

IMPROVING OUR WHEELCHAIRS

Over the past five years, we have made more than 20 enhancements to improve the quality, comfort, safety, and flexibility of our wheelchairs. From modifying the footrests to adding additional sizes and optimizing safety belts, our team has been hard at work to make our wheelchairs even more durable and effective while also striving to keep costs low.

At the same time, the worldwide pandemic has had a widespread impact on our manufacturing and distribution, increasing both production costs and shipping fees.

Starting September 1, 2021, you will notice that we have updated the price of donating one wheelchair to \$96 to reflect both our improvements and the cost changes. However, it is still less than \$100 to transform a recipient's life with the gift of mobility. Thank you for your continued support!

For more information, visit: FreeWheelchairMission.org/wheelchairs



ROCKED BY TURMOIL

In the summer of 2021, South Africa was rocked by turmoil as political protests turned violent, killing hundreds of people. Looting and vandalism has caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damage, disrupting the supply chain and creating hours-long lines for food, fuel, and other necessities. Some residents have taken up arms to defend their neighborhoods, inflaming an already tense situation. All this transpired amidst a surge of Delta variant infections that killed thousands and sent many more to overwhelmed hospitals. The COVID pandemic has already wreaked havoc on the country, shuttering businesses and driving up the unemployment rate, pushing more than two million people below the poverty line in 2020 alone.¹

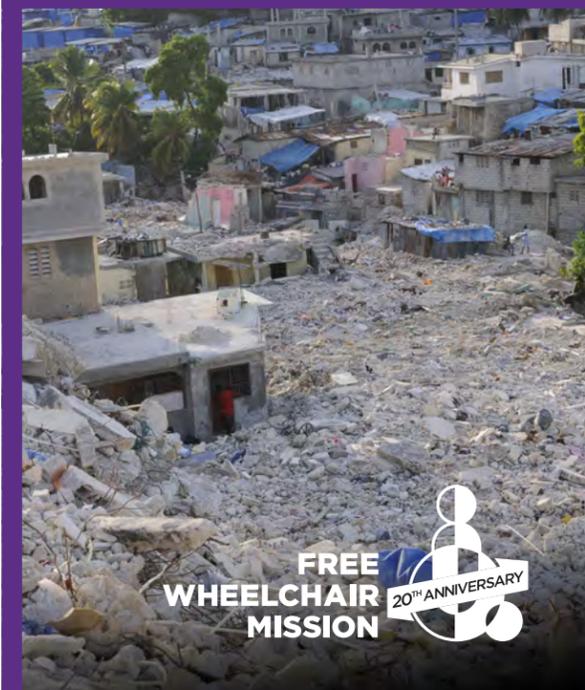
Under these types of circumstances, people living with disabilities remain among the most vulnerable.

More than 4.2 million South Africans live with a disability.² They are more likely to face greater difficulty accessing basic services such as health care and education, diminishing their prospects for employment and leading to economic isolation. They also face discrimination and abuse.³ And, when dangerous situations arise, they cannot easily flee to safety without help.

URGENT NEED

As this newsletter was going to print, a 7.2 earthquake struck Haiti on August 14, 2021, killing and injuring thousands in an already-devastated country that is dear to our hearts.

Learn more or donate now: FreeWheelchairMission.org/Haiti



Give Today to Transform Lives



FreeWheelchairMission.org/donate

Go online 24 hours a day for easy one-time or monthly giving.



Please send checks to:

Free Wheelchair Mission
15279 Alton Parkway
Suite 300
Irvine, California 92618



800.733.0858

Call Monday to Friday
9:00AM to 5:00PM PT

We Want to Hear From You! Connect With Us Online and Hear More Stories From the Field.



FreeWheelchairMission.org
Transforming lives through the gift of mobility®

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southafrica/overview>

² <http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=3180#:~:text=The%20national%20disability%20prevalence%20rate,85%2B%20reported%20having%20a%20disability>

³ <https://www.sahrc.org.za/index.php/focus-areas/disability-older-persons/disability>



DISABILITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is home to almost 57 million people, more than half of whom live below the poverty line.⁴ Unemployment affects one out of three people in the workforce, and for persons living with disabilities, access to job opportunities is even more limited due, in part, to lower levels of education. School attendance is lowest among those who have mobility disabilities, with only two out of three of them ever entering primary school and even fewer moving on to higher grade levels. According to a 2011 census, those “with severe difficulty in walking and communicating were the most marginalized in terms of access to secondary education.” Only one out of twenty young adults with disabilities in South Africa has attained a higher education, and one out of four has no formal education at all.⁵

Employment opportunities are also hindered by the stigma and discrimination often faced by people living with disabilities, driving some even further into despair: a study on the relationship between disability, stigma, and depression in South Africa showed a correlation between unemployment and depression, and between a

FREEDOM THROUGH MOBILITY

Johannes (57) enjoys fresh air and sunlight for the first time in months.



lack of education and low self-esteem.⁶ Isolated economically and socially, and without mobility, education, or work, people living with disabilities in South Africa often remain confined to their homes.

Mobility would provide them with a renewed sense of freedom and hope.

Free Wheelchair Mission has been distributing wheelchairs in South Africa since 2005, through partners that include Network of Caring, a philanthropic organization founded by the late Jim Dornan and his wife, Nancy, whose son was born with spina bifida and uses a wheelchair. With a heart to empower others with mobility, the Dornans became avid supporters of Free Wheelchair Mission, and their organization holds the distinction of being both a corporate sponsor and a distribution partner.

Network of Caring’s wheelchair distribution team, which has received training from Free Wheelchair Mission, has continued to distribute wheelchairs throughout these challenging times. One recent trip took them to a township in the north of Johannesburg, South Africa’s largest city.

DELIVERING THE GIFT OF MOBILITY

Johannes Moraudu, 57, had been working as a community safety officer and was a commander in his department when he woke up one night to find that he could no longer move the left side of his body. He had suffered a stroke.

Having lost mobility and his livelihood, Johannes spent most days confined to the tin-roofed, one-room shack that he shares with his wife and adult son. “We could feel the air coming through all the gaps as we entered,” recalled Liza, a member of the distribution team that visited Johannes after one of his former coworkers, named Simon, applied for a wheelchair on his behalf. “Driving to his home, it was sad to see the lack of infrastructure in the area. The gravel roads were in bad condition and sewage could be seen running down the sides of roads and between houses.”

⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/south-africa/#economy>

⁵ Census 2011: Profile of persons with disabilities in South Africa, xii.

⁶ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7576188/>



“I COULD HEAR THE SMILE IN HIS VOICE”

Despite the challenges and restrictions posed by COVID-19, our distribution team was able to deliver and fit Johannes (above, right) with a new wheelchair. “I am grateful to have been a part of changing Johannes’ life with the gift of a wheelchair,” said Liza (seated, left).

When they arrived at Johannes’ house, they found him in low spirits, slouched in a chair behind the door. “It all happened so suddenly and now my life has changed so much,” he said in a subdued voice. “I never thought my family would need to take care of me.” Without mobility, his wife and son would have to carry the muscular former police officer wherever he needed to go, and his friend Simon would help whenever he could.

When the team rolled a new GEN_3 wheelchair through the door, they could see Johannes’ countenance light up, even from behind his mask. They lifted him into the seat and pushed him outside to enjoy the morning sunshine while they made further adjustments to the footrests to ensure a proper fit. Johannes was overwhelmed, grateful that this new wheelchair would provide him with renewed independence and freedom—not just for himself, but for his wife and son as well. “The families’ and recipients’ lives are changed forever,” said Liza. “They are so grateful, and all wish us luck in continuing to help others [with the gift of mobility].”

This wheelchair program has boosted the profile of our distribution partner, which is becoming known for assisting people with mobility disabilities throughout South Africa and meeting the growing demand for wheelchairs. According to Liza, the program has “created awesome teamwork with our organization and changed the

lives of all the recipients, as well as their families and caregivers.”

It takes a network of like-minded partners to get wheelchairs to those who need them in places like South Africa, and it all starts with you. Without your prayers and generosity, we would not be able to manufacture and ship containers of wheelchairs to our distribution partners across the globe.

We are thankful that supporters like you have helped us distribute 1.3 million wheelchairs in 94 countries over the past 20 years. There are still an estimated 75 million people worldwide who are waiting for a wheelchair, and with the pandemic and unrest continuing to affect the communities we serve, the needs remain great.

Together, with your sustained partnership, we can continue to meet this need and transform lives in South Africa and beyond. Would you consider transforming someone’s life today?



Blessings,

Don Schoendorfer

Don Schoendorfer, Ph.D.
Founder and President
Free Wheelchair Mission