

Carrying the token of Kerala's love, hospitality 'on the hearts' of children from Uganda

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Dr Krishnakumar, head of the Paediatric Cardiology Department, AIMS, celebrating with the children from Uganda who underwent heart surgery at the hospital under the 'Gift of Life' programme of Rotary International

KOCHI: The lifelong scars on the chest of 10 children from Uganda will bear testimony to the warm hospitality and love they received from the denizens of Kerala, as they make their way back home next week.

The 10 children, nine boys and a girl, had come to India suffering from congenital heart disease. But thanks to the successful open-heart surgery at the Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences (AIMS), the children are now hale and hearty and all set to return to their homeland.

The kids were brought here under Rotary International's 'Gift of Life' programme which provides free treatment to children suffering from heart ailments from economically-disadvantaged families from

countries with low and middle-income economies.

Two infants, aged six and nine months, were among the 10 children who were previously screened by paediatric cardiologists from Children's National Hospital, Washington DC, USA, and identified as suitable candidates for surgery.

"Facilities for critical open-heart surgery for young children are almost non-existent in Africa. The parents of the children who hail from various regions of Uganda, were persuaded by Rotary International to travel to Kochi. Had they not received the opportunity to go under the knife, the children would not have been alive after a few years," said Dr A C Peter, national coordinator, Gift of Life (India), Rotary International at a function held to celebrate the successful surgeries on Tuesday.

Cochin Knights, the Rotary Club, came forward to coordinate the project locally in partnership with the Piravom Pampakuda River Valley Club. Vipin Nadakkal and his team received the children and parents.

"While the parents were expecting only cardiac surgery, we went a step further and treated many children for other ailments too. We realised they will not get another chance to visit a hospital for treating the problems," said Dr P K Brijesh, the paediatric cardiologist who performed the surgeries.

Inaugurated by Medical Director Dr Prem Nair, the celebration was attended by Dr Sanjeev K Singh, medical superintendent, and Krishnakumar, head of the paediatric cardiology, AIMS.

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