



Amelika will receive surgery from Open Heart International in September
Photo by Jarrod Vero

Amelika's Story

When she was 12 years old, Amelika* would lose her breath walking from the living room to her bedroom. She was feeling weak and lethargic. After visiting the doctor, Amelika was diagnosed with pneumonia and was prescribed medication. But she continued to feel unwell.

In February 2023, an Open Heart International team visited Tonga and screened Amelika. She was diagnosed with rheumatic heart disease (RHD). Without intervention, Amelika would die.

"I want to think about life instead of thinking about when I might die," Amelika says. "I want to be able to run and do sports like a normal girl."

Amelika will receive life-saving surgery in September when a team of volunteers, headed up by Dr Nicholson, return to Tonga. She will receive an Edwards Inspiris Aortic Valve that will grow as she does, meaning it won't need replacing for 20 years. Thanks to your support, instead of thinking about death, Amelika can think about her life.

**Name changed for child protection*



Open Heart International is a division of ADRA Australia, in partnership with the Sydney Adventist Hospital. Highly specialised teams of medical professionals are deployed to bring life-saving surgery, training, capacity strengthening surgical programs, and medical equipment to vulnerable communities around the world.

In 2023, international medical trips resumed for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. Open Heart International resumed the Papua New Guinea Cardiac Program for both adult and paediatric patients. The adult team travelled in March, and the paediatric team travelled in June. Five adults and six children received open-heart surgery while 14 additional cases have been assessed and await surgery over the next six months. The medical team of volunteers also worked closely with the local doctors and nurses in Papua New Guinea to build capacity and transfer skills.

The month of March also saw the Women's Health team return to Nepal. The medical team performed 46 stage-4 uterine prolapse surgeries over five days, and facilitated capacity building and skills transference with the local team at Scheer Memorial Adventist Hospital, across ICU, screening with ADRA Nepal, and providing post operative care to the women who received life-transforming surgery.

The Tonga Cardiac Program resumed in February with the first assessment and screening trip to identify cases for surgery in September.

In the coming year, Open Heart International is extending its services into Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Tanzania. There is also a strategic plan to focus on skills transference and capacity strengthening in Papua New Guinea and Tanzania to help them achieve independent cardiac programs in the next two to five years.



**THREE
COUNTRIES
VISITED**



**57 LIFE-SAVING AND
LIFE-CHANGING
SURGERIES COMPLETED**



**84 HEALTH
PROFESSIONALS
TRAINED**