

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

20 years after her death, Diana's legacy of care lives on

The work of Diana, Princess of Wales, relieved the pain and suffering of thousands of people with incurable illness around the world.

During her lifetime, Diana, Princess of Wales, was dedicated to improving the lives of the most disadvantaged people in the UK and internationally. She used her high profile to raise funds and awareness for critical but challenging and stigmatised issues such as those who were living with life-threatening illness such as HIV and AIDS.

Functioning between 1997 and 2012, The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund continued the Princess' humanitarian work in the UK and overseas. One area of focus was the need for palliative care – holistic care to treat avoidable pain and suffering of people with serious illness and their carers. 20 years after her death, hospice and palliative care programmes, organisations and services supported by the Diana Princess of Wales, Memorial Fund continue to bring comfort and hope to those suffering around the world – irrespective of what the illness is.

The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund was ahead of its time in supporting a holistic, patient and family centred approach to care, encouraging community based models in countries such as Kenya, Malawi, South Africa and Zimbabwe. For example:

- The Fund provided seed funding for the postgraduate programme in palliative care at the University of Cape Town and supported tuition costs for doctors across Africa to study palliative care. To date 314 students have graduated, taking these essential skills back to patients and families in their home countries.
- The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund made possible the development of a training curriculum on children's palliative care, as well as the publication of the book: 'Children's Palliative Care in Africa'. The Fund focused on supporting children's programmes for the latter part of its existence and played a key role in embedding children's palliative care in African services.
- Island Hospice and Healthcare (Island), the first hospice in Africa, based in Harare, Zimbabwe, was supported by the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund between 2003 and 2012. Zimbabwe has extreme levels of poverty, and the sustained economic crisis in the country has significantly weakened the healthcare system. Without Island's services, which are provided free at the point of care, thousands of Zimbabweans would die in pain and distress.

Bev Sebastian, CEO of Island, said: "If I could speak to Princess Diana today, I would tell that her interest in palliative care has literally been a life saver for many of our clients. On behalf of all of those in Zimbabwe that your legacy has helped, we thank you."

Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance

Dr Stephen Connor, Executive Director of the WHPCA said: “The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund is responsible for major progress on palliative care in Africa for adults and children. Princess Diana had a deep commitment to compassionate palliative care, especially for children. Her legacy lives on.”

Dr Liz Gwyther, Board Chair of the WHPCA and Convener of Palliative Medicine Programmes at the University of Cape Town, said: “Princess Diana’s legacy lives on not only in the hearts she touched and the values she taught her sons, the Duke of Cambridge and Prince Harry, but also in the care provided to hospice patients across Africa, adults and especially children, and in the palliative care leaders trained through the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund grants.”

People who need palliative care are among the sickest in the healthcare system and have some of the greatest care needs. Unfortunately, millions of people are left to die in pain without the support that could be provided by a palliative care team. But the legacy of Princess Diana’s work is critical to ensuring that no-one lives and dies with avoidable suffering, pain and stigma.

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About The Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance (WHPCA)

The WHPCA was established by the international palliative care community in 2008 as a global action network to be a strong voice for hospice and palliative care in the international arena. Registered as a UK Charity, and in official relations as an NGO with the World Health Organization, WHPCA has now become an international alliance of 245 national and regional hospice and palliative care and affiliate organisations representing 86 countries. Our global Board of Directors and members around the world are all dedicated to the belief that no one with life-limiting conditions, such as cancer, HIV, or organ failure should live and die with unnecessary pain and distress. www.thewhpc.org

About the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund

The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund was established within days of the tragic death of Diana, Princess of Wales on 31 August 1997, in response to the public donations that poured in to Kensington Palace. When the Fund was set up in 1997 as a grant-making charity, the aim was to create a lasting legacy to the Princess' humanitarian work. By the time the Fund closed, it had awarded 727 grants to 471 organisations, and spent over £112 million on charitable causes. On 31 December 2012, the Fund closed as a staffed, operational organisation, having successfully completed its ambitious, time-limited programme of work aimed at improving the lives of the most disadvantaged people in the UK and around the world.

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