

KAREN MARA MOSS: BIO SHORT

Name: Karen Mara Moss (née Toffoli)

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Occupation: Founder and Executive Director, STEPS Charity NPC
Chairperson STEPS Botswana Trust
Chairperson STEPS Namibia Clubfoot Programme
Author

Professional activities:

Karen Moss is a non-profit director, social entrepreneur and author.

Over 2,000 children are born every year in South Africa with the common birth defect of clubfoot. Without effective treatment these children face lifelong disability. The Ponseti Method of clubfoot treatment is the effective solution to prevent the disability caused by neglected clubfoot.

Karen Moss introduced the Ponseti Method to the region after her son was successfully treated by Dr Ponseti in Iowa in 2003. A passionate vision, inspired by her son's experience, drove her to revolutionise clubfoot treatment in South Africa. Karen's intention is that every child born with clubfoot should have access to the method that made such an impact on her son's life.

In July 2005, she established STEPS 2005 with the core purpose of improving the lives of children born with clubfoot. In July 2006 Karen held a pioneering workshop, the first in Southern Africa, to introduce the Ponseti method for clubfoot to Paediatric Orthopaedic surgeons. Since then she has trained over 400 medical professionals in four countries. Karen expanded her work into Botswana and Namibia, driving and supporting the establishment of clubfoot programmes in both countries working with the Ministry of Health. In 2014, she organised the first clubfoot treatment training in the Indian Ocean Island region (Seychelles) with the Ministry of Health.

Over the past 11 years STEPS has not only pioneered the Ponseti Method for Clubfoot in South Africa but partnered with 23 state-run clubfoot clinics in South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, to improve the broader health system's response to children with clubfoot, trained 432 medical professionals, and ensured that over 9,000 children have received the best treatment.

Karen's groundbreaking work has revolutionised the medical outlook for clubfoot care. As a direct result of Karen's work in introducing the Ponseti method for clubfoot to Southern Africa, the number of babies successfully treated is now in the thousands.

Professional highlights and achievements as STEPS executive director:

- By October 2016, had organised training of 432 medical professionals in 4 countries
- May 2015, signed MoU with Botswana Ministry of Health and Social Services
- April 2015, E News Channel 'Against all Odds' feature
- Carte Blanche actuality programme feature in October 2014
- Developed and wrote 'Ponseti for Parents ©' clubfoot education programme, launched in September 2014 and translated into 7 languages
- International speaker and advocate for effective clubfoot treatment, presented papers, successfully submitted Ponseti symposia and workshops for international congresses
- June 2014, Published "My Clever Night-Night Shoes", a bedtime story for children wearing the clubfoot brace at night, sold than 2,600 copies through US, UK, Australia and South Africa distributors
- Regional Ponseti Ambassador for the Ponseti International Association in Iowa
- Advises and supports the Tanzanian clubfoot care organisation
- Facilitates distribution of clubfoot braces through Africa to organisations and government

Awards:

- Winner 2011 CEO's Most Influential Women in Business and Government award - Community & Welfare sector award
- FNB 'You can Help' Community Award

Specialities:

Programme development, writing, editing, communication, media spokesperson, social media, coaching and motivating individuals and groups, project implementation, start-ups, website content, marketing strategy, development strategy, copy-writing, public speaking

Testimonials:

"It has taken the involvement of the families to convince many doctors that surgery is unnecessary and indeed harmful. I think your efforts to make the parents aware of the fact that the deformity should be treated without surgery is very important. It is wonderful work you are doing to get the doctors to give up surgery and learn how to properly manipulate and cast the clubfoot." Ignacio V. Ponseti MD, May 2, 2006

"Karen's work at putting together the STEPS charity and highlighting the plight of those needing treatment for clubfoot has been remarkable. Her stories and messages have helped keep me going at times when things have been tough and she has provided information which was crucial at numerous times." Eve Morris, February 24, 2011