

Based in Connecticut, Rick Sieller helps burn victims in remote rural communities in countries across the globe by providing them with compression garments to reduce scarring as well as the physical disability often associated with being burned. This non-surgical method remarkably offers the hope of a life not further scarred by the fire.

He has set-up 9 clinics in 9 countries, including Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras where thousands of children are burned each year in at-home cooking accidents, electrocution injuries and other accidents. More than 60 percent of the world uses an open flame as the main heating source to make their meals. Most victims are women and children who suffer when the kettle tips over, hot oil spills or a faulty cooktop combusts. Contact with open-flames and stoves presents great danger to children even when there is an adult in the room. Flames used to light a home also pose a risk.

While the World Health Organization has called burns a global public health problem, and further reported that an estimated 180,000 deaths occur annually from burns in low- and middle-income countries, Sieller says the news is often overlooked. There are millions of non-fatal burns each year, he maintains, that cause prolonged hospitalization, disfigurement, and disability. Stigma and rejection often follow.

Sieller launched his non-profit organization, the International Women and Children's Burn Foundation (IWCBF.org) in 2005. In most countries, skin grafts and early intervention is not available. On an early visit to Managua, he toured a poor public hospital with a single patient room housing ten young burn victims and learned that there were thousands of other children just like them in Nicaragua waiting for help. He ran the calculations. Establishing operating facilities and finding skilled surgeons, costly medications, OR equipment and training clinical staff were overwhelming, if not impossible. There wasn't enough time or money, he realized, to provide immediate and meaningful care.

Sieller, who had worked with burn victims at Yale New Haven Hospital in the 1980s, toured the facility in 1993 with a mentor and realized that he had to get involved. He created a cost-effective solution.

What he could do was offer relief to victims by providing them with custom compression garments, splints and masks that could help prevent skin contraction during scar maturation. The garments would allow victims to move and position their injured bodies and limbs. Without the this type of intervention, burn victims skin contracts if they're left alone, the skin-scar will set in place and, over time, future movement is lost. Sieller also provided custom face masks to keep the skin soft and flat and encourage healing.

The cost of garments and masks sounds ridiculously low, at \$10 or less. But in poor countries that's a huge amount and insurmountable to many. Still, families are asked to pay what they can

because, as Seiler has learned, the garments aren't often worn if they aren't considered to have value.

To support and expand local reach and access, Sieller learned how to make burn suppression garments on an industrial sewing machine and then created a local network of seamstresses, using an "show one, teach one" approach. That effort helped many victims and created local seamstress-tailor jobs in the 9 countries.

He funds the 501 (c)(3) foundation using 50 percent of his own money and relies on donors for the rest. Additionally, the organization partners with various organizations to support care for people affected by burn injury. That includes Aproquen, who he partnered with to help build a burn unit surgical and treatment facility in Nicaragua.

Sieller has traveled across the world on more than 100 medical missions since the 1990s and has often brought his daughter, Meredith, 22, along. There is a plan that she will take over the foundation and add a mental health component to the operation.

"The maternal aspect of pediatric burns takes a significant toll on mothers and fathers who maybe looked away while their child was near the flame," Sieller said. "We can't ignore the parents and psychological burden, even guilt. We need to help the family move forward."

In September 2022, the IWCBF foundation was contacted by the Ajiboye family for help. Their daughter "Mary Gold", now age 3, was burned in a gas/fire explosion in Feb 2022. She received some care locally but was badly burned and became disfigured. Mr. Sieller contacted friends and raised funds for a trip ½ around the world to care for her. He hired a local tailor to sew garments over a two-day period as well as fabricating custom splints and a custom face mask to help control the deep scarring occurring. "A labor of love" as he often describes this work. He spent hours teaching her family on scar remodeling and anticipated changes of her skin, scars, and joints over the subsequent 6 months. No other intervention- no surgery.



December 2021



March 2022



March 2022



June 2022



September 2022



June 2023

I leave you with a letter from her father that conveys the impact of Rick's intervention. He saved a child from a tormented life and her mother from taking her own life.

This is a letter from the Ajiboye family:

Letter received 7.1.2023 from the Ajiboye family.

We are writing to express our deepest gratitude for your immense contribution and response to light up our darkness. Your donation is a life saver and life changing, we indeed appreciated. The total amount given to our family to paid off major part of our loan took from bank in Nigeria during the incident is a lifesaving because if not suicide will possibly be an option. We received 3000 dollars through Mr. Rick to pay off the bank debt then a lots of therapy material used for the care of our daughter MARY AJIBOYE who survived the fire accident also payment of the bills for the rented apartment and also feeding both morning, afternoon and night throughout the stay of Rick Sieller.

Rick came through a hard processed and stressed to Nigeria with your support...

Rick put in all his humanity effort to ensure the process was carried out successfully, he came in September 2022 and spent 5days with us in a rented apartment paid by him and the 5days was full of rigorous exercise with Rick building / constructing physiotherapy materials needed to clear the scars and help in healing of the reconstructive surgeries on the contracted part of her body.

This had a great impact on our lives and especially that of our daughter as she can now use her hand swiftly without any restriction and the scars greatly improving, this is such a positive turnaround.

We received your donation for which you did not receive anything in return, we are happy as a family, working on our daughter as instructed by Rick and we are having obvious improvement. We are blessed to have your great support and we are extending our warm thank you for your generosity, benevolent, clemency toward our family.

MARY is grateful.

BABY RICKIE is grateful (second child born during Rick's visit and named after him!)

OUR FAMILY is grateful.

Sincerely

AJIBOYES FAMILY

(Attached are photos of Mary prior to sustaining burns, her status upon Sieller's arrival and now the one-year outcome, 18-month outcome from the burn). Truly a miracle.