

Breakthrough craniofacial surgery: Round 2

 By [Frank Graewe](#)

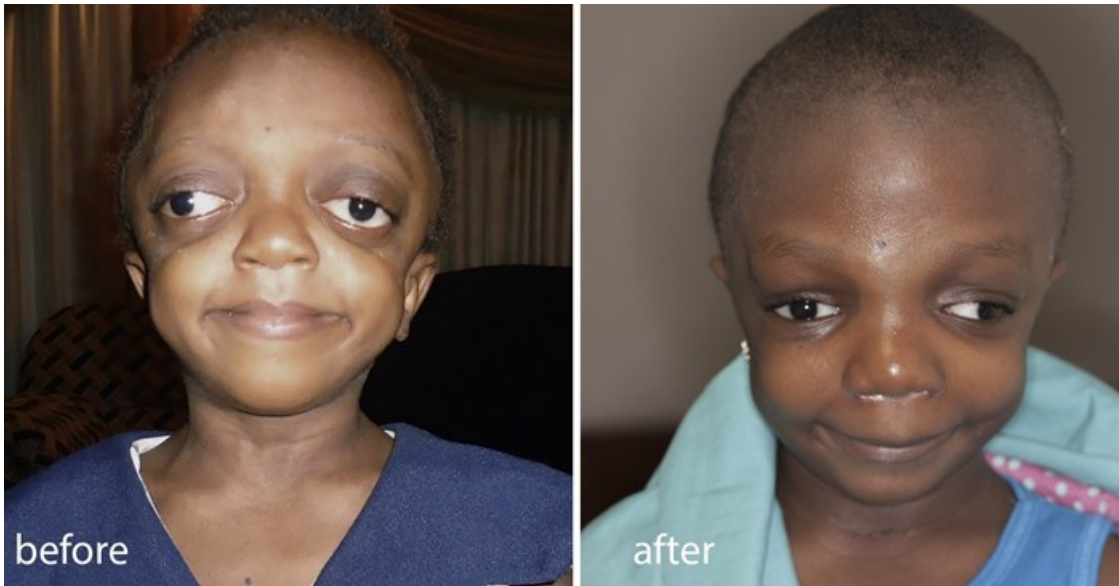
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Almost a year after undergoing life-changing operations for serious skull defects, two young girls returned to South Africa for their final surgeries.

In June 2015, [Bizcommunity.com](#) reported on how Professor Frank Graewe, a renowned reconstructive and micro-surgeon, teamed up with the World Craniofacial Foundation (WCF) and Smile Foundation SA to help Grace (8) and Akikere (7).

Akikere's journey

The seven-year-old from Nigeria, suffers from Crouzon syndrome and before her 2015 surgery, she suffered from right-side heart failure as a result of the respiratory problems often seen in such cases.



Akikere: before and after

In 2015, Akikere's mid-face and forehead were detached from her skull, and "distractors" were implanted, which would gradually push her face forward over time and thereby assist her breathing problems.

Ten months later, not only have Akikere's distractors have been removed, but she is also off all heart medication and her paediatric cardiologist says that her heart condition has clinically subsided.

Grace's story

Grace, from Zambia, underwent her ground-breaking surgery last year at Tygerberg Hospital to correct a major skull defect utilising 3D technology and bioengineered bone.

Ten months post the completed bone graft, CT scans show that there is bone regeneration on her skull – a positive sign that the bioengineered bone is doing its job.

“We usually expect the full bone regeneration to take about two years, so we are very positive about Grace’s progress so far,” says Prof. Graewe.

Her second surgery took place on the 12 April and involved reconstructive surgery to correct the placement of Grace’s eye-sockets and her nose.

“Grace’s condition resulted in her eyes being too far apart, we corrected this and also reconstructed her nose by using cartilage harvested from her ribcage. We’re very happy with her results and we don’t expect that any more surgeries will be needed for Grace at this stage,” he explains.

Happy endings

“The opportunity to work with the South African team on these two cases has been an absolute godsend and a pleasure,” says Dr Ken Salyer, the US-based chairman of the WCF – who travelled to South Africa to work with the local team.

“The co-operation between the WCF team and the South African surgeons, led by Prof. Graewe, has concluded with excellent results. Both of our young patients are doing well, and the experience has been a great learning opportunity for all the surgeons involved.”

Go to the [Smile Foundation SA](#) or [WCF](#) to make a donation.

ABOUT FRANK GRAEWE

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