

# INTERPLAST UK

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## MISSION TO KUMI HOSPITAL, UGANDA NOVEMBER 2016

This international team first met up at Mildmay hospital and research facility in Kampala not long before midnight on Saturday 29th October, when those from England, Scotland, Germany and Denmark caught up with Ariel from Tel Aviv and Shu from Tokyo! We spent Sunday travelling to Kumi and blessing George, our driver from Kumi Hospital, for his skill in mending a damaged fuel pipe by the roadside and keeping the bus going so that we could complete our journey.

The team consisted of:



Janis Perialis, Ariel Nieman and Peder Ikander, (surgery); Shu Hoshiyama (anaesthesia); Tine Ikander, Louise Newman, Joanne McWilliam and Liz Williamson (nursing); Lynn Fletcher (co-ordination).

Peder and Lynn visited Kumi last year and Louise was on her third mission of the year, but for others, it was their first mission with Interplast UK

Work began on Monday morning: running the busy outpatients clinic, making lists for surgery for the coming days, preparing the operating theatre supplies and equipment and organising the wealth of donated clothes, toys and craft items – and during those activities, being welcomed by and getting to know the staff of and visitors to Kumi Hospital.

42 operations and 2 dressing changes under anaesthetic were carried out over 8 days and a further day was devoted to changing dressings under anaesthetic. Many of these operations were for post burn contractures and were lengthy (up to four hours) and requiring complex skin grafts. The wonderfully-named “Jumping Man” technique was used at times (ask your friendly local plastic surgeon to explain!).

- The youngest patient was aged 2 months and the oldest 70 years.
- 28 patients were under 18 years old, and, of these, 18 were under 5.
- Conditions operated upon included post burn contractures (14), keloid scars (8) and cleft lips (5).



The ward where our patients stayed was very busy, as a stay in hospital in Uganda is a family affair. Parents, grandparents and other relatives ensure that patients have food and drink and help them to wash. Water is provided in the hospital grounds but you need to bring your own food, cooking pots and washing bowl. If there is no-one at home to look after the other children, they must come to hospital too, so there was plenty of interest in our crafts and games – from children and adults alike



Sunday was a day of rest from operating. We are grateful to Elspeth Robinson (Kumi Community Fund – outreach for children with disabilities) for arranging visits to three village locations. There we met some of her patients with physical difficulties and saw how much they benefitted from simple aids to mobility. Elspeth is a real friend to Interplast UK in Kumi and we benefit greatly from her extensive local knowledge and contacts. We also made a return visit and took gifts to the Amecet “shelter of peace” orphanage in Soroti. Although her main building was undergoing refurbishment, we were made welcome by the director, Els van Teijlingen. Els’s excellent work in looking after children and re-integrating them with their families wherever possible continues to be needed –just in that week, Els had received a new born baby that had been rescued from being abandoned in a pit latrine.

Team Kumi 2016 came from across the globe, brought together by hearts of compassion for those in need of skilled surgical intervention but without hope of receiving it. It was a privilege to see how quickly good working relationships developed, difficulties were overcome and a real team spirit developed. We were pleased to have excellent support from local staff, including Dr Robert Olupot, the Medical Director at Kumi, who took the opportunity to work alongside our surgeons and discuss techniques with them. Our lead surgeon, Dr Janis Perialis, has worked for many years in Tanzania and he was delighted to have many opportunities to practice his Swahili during the course of our visit.

All too soon our time in Kumi was at an end. Team Kumi 2016 had worked hard together but had also shared much laughter – and danced together at our end of mission dinner, although our best efforts were eclipsed by the grace, rhythm and sheer exuberance of the hospital and guest house staff!

Our thanks go to our medical volunteers for giving us their time and talents and to all our supporters and donors who enable us to do this work.

Lynn Fletcher, Secretary