



The Dorah Mokoena Charitable Trust

A charity registered in England & Wales No. 107000

Update, August 1999

This is the first of what will, hopefully, be regular updates on the work of the Dorah Mokoena Charitable Trust.

Since its creation in April 1998 the trust, together with its sister organisation Children of Fire, has been working to provide care and treatment for a number of children who have been severely injured by burning.

There are changes ahead. Changes that will expand the scope of the Trust to help more deserving cases from a wider age group and across geographical boundaries. We will be helping children and young people across a wider area of southern Africa and promoting first aid treatment and burns prevention education.



Dorah and Tristan
1999

Expansion of our scope will place no less a strain on our financial resources and we hope that the initial generosity extended to Dorah will continue as we help equally deserving cases. The wishes of any existing donors regarding the use of their donation will be followed.

Dorah is and will always be the inspiration behind our charity. She will need care and assistance for many years to come. She continues to improve in every aspect of her life and returns to the UK soon for further treatment.

The following summary of our work was written by Bronwen Jones.

Please also read the final page which gives contact details and other useful information, including the address of our Internet site.

The Editor

In December 1997 I made an appeal through the columns of *The Times* for help to save the sight of a little girl. Her world and mine were turned upside down by all that followed.

Dorah Mokoena lost her face and hands in a shack fire when only six months old. She became separated from her mother. Officials in an impossibly overburdened healthcare service in South Africa decided to remove her eyes on grounds of cost and medical complexity.

As a result of *The Times* article, a better solution was offered and a charity established to manage a medical miracle and to help other children towards similarly improved lives.

The Dorah Mokoena Charitable Trust has funded pioneering work on one of the most badly burned children to ever survive. While key surgeons and anaesthetists gave their time for free, it has been a costly business uprooting a child from one country and arranging her care in another. I was thrilled to find Dorah's mother Margaret and she too, went to the UK to stay with her daughter through the course of 17 operations in 1998 and early 1999.

As radical as the surgery was the warmth of the British public, with many families taking the unusual mother and child couple into their homes and hearts. As a result of living in a normal loving environment, Dorah's development took off. She went from being a hideous cot-bound incontinent baby to a little girl who could walk, communicate and remain continent all day long. Her eyelids were rebuilt by Richard Collin, a leading ophthalmic surgeon at Moorfields Hospital. And her lips were recreated by John Clarke, the most experienced burns and plastic surgeon in the UK, at Queen Mary Hospital. His colleague David Martin helped restore movement to one fingerless hand.



Dorah with South African High Commissioner in London

At the same time the trust took on the task of empowering Dorah's mother so that in future years she will be able to live a life of maximum independence and also know how best to care for her child.

British and American schools became involved in fundraising endeavours as well as in designing toys to help a little girl with multiple disabilities catch up with several years of too little stimulation.

Each stage of helping Dorah opened our eyes to other needs and other solutions. I visited hospitals across southern Africa to build up a picture of the number of other children suffering serious burns, the way in which they were treated and how this could be improved upon.

Gradually the embryonic trust has evolved into powerful force for change in Africa. This evolution has not been without problems as the trustees found our initial objectives did not reach quite as far in age, geography or endeavour as the need we had come to recognise.



A young burns victim

So those endeavours that cannot be carried out fully under the auspices of the trust are being piloted or trialled as the personal endeavours of individual trustees. In some aims, a sister charity in South Africa, Children of Fire, has taken on work that cannot legally come under the Dorah Mokoena Charitable Trust's brief.

To this end, a burns prevention programme has begun in the seriously deprived and dangerous squatter camps of South Africa. It is bringing first aid training and supplies to the communities as well as encouraging a more proactive stance in the fire brigade and police service.

An individual trustee has also taken an acid burns victim under her wing, because she needed treatment.

More recently one trustee has arranged for Irene Peta, a 10 year old girl who was badly burned and orphaned at the age of 11 months, to have a colostomy reversed prior to trying to replace her fused hip.

Each medical case is being documented to assist other young people and their families who come to us for advice in future years.



Irene Peta

The recognition of a wider need has led the trustees to decide to close the trust and to open a new one called Children of Fire International. All funds collected from now on will still be to assist children like Dorah but may also be spent on young people who have been burned up to the age of 25, even elsewhere in Africa. And funds may also be spent on wider educational initiatives and prevention programmes.

Dorah, our initial raison d'être continues to thrive. She started at a school for low vision children after Easter this year, in South Africa, and is due to have a corneal graft to her right eye in the UK, in late September.

Bronwen Jones, Trustee.
August 1999

USEFUL INFORMATION

If you have access to the Internet, more details can be found at:

www.icon.co.za/~firechildren

The correspondence address for the
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