

# Changing lives together since 1983



Moceiwai and his mum, Loata, before his surgery.

## Moceiwai's story

2023 marked the 40th anniversary of Rotary co-founding Interplast.

Since 1983, Interplast and Rotary have changed thousands of patients' lives and trained hundreds of clinicians in developing countries.

Interplast's first volunteer surgical team to travel since COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were lifted visited Labasa and Suva in Fiji. 31 surgeries were performed on 29 patients, including 1-year old Moceiwai, who was born with a cleft lip and palate.

For 12 months, Moceiwai and his mum, Loata, had endured 3-hour return bus trips from their village to the Labasa hospital, sometimes daily, to receive treatment or have his feeding tube replaced. The logistics and the expense of the constant trips took a significant toll on the whole family.

Then Loata received wonderful news. The treatment she had been praying so hard for was a possibility. The Interplast team had arrived at Labasa Hospital.

After a year of managing Moceiwai's condition, Loata was ready to entrust her baby to the Interplast team for his first life-changing surgery.

"I give him to Dr Simone, I was crying, and she just told me 'Don't worry, we're going to take of your baby, I promise'."

In a 4-hour operation, Moceiwai's cleft lip was successfully repaired. Loata's anxious wait turned to tears of joy when she saw her son.

"I call my husband and my husband came, he just look at him and we were crying. I just standing there and thank God, without those team, the Interplast team, nothing can be done like this".

The next step for Moceiwai and his family is his cleft palate operation. A cleft palate, if unrepaired, impacts on the ability to eat, speech, hearing, growth, development and general health. Infections are common, requiring more trips to hospital and ongoing expenses.

Interplast volunteers will return to Labasa, and the plan is to repair Moceiwai's cleft palate then.

**Interplast's 145th visit to Fiji was mostly funded by Rotary District 9675 in Australia. A sincere thank you to all Rotarians and Clubs who contributed to this program.**



Moceiwai sleeping in his mum's arms after surgery.