa and Chief Medical Officer at Discovery Health expressed, “The objectives of The Children’s Cardiac Foundation of Africa are totally consistent with Discovery’s ambition to be a powerful force for social good. Through our Discovery Foundation, we are investing excess of R300m to support medical research and training of specialists in identified areas of need in South Africa. The training commitment of the The Children’s Cardiac Foundation of Africa is aligned with this. I look forward to working actively and positively to support the much-needed contribution of the TCCFA to the people of our country and our continent.”

Looking ahead, the foundation aims to raise funds (consumers and corporates are encouraged donate online or follow the crowd-funding link: <https://www.givengain.com/cc/tccfa>) to assist 300 cases in South Africa, and Africa.

Ends

Issued on behalf of: The Children’s Cardiac Foundation of Africa

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