

Interplast surgical team operating
alongside local counterparts at
JDWNRH

Photo credit: Suzanne Caragianis



Interplast®

INTERPLAST IN BHUTAN 2015-2020 EVALUATION SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Interplast has been conducting programs in Bhutan since 2014, when it conducted a needs assessment, followed by its first full program activity in 2015. Since then the program has expanded, but the core of the program remains; capacity building and mentoring built around plastic and reconstructive surgical program activities, and allied health focussing on hand therapy.

Interplast's Country Strategy Bhutan 2019-21 vision is to ensure that:

Bhutan has a sustainable, locally-driven plastic and reconstructive surgery service, providing quality surgical and related medical outcomes to those requiring them.

Subject to available funding, Interplast delivers two programs each year. The exception to this has been 2020, as global travel restrictions resulting from COVID-19 have also forced a pause in all of Interplast's in-country programs. Interplast is providing remote support to Bhutan during this time. Once travel restrictions have eased, Interplast expects it will resume programs similar to its pre-Covid model.





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Country context

Bhutan has been making steady progress toward improved development outcomes for its citizens; it is on track to eliminate extreme poverty, and its poverty rate is the second lowest in South Asia. It is making improvements in education, employment and health care, although outcomes for rural Bhutan are not as strong as for urban areas. Gender disparities in economic opportunities persist, and women are more likely than men to be working in lower paid sectors.

Bhutan's health indicators are steadily improving; with reductions in maternal and infant mortality rates, and under-five mortality rates, and an increase in life expectancy. Its health infrastructure has grown, as has access to health care. One of Bhutan's greatest areas of need is in developing its health care workforce, and one of its greatest workforce challenges is in training specialists in various fields. Bhutan lacks an institution to train its undergraduate medical doctors. The only medical university, the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences (KGUMSB), established in 2013, is not yet in a position to offer a Bachelor of Medicine/Bachelor of Surgery program. As a result, Bhutan's government supports overseas training for undergraduate education in medicine, pharmacy, nursing, dental and other health sciences.

Plastic, reconstructive and burns services

At the time of writing, Bhutan did not have a hospital unit dedicated to treating burns patients, or a qualified plastic and reconstructive surgeon, and there are no surgeons or other medical professionals who are performing plastic and reconstructive surgery. Medical practitioners need support to develop skills and expertise in these areas. Most physiotherapists and physiotherapy technicians have a basic knowledge of burns rehabilitation, and have not had access to hands-on experience. Experience in rehabilitation following plastic surgery is another area where physiotherapists and physiotherapy technicians lack experience.

There is a general unmet need for patient access to plastic and reconstructive surgery, burns rehabilitation, treatment, and follow-up therapy. All plastic and reconstructive surgery undertaken in Bhutan is either done by, or alongside, visiting overseas medical teams, including Interplast.

Interplast clinic delivered at JDWNRH in
collaboration with local counterparts

Photo credit: Suzanne Caragianis



Interplast in Bhutan

From 2014 to October 2019, Interplast volunteer teams; comprising surgeons, anaesthetists, nurses and allied health practitioners, completed 79 assignments and delivered 21 program activities in Bhutan. Over 1,220 procedures, 504 consultations and over 1,300 allied health interventions have helped to improve the lives of patients in Bhutan, and have provided mentoring opportunities for medical teams based at the the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH) in Thimphu- Bhutan's main and national referral hospital, and the Eastern Regional Referral Hospital in Mongar. Two hundred and eighty nine medical professionals (186 men and 103 women) have participated in mentoring and capacity building activities.

In April 2017, Interplast signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with its institutional partners in Bhutan; the Ministry of Health, JDWNRH and KGUMSB. The MoU has guided the program, and embedded it into Bhutan's health planning and health system, and this has helped in securing the sustainability of the program.

Review of Interplast programs 2015-2020

This review examined the progress that the Interplast Bhutan program has made in meeting the program objectives. The review has been informed by: a desk review of the program from 2015-2019; interviews with representatives of Bhutan's medical workforce, health administrators and medical academics, and patients who have benefitted from an Interplast service; Interplast volunteers; Interplast's Chief Executive Officer, and its country program managers.

Findings

There are a number of key inputs that have contributed to the impact of Interplast's program in Bhutan: a commitment to capacity building and mentoring by Interplast volunteers and local counterparts is the key to the impact of the program, and its long term sustainability; a shared goal of establishing for Bhutan its own plastic and reconstructive surgical service is one that will have the greatest impact; the MoU guiding the program; and the volunteer teams, with each member bringing their expertise, and contributing to patient outcomes.

Interplast clinic delivered at
JDWNRH in collaboration with
local counterparts

Photo credit: Suzanne Caragianis



It is in developing a plastic and reconstructive surgical service that they see where Interplast's most significant contribution will be, not in doing the surgery; a view shared by Bhutan's Minister of Health, and the Ministry of Health. For partners, capacity building and mentoring is the way that Bhutan can achieve the goal of having its own plastic and reconstructive surgical service. Securing approval from the Ministry of Health for the first candidate, Dr Sonam Jamtsho, to be formally trained in plastic and reconstructive surgery is a major achievement of the program, and a significant step toward this goal:

We have planned to have a fully-fledged burns unit at JDWNRH... and with Dr Sonam's return we want to establish a plastic surgery unit which can handle all plastic and reconstructive surgery. (Mr Tandin Dorji, Chief Program Officer; Ms Choney Dema, Program Officer; Ministry of Health, Bhutan)

Those interviewed in Bhutan see the opportunities for training as something that they can access for their own professional development, but also one that will lead to the establishment of a burn unit and plastic and reconstructive surgical department.

Partnerships and the MoU

The establishment of the MoU between Interplast, the Ministry of Health, JDWNRH and KGUMSB has served the program well, guiding its activities and affording it respect and credibility with its partners, who are all equally invested in achieving the goals and vision of the program. The MoU has visibility of the Interplast program at the highest level within Bhutan, gaining approval and being signed by Bhutan's Prime Minister and the Minister of Health. It has driven local ownership and integrated Interplast's program into the Ministry's forward planning processes and annual performance plans. In interviews, Ministry of Health representatives cited the MoU as the key to a successfully run and sustainable program; with all key stakeholders understanding their roles, and that it has strengthened the credibility of Interplast's relationship with partners, giving the program local ownership and control.

" Unlike many similar programs, Interplast program has resulted in locals taking ownership of the program" (Dr Tashi Tenzin, Neurosurgeon and Dean of Faculty of Post-Graduate Medicine; KGUMSB; Dr Sonam Dargay, Urological surgeon; Dr Karma Sherub, Paediatric Surgeon; Bhutan)

Modelling behaviours-multidisciplinary teams

Changing the workplace culture in the institutions where volunteers are based is having a lasting effect on improved practices, appropriate use of resources

and is contributing to improvements in patient safety. Volunteers who were interviewed said that Interplast had earned respect because the teams focussed on partnerships; local teams could see how a good team would work together across their areas of expertise, with each member having an equally important role, providing a multi-disciplinary service from intervention, to treatment, to follow-up and patient care.

This approach has helped local medical teams see the value in a multi-disciplinary approach, and how it helps their patients.

With the Interplast team, patient care is also provided on a team approach with the involvement of all specialties, including nursing and physiotherapy. (Dr. Gosar Pemba, Anesthesiologist and Medical Superintendent; JDWNRH; Bhutan)

Prior to Interplast team visit, most of the locals departments such as surgery, OT, physiotherapy and nursing worked independently but learning from the Interplast team, now there is much respect for the value added by each person and profession, and by each unit or department particularly physiotherapy (Mr Tshering Norbu, HOD, Physiotherapy Department; Mr Tshering Dorji, In-charge, Hand Unit of Physiotherapy Department; JDWNRH; Bhutan)

Gender and disability

Part of terms of reference for this review was to collate data on gender and people with a disability, in order to give Interplast a clear picture of potential barriers to its program, both surgical and training, based on gender and disability. Interplast is yet to be in a position to draw upon a comprehensive data set which would assist in identifying areas that pose structural barriers to its programs, both surgical and capacity building. In one sense, the majority of people who receive a surgical or therapy service have a congenital or acquired disability, so patient numbers alone illustrate access to services. The same cannot be said for gender. Whilst some program reports provide a gender breakdown for patients, and for trainees, a lack of comprehensive data on gender has meant that this review has not provided a coherent picture on access constraints based on gender. This is an area which Interplast has recognised it needs to address, and is currently investing significant resources to better understand barriers in all of its country programs, so that it can develop a targeted strategy to address these barriers. It has identified opportunities to partner with specific organisations, such as women's and disabled people's organisations, to understand the circumstances and structural barriers in each country where it has a program.

Outcomes against the Country Strategy Bhutan 2019-21

The objectives of the Bhutan program's Country Strategy 2019-21 are to contribute to:

- Improved plastic and reconstructive surgical skills
- Improved nursing skills – including pre and post-operative care
- Improved allied health services – in particular in relation to burns, hand surgery and cleft lip and palate repair management
- An improved 'whole of team approach' to surgical outcomes.

In the five years since the first Interplast program in Bhutan, each visit has contributed toward meeting country strategy objectives, with steady progress toward achieving the improvements that the Country Strategy 2019-21 articulates.

It's mentoring and capacity building program has helped Bhutan begin to build a more skilled surgical workforce which is taking on less complex plastic and reconstructive surgery independently of Interplast volunteer teams. Although the formal training program for one general surgeon has been disrupted due to global travel restrictions in 2020, he has been able to continue developing his skills through remote mentoring with Interplast volunteer and Bhutan program Country Coordinator, Dr Tim Proudman.

Training of nurses is leading to improved nursing skills, through in-theatre mentoring, demonstrating and establishing systems for patient management, on-ward patient management, and improvements to in-theatre and on-ward hygiene practices. Although more needs to be done, volunteer nurses have seen marked improvements in safety, accountability and ownership of patient care, and an enthusiasm to develop better skills.

Allied health is an area that has seen remarkable improvement, particularly in hand therapy skills, and access to therapy for patients. From the first program in Bhutan, prior to Interplast's involvement, to the present, the confidence of physiotherapists and physiotherapy technicians has grown. Local therapists noted the difference that the establishment of hand therapy units had made to the profession; lifting the profile of 8 therapy, giving local therapists better access to professional development, and improved access for patients to therapy following surgery.

A 'whole of team' approach is one area that both Bhutanese respondents to the review, and Interplast volunteers, have seen improvements. Local medical teams have observed how a good team can work together, with each person bringing their own expertise to patient treatment and care. Interplast volunteers noted that they are seeing a shift in workplace culture, with each team member having a respected and important role, and this has led to improvements in outcomes for patients.

The Bhutan program has been an ambitious one; it has a large cohort of volunteers, with most returning for each visit; it conducts two visits a year of typically a fortnight's duration; its volunteers travel to remote areas which can be challenging. The program requires a sustained commitment of its volunteers and their local counterparts, and at times places the surgical system under pressure. Strong partnerships have sustained the commitment by Interplast and by Bhutan's stakeholders. Although much remains to be done, in five years the program has made solid progress toward achieving its strategic objectives.

Dr Mark Moore & Ms Suzanne Caragianis meeting with
Bhutanese Minister of Health Dasho Dechen Wangmo in
October 2019 - Photo credit: Suzanne Caragianis



1. Interplast to support local partners to develop a 10 year national strategy for the development of plastic and reconstructive surgery and related services for Bhutan – including training pathways, facility and resource development and a national clinical delivery plan. This strategy will also include building of a specialist team to support plastic surgery (nursing, anaesthetics, allied health). This strategy should be owned and endorsed by the Ministry of Health. (all partners)¹

2. In addition to plastic and reconstructive surgical training, Interplast could include focus its training in other related surgical specialties, such as orthopaedic and ENT surgery, as well as specialised nurse education. This should include broadening the training of Dr Jamtsho (and future plastics trainees) to include a range of sub-specialty areas (Interplast/JDWNRH/KGUMSB)

3. Interplast to investigate working with local counterparts to

- Develop a patient database system to track patient outcomes to determine the long term effectiveness of interventions and identify areas for future service provision and education
- utilising the above, a data set which is available for Interplast and for local partners, including the Ministry of Health and KGUMSB, showing the impact of the work that local surgeons, anaesthetists, therapists and nurses undertake for patients
- Investigate the feasibility of an ongoing longitudinal study of some patients, to ascertain how receiving a surgical or therapy service has made an impact on their lives, including their ability to fully participate in their community.

(Interplast/MoH/KGUMSB/JDWNRH/ERRH)

4. Interplast to work with partner institutions to assist with procurement processes, including capacity building in managing resources and equipment, ordering and stock management, to ensure that equipment and consumables are available for use in accordance with clinical need (all partners)

5. Interplast to work with KGUMSB to develop a program which formally enables Interplast to contribute to teaching and learning for university students and faculty – for example; through delivering annual short-courses which are embedded in the university curriculum, and

through supporting faculty with their own professional development.(Interplast/KGUMSB)

6. Ongoing Program Delivery

Ensure that Interplast volunteers are able to continue engaging with general surgical, ENT and dental departments during each visit; and that general surgery and ENT residents attend patient screening for teaching and booking purposes. (Interplast/JDWNRH/ERRH/KGUMSB)

7. Ensure that a dedicated local counterpart is identified and confirmed (by local partners) well ahead of each visit, to be responsible for managing patient screening and referral, and follow-up. (Interplast/MoH)

8. Secure local partner commitment, prior to each visit, for surgical residents and therapists to attend screening and clinical meetings, to allow teaching and training with each case. (Interplast/JDWNRH/ERRH)

9. Clinical Education and Skills Development

Ensure that all Interplast surgical programs continue to emphasise the provision of surgical services as a mechanism for training - to guide local surgeons to do surgery, sharing knowledge, experience, and hands-on training. (Interplast)



Suzanne Caragianis
(Hand Therapist) with patient

Photo credit: Suzanne Caragianis

10. Using its global and regional connections, Interplast should continue to support continuing the medical education for Bhutanese medical professionals outside of Bhutan; by facilitating attendance at conferences and meetings, and access to relevant courses (particularly where these aren't available in Bhutan); and support more regional collaboration for attendance at seminars for doctors, nurses and physiotherapists. (Interplast)

11. KGUMSB, along with JDWNRH and the Ministry of Health, identify two to three additional candidates for skills development in plastic and reconstructive surgery, and commit to supporting them to begin early stages of training. These candidates should be included and supported through

12. Interplast initiatives. Likewise, Interplast activities should also target junior surgeons and trainees who are interested in basic plastic surgery skills development. (all partners)

13. Consider including in future programs, delivery of education on new skills/subject areas including:

- wound management
- burns management
- reconstructive surgery following breast cancer
- reconstructive surgery for transgender patients
- ward nurse training (including a focus on hand hygiene and ward rounds).

(Interplast/JDWNRH/ERRH)

14. KGUMSB, JDWNRH and ERRH work with Interplast to ensure that nurses are included in training, lectures, in the operating theatre so that they have access to skills development, knowledge and experience. (all partners)

15. Interplast to continue to facilitate the development of a remote program that can be delivered during Covid19 travel restrictions, and prepare educational resources which would be available for future use. (Interplast/JDWNRH/KGUMSB)

16. Interplast to consider increasing the number of onsite (university campus) training workshops, and seminars for residents and faculties of KGUMSB, and JDWNRH. (Interplast/KGUMSB/JDWNRH)

17. Interplast to work with local anaesthetists to explore improved opportunities for training in anaesthetics to ensure access by anaesthetists, anaesthetic nurses, and theatre and ward nurses. (all partners)

18. Interplast allied health volunteers to assist training for interns at the University, in assessment and upper limb injury care and management. (Interplast/KGUMSB/JDWNRH)

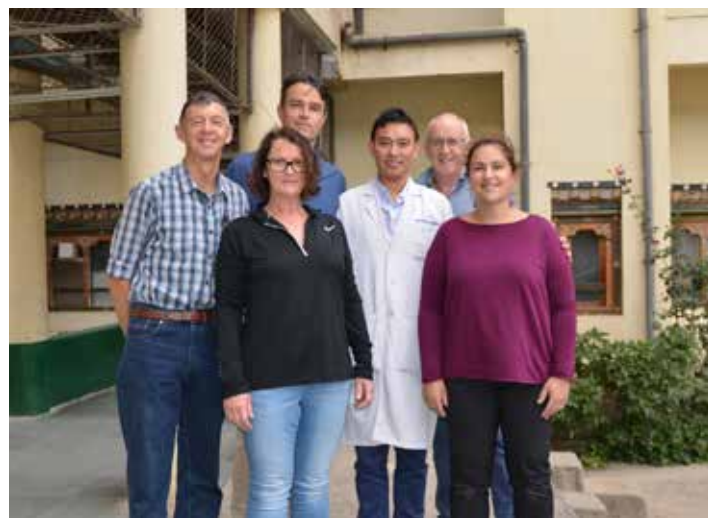
19. Interplast could continue to support and promote an exchange program of trainees, and consider facilitating trainees from Australia to Bhutan, as well as supporting in Bhutanese trainees to Australia. (all partners)

20. Partnerships

Key local partners continue to allow Interplast to be a key player in supporting human resource development related to plastic and reconstructive surgery and related services, through collaboration and guidance to partners. (all partners)

21. Interplast should investigate opportunities to formally partner with in-country local and international NGOs and other civil society partners to support program delivery, including supporting the gender equity, disability inclusion and safeguarding objectives of programs, and to expand the reach and impact of its programs in Bhutan. (Interplast)

22. Continue to work under the umbrella of an MoU between Interplast, the MoH, JDWNRH and KGUMSB, which is reviewed and re-signed on a 3-yearly basis or longer if possible. (all partners)



Interplast surgical team with Dr Sonam Jamtsho
October 2019

Photo credit: Mark Moore

Overview

In order to reach a cross section of local stakeholders; including surgeons, nurses and allied health workers; patients and their families, Interplast engaged local consultant, Dr Tashi Togbay, to interview program participants, to understand their experience of Interplast, the impact that Interplast programs are having in Bhutan, and to make recommendations for future programs. Dr Togbay also interviewed senior hospital administration, staff from KGUMSB, and staff from Bhutan's Ministry of Health.

To understand Interplast from the perspective of Australian volunteers, two surgeons, an anaesthetist, two physiotherapists and two nurses were interviewed (by an external consultant). Responses to volunteer surveys are another valuable tool for gauging the experience of Interplast from a volunteer perspective. This section incorporates feedback of individual interviews, and responses from volunteer surveys undertaken during February 2020. Volunteers have a range of experience in Bhutan; some have volunteered on one or two programs, and others have been many times, completing over five programs as an Interplast volunteer. As well as volunteers, a member of the Interplast management team was also interviewed.

The list of interview respondents to the review is at the end of this section. Recommendations from stakeholder feedback are set out in Findings and Recommendations at Section 7.3.

Interplast acknowledges and thanks all informants to the review for their invaluable input, insights and recommendations; and for making the effort to help Interplast understand the impact of its work, helping to inform future programs. A list of all respondents is at the end of this section.

6.1 Patients and family

Between the 1st and 6th of June 2020, eight patients were interviewed for the review. Patients ranged from six to 60 years of age; with seven males and one female being interviewed. In the case of children, as well as interviewing the child, Dr Togbay interviewed each child's mother. Patients were treated for injuries and burns, with one receiving treatment for a condition they had since birth. Six patients had received surgical services, and all received therapy services.

All patients interviewed felt that their lives had improved by the treatment that they received from Interplast. For some, the restoration of function has had life changing results; allowing them to participate in their communities, return to work, and for younger patients, giving them a far greater chance at going to school, socialising with their peers, and to fully participate in other aspects of their young lives. Parents were extremely grateful for treatment which had improved the lives of their children, giving them the prospect of a normal life now and into the future.

Patient interviews were conducted in accordance with Interplast's Privacy Policy, and Child Protection Policy, and were selected to represent a range of ages and conditions; however, those available for interview were limited by individual circumstance.



PATIENT 1

**male aged 34,
construction labourer treated
for workplace hand injury**

In 2018, the patient sustained an injury to the finger of one hand whilst working on a construction site. He was treated at the local health unit, and managed the wound care himself with herbal medicine. Once the wound healed the patient reported that there was no improvement in movement of his injured finger.

Whilst the Interplast volunteer team was visiting JDWNRH, the patient sought treatment for his injury. He was seen by Interplast volunteer surgeon, Dr Tim Proudman, who performed surgery on the injury, restoring nerve function and movement to the injured hand. The surgery, combined with hand therapy by Interplast allied health volunteers, and an eight-week intensive hand therapy treatment program at the Hand Therapy Unit, JDWNRH, has helped restore functionality for the patient.



“ IT HAS BEEN NOW MORE THAN ONE YEAR FROM THE SURGERY AND THE INJURED FINGER IS NOT BOTHERING ME MUCH AS EARLIER. I MIGHT BE LANDED WITH LIFELONG FINGER DEFORMITY IF I COULD NOT SEE AND MEET WITH THE INTERPLAST TEAM FROM AUSTRALIA. I AM VERY THANKFUL TO THE INTERPLAST TEAM FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT. “

A dark blue silhouette of a child, seen from the back and slightly to the side, standing with arms slightly away from the body.

PATIENT 2

child aged 10,

treated for burns sustained when he was six years old

A child aged 10 sustained severe burn injuries at the age of six, from a boiling pot of water. Immediately following the accident the child's parents took him to hospital where he received pain relief and dressings for the burns. He continued to receive physiotherapy at JDWNRH whilst the wounds were healing. In 2017, during an Interplast visit, allied health volunteers saw him and employed a course of therapy for the scar tissue, and applied topical treatment to be left on the injured tissue. The boy was able to see an Interplast therapist each time the volunteer team visited Bhutan, and in 2019, Interplast volunteer hand therapist, Ms Suzanne Caragianis, provided a pressure garment, which was reported by the his mother as being very effective in improving the scarred tissue. The young boy and his family were very grateful for the assistance provided by Interplast, as it had made a marked improvement in managing the injuries sustained.

**"I AM VERY THANKFUL TO THE TEAM FOR HELPING
ME FOR RESHAPING THE SCARS."**

PATIENT 3

male aged 16

treated for birth defect

Living with a right ear deformity from birth, this young man did not envisage ever being able to receive treatment. He heard about the work of Interplast from a doctor in Bhutan, and when the volunteer team visited JDWNRH in 2019, they performed surgery, successfully reshaping his external ear. Although he does not yet have hearing in the affected side, further surgery is planned to allow the ear to fully function.

**"THE OPERATION WAS DONE BY EXPERTS. THERE
IS NO BAD STRETCHING MARKS AND PAIN ON THE
SITE WHERE SKIN WAS TAKEN FOR GRAFTING.
I DREAM THAT I HAVE FULL FUNCTIONAL EAR.
I ALWAYS PRAY FOR THE GOOD
HEALTH OF THE DOCTORS AND HOPE
THAT THEY CAN COME BACK TO DO
FURTHER OPERATIONS"**



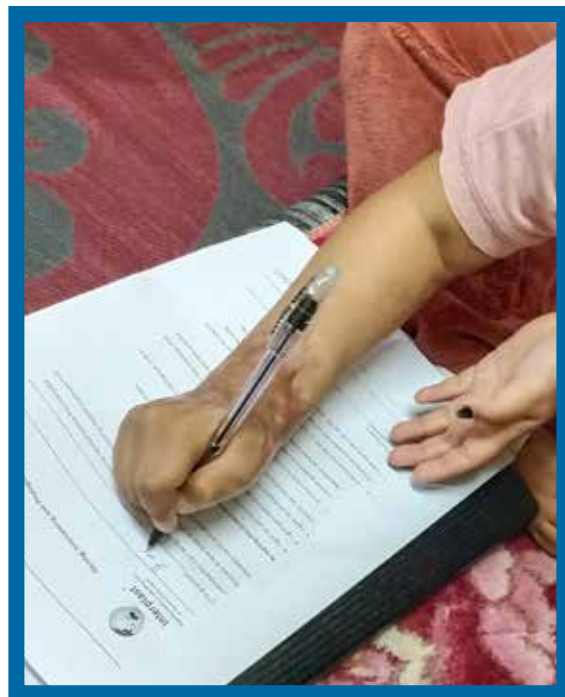
PATIENT 4

child aged six, treated for burn injury

In 2019, the six year old girl sustained burns from a flame and was immediately treated at JDWNRH, receiving antibiotics and dressings for the wounds, and physiotherapy. Later in 2019 a skin graft was performed, and she received hand therapy. Despite the treatment and surgery, the young girl continued to experience restricted movement in her affected arm. During their visit in October, the Interplast volunteer team performed surgery to restore movement, followed by therapy. Both the girl and her mother expressed their gratitude for the improvements.

“THE TREATMENT AND HOW THEY DEAL WITH MY BABY WAS VERY GOOD AND I FEEL GRATEFUL THAT INTERPLAST TEAM CAME AND I FEEL THANKFUL TO THEM FOR MAKING MY BABY BETTER. THE TREATMENT FROM THE INTERPLAST BROUGHT HUGE CHANGES AND I FEEL GRATEFUL TO THE TEAM. (MOTHER)”

NOW, I CAN DO ALL THE ACTIVITIES WITH MY HAND. IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME FROM WRITINGS AND PLAYING MOBILE PHONE. I AM STILL USING MEDICINE. (CHILD)”



PATIENT 5

**child aged seven,
treated for burn injury**

This young boy suffered hot water burns as an eighteen month old infant, and was treated at the local health unit. Before he saw the Interplast team for the first time, he had received wound care treatment and dressings; and surgery at the Paro Hospital to treat thick scarring. The Interplast volunteer team performed surgery to remove the scarring, and post-operative therapy. In 2018, by Interplast undertook further surgery to remove scars. Further intervention in 2019 was postponed, as the family could not make the journey to Thimphu due to the distance.

“ WE ARE HOPING TO SEE THE INTERPLAST TEAM AGAIN WHEN THEY COME TO BHUTAN. WE HOPE THAT THE EXPERTS COULD CURE MY SON WOUND AND ALSO SCAR.”

PATIENT 6

**male aged 23,
burn sustained at work**

This young man was injured in 2018, sustaining burns to the neck from an exploding chemical bottle. After he received a tetanus injection and wound dressing, he was sent home with dressings for daily self-care, and medication, which he took for two months. After the wound healed, the scarring was thick, and restricted movement. The young man was referred to JDWNRH and saw the Interplast team in October 2018, where Interplast performed a skin graft, and provided post-operative therapy and a pressure garment.

“THE PHYSICAL THERAPY AND GARMENTS RELIEVES ME FROM MY ITCH. I CAN EXTEND MY NECK MORE COMPARING TO BEFORE SURGERY... NOW ALTHOUGH THERE IS A BIG SCAR STILL BUT THE WOUND IS NOW MORE CLOSED AND DOES NOT LOOK THAT BAD AS COMPARED TO BEFORE.”

PATIENT 7

**male aged 22
injured hand from carpentry**

This young man sustained an injury to his hand in 2019. After seeking immediate treatment at Paro Hospital, he was referred to JDWNRH where local doctors performed surgery to mend the nerve damage as a result of the injury. Following a second surgery and therapy from the Hand Therapy Unit at JDWNRH, in 2019 the young man was treated by Interplast, with surgery and hand therapy. Eight months after the surgery, he has had movement restored, although progress is slow.

I AM GRATEFUL TO DR.UGYEN THINLEY AND THE INTERPLAST TEAM FROM AUSTRALIA. I MIGHT BE LANDED WITH HAND DEFORMITIES IF THE SURGEON'S HAVEN'T PERFORMED ME THE SURGERY. I CAN AT LEAST DO THE INDOOR AND OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES. I AM HAPPY WHAT I AM TODAY. I HOPE TO SEE THE INTERPLAST TEAM IN NEXT VISIT.



PATIENT 8

male aged 60
hand injury

This man injured his right hand 20 years ago, and had surgery to repair the tendon of his thumb. At the time of surgery there were no hand therapy services in Bhutan and he did a program of exercise prescribed by the surgeon, with no noticeable improvement. In 2018, he visited the Hand Therapy Unit at JDWNRH, and was referred to the Interplast volunteer plastic surgeon, who corrected the old injury. Following the surgery, he was able to access therapy from the Interplast therapist for three weeks, and from the Hand Therapy Unit at JDWNRH for eight weeks. Although there has been improvement for this patient, he would still benefit from further surgery and therapy.

"I AM WILLING TO DO THE SURGERY AGAIN IN THE NEXT VISIT IF THE INTERPLAST TEAM AGREES. I WISH THE INTERPLAST SERVICES WAS THERE WHEN THE TIME OF INJURED MY THUMB SO THAT MY THUMB WILL BE IN NORMAL FUNCTION IF OPERATED BY THE INTERPLAST TEAM.

I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT THE CONTINUING INTERPLAST SERVICE TO BHUTAN WILL BENEFIT THE PEOPLE OF BHUTAN SINCE WE DON'T HAVE PLASTIC SURGEON IN BHUTAN. WE REALLY APPRECIATE AND ARE IMPRESSED BY THE TREATMENT AND CARE FROM THE TEAM."





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