

## Save A Child's Heart Israel Humanitarian Program Helps Rwanda Children



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**By Joel Leyden**  
**Israel News Agency**

Jerusalem ----August 14 ..... Israel based, humanitarian organization, Save A Child's Heart, welcomes its first group of children from Rwanda to be operated on in Israel at Wolfson Medical Center.

"Rwanda represents the 28th country partnering with Save A Child's Heart," Simon Fisher, executive director of SACH told the *Israel News Agency*.

"Over 30 percent of the children being treated by us come from Africa. But whether it's the refugees of Sudan, the poor from Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia or any other nation worldwide we are here and ready to save lives. Every child deserves the best humanitarian medical treatment and we have both the medical professionals and facilities to get that job done."

[Save A Child's Heart \(SACH\)](#) welcomed the arrival of its first group of Rwandan children suffering from heart disease to be operated on in Israel at the Wolfson Medical Center. The five children, who range

March 2007, during an inaugural visit to Rwanda, following the organization's annual medical mission to Ethiopia. The 48 hour introduction visit to Rwanda included meetings with various officials and medical personnel who strive for the development of an improved health care system.

The SACH Israel humanitarian medical team visited the King Faisal Hospital in Kigali and met with Dr. Joseph Mucumbitsi, the Head of Pediatric Cardiology unit. Dr. Mucumbitsi had previously contacted Save A Child's Heart to request assistance from the organization in order to help rehabilitate and develop the Rwandan medical infrastructure as well as help to treat complex pediatric cardiac cases among the nation's children.

During the visit to Rwanda, Dr. Tamir, Head of the Pediatric Cardiology Department at Wolfson Medical Center in Israel together with Dr. Mucumbitsi, conducted a screening clinic for over a dozen children who suffer from heart disease requiring treatment. The operations for the Rwandan children will be carried out by SACH as part of its long-standing humanitarian activities that has brought over 1700 children from 27 countries around the world to Israel over the last 12 years for heart surgery.

Save A Child's Heart provides lifesaving heart surgeries for children from developing countries in Israel. Since 1996 children have come to SACH from countries such as Ethiopia, Nigeria, Zanzibar, Moldova, Vietnam and China while close to half of the total number of children treated at SACH are Palestinian or from Arab countries including Jordan and Iraq. Follow up care and capacity building are also an integral part of SACH's core mission and activities.

Save A Child's Heart treats patients, ranging in age from infants to teenagers, receive various types of treatment that is necessary for their heart problems in Israel. The children come from all corners of the

world, including China, Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ghana, Jordan, Moldova, Nigeria, the Palestinian Authority, Russia, Srilanka, Ukraine, Vietnam, and the Island of Zanzibar (part of the Federation of Tanzania).

Save A Child's Heart has a full outreach program to train medical personnel in our partner countries. Their ultimate goal is to create centers of competence in these countries, enabling local medical personnel to provide needed treatment in their own environment. The program brings doctors and nurses to the Save A Child's Heart center for in-depth Post Graduate training in all facets of pediatric cardiology. In addition, our staff travels overseas to educate and to perform surgery in cooperation with local personnel. However, until our goal is achieved, children with congenital heart problems are brought to Israel for surgery and other cardiac care.

Save A Child's Heart provides all its services in cooperation with the Wolfson Medical Center in Holon, a southern suburb of Tel Aviv, Israel's largest city.

Save a Child's Heart exists today because of the vision, passion and boundless energies of the late Dr. Ami Cohen. An excellent surgeon, an inspiring leader, and a warm and caring person, Ami was the driving force that created SACH and turned it into an important contributor to children's health worldwide.

In August 2001, Ami passed away. His friends and colleagues in Save a Child's Heart sorely miss him, but continue to emulate his enthusiasm and dedication, bringing the organization to even greater achievements.

Dr. Cohen immigrated to Israel from the United States in 1992. He joined the staff of the Wolfson Medical Center and served as the Deputy Chief of Cardiovascular Surgery, and Head of Pediatric Cardiac Surgery.

In 1988, while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces in Korea, Dr. Cohen was approached by the head of an international organization, Save the Hearts. The organization was sending orphaned and indigent Korean children to western countries for medical care not available locally. Dr. Cohen was so impressed with the concept that he requested and received permission from his superiors to participate in the program. During the remainder of his time in Korea, he performed 35 pediatric cardiac operations, giving those children a new lease of life.

Save A Child's Heart came into being in 1995 when Dr. Cohen was contacted by an Ethiopian doctor referred to him by a mutual friend at the University of Massachusetts. He asked for Dr. Cohen's help with two children in desperate need of heart surgery. From this beginning, the SACH medical team of highly skilled doctors, nurses and paramedics, has now grown to over 70 members in Israel, and has operated on hundreds of children.

"The astounding success rate of 96 percent has been achieved with hardly any publicity, public relations, and little money," says Fisher. "Our greatest achievement is that all the children, regardless of race, creed, color, sex, or religion are treated free of charge in Israel with the finest medical care at the cutting edge of technology, provided by Save A Child's Heart in co-operation with the Wolfson Medical Center."

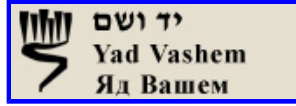
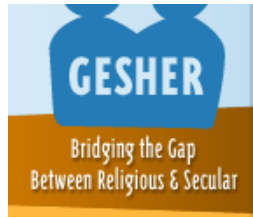
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