



## **Real Medicine Foundation Brings Help to Those That Need it Most**

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When a massive earthquake struck Northern Pakistan on October 2005, many children were injured but never received the proper care. This little girl, whose leg was smashed during the earthquake, recently had corrective surgery thanks to the efforts of Real Medicine Foundation.

At the Lladro Gallery on Rodeo Drive last week, pediatrician Martina Fuchs was

dressed in a glamorous black dress, mingling with a crowd of cocktail sipping, hors d'oeuvre eating guests, as they strolled past artwork by Yoko Ono, Sean Lennon, Jean-Michel Basquiat and a few Picassos, deciding how many thousands of dollars to bid during a benefit auction for Real Medicine Foundation.

Thousands of miles away from the expensive shops of Beverly Hills, across the globe, a child suffering from diarrhea in Jhabua, a District in Central India, would appreciate it. So would the 200,000 people living in impoverished and remote sites in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, and Mozambique, which are receiving help from this humanitarian organization. In Los Angeles, where at any given day there can be 16,000 homeless children, the fundraising effort would also be felt.

"This is about connecting possibilities, and making the world a bit fairer," said Fuchs, who sparked the ripple effect that became Real Medicine Foundation back in 2004. The organization's purpose is to provide medical support to disaster, postwar, and poverty stricken areas. "Here in LA we have so many possibilities in art, entertainment, music, and we can redirect resources to those that need it."

It all started in December 2004, when she watched the news broadcasts of the devastating tsunami that killed an estimated 300,000 people from her Studio City home. "It was the faces of the children," she said. "It was the first time that I had been touched so deeply."

So Fuchs just packed her bags with medicines and clothes and took off on her own to Sri Lanka to see what she could do. On the way there she met a carpenter from Australia and a plumber from Scotland who were on their way to help as well, and together they opened up a clinic in the Mawella Refugee camp in southern Sri Lanka, she said.

In that region of the country the tsunami death toll was about 20,000 people, and about 10,000 were injured. The local hospitals were unable to meet the needs of the people. "It was like a war zone. Everything was destroyed. It was like a bad movie," she remembered. "People started lining up outside our clinic as soon as we opened." The clinic, although relocated to another facility, remains open and fully functional today.

Fuchs said they soon realized families needed much more than just medical care. One woman had to choose which of her children's hands to let go of when they were washed away by the water, she said, as she showed her guests at the fundraiser a picture that was drawn by the 6-year-old boy whose hand the mother held on to. The 8-year-old daughter that she let go of, drowned. "No amount of medicine is going to fix that."

The picture, where stick figures were engulfed in a blue sea drawn with crayons, was one of the organization's efforts to offer psycho trauma support to children and families, by having them express themselves through art.

Real Medicine Foundation was formed in 2005 as Fuchs found more doctors and individuals who wanted to help. The nonprofit network has grown to 80 professionals, in and out of the medical field, who have started projects in nine countries, going where there is a need. Places where what you see "makes you really question what is considered "normal" in this world," said Fuchs who in March got back from visiting several project sites.



Pediatrician Martina Fuchs formed Real Medicine Foundation to aid the victims of the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka. In a two-year period her efforts have snowballed into humanitarian operations in 9 countries, helping close to 200,000 people. At the Lladro Gallery in Beverly Hills, where the organization held its second annual fundraiser last week, Fuchs shows a picture (above) drawn by a six-year-old boy who survived the tsunami. When the waters washed over them, his mom had to chose whose hand to let go of, his or his 8-year-old sister's. She chose his, and his sister drowned.

"As I was driving back from Jhabua, [a District in central India], I was looking out the window and I just started crying. "Such poverty! Everything is so dry. You see children with diarrhea going in the streets because they have no access to toilets. They have no access to clean water so kids actually die of diarrhea there," she said.

Back in Beverly Hills, with a slideshow of photographs and a microphone, speaking over the hum of conversation, Fuchs tried to describe what the leg of a little girl looked like after it had been smashed during the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. 'Her bones were smashed, and the skin looked burned. It had never been appropriately fixed,' she said. Through Real Medicine Foundation, that girl received the surgery she needed, she said. Fuchs also spoke about building a Day Care Center and school in Tangalle, Sri Lanka, of the children's clinic at the Mawella Camp, and the HIV prevention and care programs in Jhabua, India, among other projects.

"I believe that deep down we all share this common core belief in social justice and only need the appropriate channel to act on it," said Dr. Omar Amir who spoke about efforts in Balakot, Pakistan. "Real medicine is truly dedicated to the idea that a committed group of individuals, through their initiatives can make great strides. It has brought healthcare where there was none, to the most neglected, difficult areas like Balakot."

Beth Cole director of RMF's Whole Health Team spoke of an acupuncture project in Uganda, while Michael Lear spoke about training physical therapists in Sri Lanka.

"For me this work has really been a path to the heart. It's a no brainer,"Lear said "Real Medicine has been a vehicle for me to connect with what I feel we all possess, this passion and this love for humanity."

The amount collected at last weeks fundraiser is still being counted, said Fuchs, but she hopes that it will be enough to fuel her operation forward. RMF's vision is to extend the same pace of development over the next two years. By May 2009, the real medicine Network hopes to include regional headquarter operations on each continent with teams deployed on long term missions in every country where the need arises around the world.



The Network will provide medical support as well as long term psychological, economic and social support to disaster, poverty and war areas. "We hope we can continue this growth, and eventually the world will be a little bit more equal. That is my dream," said Fuchs.

But "the more you do the more need you see," she said adding that RMF is preparing to send doctors to Peru, to aid the victims of the recent earthquake.

*For more information or to make donations please visit [www.realmedicinefoundation.org](http://www.realmedicinefoundation.org). If you wish to send a check donation please do so at Real Medicine Foundation P.O.BOX 1044 Studio City, CA 91614.*

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