



The rights of burnt children

The rights of the child burn survivor in the Western Cape were the focus of the Phoenix Forum on 26 January, held at the South African Astronomical Observatory in Cape Town.

Discussions revolved around presentations by Lois Law, a researcher with the Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office, and Mira Dutschke of the Children's Institute's Child Survival Project, which focused on existing international and local legal provisions for child burn survivors and the role and responsibility of the state in honouring such provisions.

Both women had done extensive research into children's rights and their translation into law, and the responsiveness and effectiveness of state organs in intervening to guarantee those rights.

Forum participants, particularly health professionals working with burn cases in the public health sector, spoke of obstacles to proper research, such as incomplete and inadequate record keeping.

Speaking on international instruments that affect child burn survivors, Lois Law said in the first instance child burn survivors' rights to intervention, treatment and social integration must be located within a broader rights framework.

After World War II, she said, health came to be seen universally as a fundamental right, and all national health legislation across the world was meant to reflect that.

She said the World Health Organisation defined good health as encompassing physical, mental and social well-being. African National Congress health policy supports the rights of children in all situations to receive the best health care.

UNICEF has found that around 5 million children in Africa currently die from accidental or environmental deaths — such as fires — each year and, more generally, 10 million die from totally preventable causes.

Lois said any discussion of disability in low-income settings cannot exclude discussion on loss of opportunities for advancement and difficulties in



Lois Law and Mira Dutschke, who addressed the Phoenix Forum in January.

accessing social services, which has implications for quality of life.

These are believed to be factors in many young burn victims' losing out on critical treatment immediately after being burned, or on crucial follow-up rehabilitation services, giving rise to infection, more permanent disfigurement and psycho-social damage. Every aspect of life, she said, is affected: education, accommodation, nutrition, and transport.

Social security provision should therefore provide for the basic needs of child burn survivors, whom many consider among the most vulnerable of children.

Mira Dutschke said the Children's Institute project assumes a right to life and maximum development, especially for children. In this context, it asks what the state can do to maximise their survival, taking into account development and socio-economic rights imperatives which, in turn, feed into the rights of child burn survivors.

Because unsafe domestic environments have negative effects on the right of children to maximum survival until age 18, child rights lobbyists agree the state is obliged to intervene in this, something that several laws also call for. The law, Mira said, also places obligations on parents, educators and other children's caregivers.

"All threats to life should be eliminated so development can take place, in which the child's voice should also be heard."

The full presentations are available on: www.pbp.org.za/forums.htm

• With thanks to Michail Rassool for this summary.

The Phoenix Forum

The "Phoenix Forum" is a roundtable that brings together stakeholders in the field of burns in the Cape Town area, with two or three presentations delivered by experts in their field. We aim to host two such Forums a year. All interested parties are welcome to attend.

The first Forum, held in October 2006, looked at what was being done in the arena of burns, and sought to identify where needs resided. This meeting was enormously helpful to Phoenix in charting its mission, even after the months of consultation with a wide range of experts.

The second Forum took place in June 2007 on the subject of burn prevention. The third, in January this year, looked at the Rights of Children, with specific reference to those who have been burnt.

The next forum is scheduled for September 2008, on the theme of environmental modification in burn prevention.

If you would like to attend future Phoenix Forums, please contact Michèle Twomey at 082 470 0046 or e-mail mtwomey@pbp.org.za

Be our Friend

With the Friends of Phoenix campaign, members of the public and companies can support the organisation financially.

To obtain free copies of the Friends of Phoenix brochure, which explains why we exist and what we aim to accomplish, please phone David Waight at 083 3300016 or e-mail admin@pbp.org.za, or download it in PDF format at: www.pbp.org.za/supportus.htm

UK burns care pioneer visits SA

Carolyn Cripps (OBE), Founder of the British Children's Fire and Burn Trust, and a member of Phoenix's Board of Advisors, visited Cape Town to meet with members of the Phoenix governing board and to familiarise herself with the work of the Phoenix Burns Project.

Mrs Cripps visited the Burns Unit at Red Cross Children's Hospital, a local fire station, Khayelitsha and St Joseph's Home for Children in Phillippi, where some child burn survivors receive care after discharge from hospital.

Mrs Cripps witnessed the crowded living conditions and inherently unsafe appliances that lead to many of the devastating fires that rage across informal settlements on the Cape Flats each year.

"My visit to Khayelitsha has left profound memories," she said. "By chance I witnessed first-hand a desolate couple, sitting among glowing embers, who had that very day in the early hours not only lost a close member of their family but their home, all possessions and the home of their immediate neighbours in its entirety. As well as this loss, other neighbours also suffered damage and loss of possessions in and around their dwellings."

"What was moving to me, however, was the overwhelming feeling of

strong community spirit for this poor couple from these very neighbours. This manifested itself in many and various sympathetic ways."

Sadly, fire is not the only burns horror people face on a daily basis. Each year the Red Cross Memorial Hospital sees between 900 and 1 000 children who present with burn and scald injuries related to domestic and cooking accidents. These are primarily caused by knocked-over lamps and candles, as well as spilt hot liquids from tea, stews and pap. Scald injuries are as devastating to the child as are those of fire.

"The fine work of the Phoenix Burns Project to help alleviate this suffering has captivated my attention," said Mrs Cripps. "Please do count me in on the important and invaluable tasks ahead. I will feel privileged be of help."

Mrs Cripps also shared the wealth of experience she has gained over 15 years in supporting child burn survivors in the Britain, the Russian Federation and other countries of the former Soviet Union.

During her visit, Mrs Cripps had several meetings with members of Phoenix to discuss potential areas for future cooperation.

Phoenix President Dr Peter Martinez said that "the Phoenix Burns Project



Carolyn Cripps OBE, founder of a British burns organisation and member of Phoenix's Advisory Board, who recently visited South Africa.

is extremely fortunate to have dedicated Advisors of the calibre of Mrs Cripps who are prepared to take a 'hands on' approach to their role in the organisation. We are extremely grateful to Mrs Cripps for her interest and engagement in our work, and we look forward to working with her."

FILL A TIN FOR CHANGE

Your small change can make a big change in a burn survivor's life.

Through the generosity of DivFood, a division of Nampak, we have introduced collection tins as one of our fundraising activities.



Please consider keeping a collection tin in your home to put all the small change cluttering up your purse or wallet. Every cent helps, and it all adds up!

Better still, why not support Phoenix by taking a carton of collection tins to distribute in your school, your office or among your friends?

If you would like to take a tin, please contact Patricia Waight on 072 261 1885.

PHOENIX FIRE MONITOR

Shack fires reported in Cape Town newspapers for the period 1 December 2007 to 31 March 2008

25 March	Nyanga KTC settlement Grandmother, 3 infants die, 500 homeless
3 March	Samora Machel Kosovo informal settlement Man (26) dies, 24 homeless
9 February	Red Hill informal settlement 100 homes destroyed, hundreds displaced
5 February	Khayelitsha Site B Home destroyed, 3 children die in shack fire
4 February	Samora Machel informal settlement Boy (4) burns to death in shack fire
13 January	Valhalla Park, Phillippi Man dies, 400 homeless in three separate shack fires, 100 shacks burnt down
16 December	Masiphumelele informal settlement, near Fish Hoek 150 shacks destroyed, 600 people homeless
7-9 December	Khayelitsha, Gugulethu 400 fires in Cape over 3 days, 330 homeless, 66 shacks destroyed
3 December	Gugulethu, Barcelona informal settlement Elderly woman, 3-year old die in shack fire. 28-year old woman dies in shack fire

TOTAL: 13 DEATHS, ABOUT 2 000 HOMELESS

Phoenix launches new Fire Recovery Kit

Imagine returning home from work to find that all your possessions have been lost in a fire. This is a stark reality every year for hundreds of people who live in the many informal settlements in the Cape Peninsula.

Because paraffin and candles are used for lighting, cooking and heating, there is a much greater risk of fire in the cold winter months.

As we approach the winter months, Phoenix is launching a new project, the **Phoenix Fire Recovery Kit**, to assist those who have just lost all their possessions in a fire.

The Fire Recovery Kits come in a sturdy 100-litre plastic container that is large enough to double as a dry storage bin and can also be used as a baby bath. The container is filled with a large number of basic household items, as well as some basic foodstuffs for two people to last several days.

The Kits will be distributed directly to affected families and through our partner relief organisations active in the Cape Peninsula.



We thank the management and staff of Deneys Reitz Attorneys, Cape Town, for a generous donation which enabled us to start this project.

Each Fire Recovery Kit costs approximately R600. Please support this by sponsoring a Fire Recovery Kit, or by inviting your church, school or work colleagues to contribute to one or more kits.

Please support this project generously. It could mean a world of difference to someone you know.

- For further information, please contact us at admin@pbp.org.za.

Tasteful vanilla

Children who withdraw from social interactions following a traumatic experience are often drawn out when given the opportunity to engage in a creative artistic activity.

In a new partnership with the Vanilla Canvas Art Gallery in Diep River, Phoenix will work with local artists to allow burn survivors to express their feelings and to explore and develop their creative abilities through the medium of art.

This also has the advantage of allowing the children to exercise their injured arms and hands and to improve coordination. The Gallery will assist Phoenix with artwork for its publications.



Vanilla Canvas co-owner and artist David Fourie with Phoenix's David and Patricia Waight at the gallery's launch function on 2 April 2008.



What remains after a fire? Phoenix has launched its Fire Recovery Kits to help some of the people who lose everything in a fire with immediate necessities.

Photo courtesy of the Paraffin Safety Association of SA

Helping us help others

Early in 2008, Rebserve Cleaning Services kindly donated a large quantity of nappies to Phoenix to be used in whatever way would most benefit needy children in Cape Town.

Phoenix shared this windfall with child-related NGOs Nazareth House, St Kizito Children's Programme and the Mater Domini House in Pinelands. All three organisations are protecting and supporting vulnerable children and their mothers in Cape Town.

A big Thank You to Rebserve for this wonderful donation.

New advisors on board

Our Board of Advisors, an informal group of people willing to assist Phoenix when needed, already includes eminent persons with a wide range of expertise and contacts. We welcome two new members to this body:



JASPER WALSH, a qualified Chartered Accountant, is a former Member of the South African Parliament and immediate past Director of the relief agency Catholic Welfare and Development in Cape Town.



CHRISTOF ZELLENBERG is a Director and Head of Private Wealth Management Deutsche Bank, Vienna. He worked in the United States in 1996 at the Leadership Institute in Washington D.C.. He established the political think tank Europainstitut in Austria to promote Christian virtues

and anthropology in a free society. In 2002 he joined the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and is currently a member of the delegation of the Order for Vienna & Lower Austria. He is also a member of the Spirituality Commission of the Order in Rome.



Bear with your Rehab now comes capped

Rehabilitation is a long and painful process for young burn survivors, who often have to return to hospital for a series of follow-up treatments.

Sadly, a very high proportion of patients are lost to follow-up after they are discharged from hospital. This leads to numerous complications

that require subsequent hospitalisation of the child.

The Bear with your Rehab project provides a soft toy to each child on discharge from hospital and to children returning for follow-up treatment. The toys are accompanied with a message to the child's caregiver regarding the importance of continuing follow-up treatment.

Since burnt skin is much more sensitive to sun damage than unburnt skin, we now also provide protective head wear to the children. For the younger children, the knitted caps donated by Phoenix member Patricia Waight (pictured top left) have proved very popular.

For the older children, Phoenix has secured a donation of trendy peaked caps from Top Cap. Phoenix is extremely grateful to Top Cap and Patricia Waight for their kind donations of head wear.

We are also grateful to the Catholic parish of Constantia for their ongoing donations of soft toys and support to Phoenix in various other ways. To all our wonderful anonymous donors we would like to say "thank you very, very much!" Your ongoing support of this project is making a big difference to these children.



What happens after a child has been burnt?

As this newsletter is going out to its readers towards the end of April, a new booklet produced by the Phoenix Burns Project, in association with the Burns Unit of Red Cross Children's Hospital in Cape Town, is being prepared for printing.

The 8-page booklet, titled *My Child Has Been Burnt – What Now?*, describes step-by-step the process of treatment and recovery of burnt children. It explains to the patient's caregivers the reasons for treatments, stresses the importance of follow-up treatment, physio- and occupa-



tional therapy, and diet. It also provides some post accident counselling, and offers advice for the period after release from hospital.

The illustrated booklet, written by Phoenix's Dr Roux Martinez in consultation with several experts in burns treatment, will be translated into Xhosa and Afrikaans. It will be distributed initially to Red Cross Children's Hospital.

Hospitals, clinics and other interested parties who would like to order copies may contact Dr Martinez at 082 922 6492 or e-mail her at admin@bbp.org.za.

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