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Road Accident Fund

AMPUTEE WALKS AGAIN

The last time Frans Moraba visited his home in Limpopo was almost two years ago, that was a few weeks before a head-on collision literally cost him an arm and a leg.

In just a few days after receiving his state-of-the-art prosthetic leg worth R95 000, courtesy of the Road Accident Fund, the 65-year-old unemployed grandfather, is dreaming of going home to see his house and relatives in Janefurse, Limpopo.

"I'm going home," he says beaming while relieving almost two years of agony confined to a wheelchair, which he struggled to use and unable to do much including making a living doing odd jobs like he did prior to the accident.

"I also want to go to town one of these days, I have not been to town in a very long time" he says dangling the newly fitted prosthetic leg from a bed before taking a few steps at the orthopedics' consultation room in Norwood, Johannesburg.

Moraba had his right leg amputated following a head-on-collision between two minibus taxis outside Alexandra in Johannesburg on 1 September 2011. He also suffered serious shoulder and chest injuries which rendered his left arm paralysed below the elbow.

"Today I'm very happy. I can stand on two feet. There are many things I want to do but most important is to visit my home in Limpopo. I have not been able to visit because of my condition. I want to go and see people, many have since passed and I have not been able to pay my respect," he says before reliving the horror which left him depressed and unable to make a living.

"I got into a taxi on my two feet and woke up with one leg and unable to use my right hand. My whole right side of he body was badly hurt," says Moraba, who spent at least three months recovering in numerous hospitals across Gauteng.

"The shoulder and the neck are very sore," he says rubbing the motionless arm tucked close to his body with a new upper 'extremity-arm and elbow-sling' and swathe received with his prosthetic leg. "Sometimes the pain on my shoulder and chest is unbearable," he pauses, "but no no angifuni ikhishwe noma ingasebenzi (I don't want it removed although I can't use it). My wife tells me that I gave permission for my leg to be amputated but I don't remember," he says touching his leg cut almost halfway between his knee and ankle.

Moraba says he was ready to give up on ever getting an artificial limb as he had been promised so many times without anything concrete happening. "For a long time I had to use a wheelchair but unfortunately for me I only have one leg and one arm working. I had to use my left leg and arm to try and move the wheelchair, and that was very difficult. Just imagine trying to do that with one arm and one leg."

Moraba, who claimed directly with the RAF, believes his days of despondency ended when she met Xolisiwe Zwane, RAF's Case Manager at the Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital.

Xolisile Zwane, Hospital Case Manager

AMPUTEE WALKS AGAIN

"I don't know her but I have a feeling our ancestors connected and that is why she did all these things for me. She did so much for me even without knowing me,"

"I'm grateful to the Road Accident Fund for what it has done for me and continue to do. It gave me a chance to walk again, but maybe all this would not have happened if it was not for her (Zwane). I feel like she went beyond her call of duty to help me. I don't know her but I have a feeling our ancestors connected and that is why she did all these things for me. She did so much for me even without knowing me," he says.

For Zwane though, she feels she did nothing extraordinary. "I was just doing my job. The Road Accident Fund is tasked with looking after victims of motor vehicle accidents and as employees we are ensuring that the Fund fulfills its mandate and treat our clients with Ubuntu. It is good to know that someone out there is happy with the way I'm doing my job, after all we want to make a difference in the lives of victims of motor vehicle accidents," she says.

Zwane wrote numerous emails to her RAF colleagues asking for their intervention to assist Moraba, including asking for the RAF to waive the RAF4 Assessment

which Moraba was in no position to pay for.

"With his Brachial Plexus injury he is unable to wheel his wheelchair so it is vital that he be fitted with a prosthetic limb. He will need life-long assistance because he will not be able to fit his own prosthetic limb with a non-functional arm. Please let us make a difference with this claimant and try and facilitate the whole claim process, as it is long overdue," part of an email from Zwane.

Thanking all involved in helping Moraba, Zwane wrote: "We managed to save the claimant the stress of having to find the amount for paying for the completion of the unnecessary RAF Form4 and we also saved the Fund for paying for the RAF 4."

The RAF4 assessment was waived because Moraba's Brachial Plexus injury qualified him for General Damages (serious injury list) and his below the knee amputation qualified him on the narrative as the two injuries impacted severely on his ability to carry out daily activities.

RAF interventions include issuing undertakings and appointment of care givers long before claims are settled, all with the goal of making early interventions to prevent exasperating the injuries suffered by victims and promote quick recovery.

Lucas Ndlovu of Prosthetics and Orthotics, who fitted Moraba with an artificial leg, said he was pleased with the way his patient is responding.

"I'm very impressed with him. Akatetemi (he is not a cry baby). The first time I fitted the prosthetic leg (12 July 2013), he just walked as if he had been using it for a long time, he did not complain about anything. Obviously because of the damage to his shoulder and arm his balance is severely compromised compared to that of a leg amputee with normally functioning arms.

While the prosthetic limb will enable him to reach places he could not before, it would do wonders for his self esteem," says Ndlovu who also uses a prosthetic leg.

Moraba already feels optimistic about life. "Things are looking better. I already have my prosthetic leg, and the RAF has promised to start paying my wife, who is my care giver. For a long time I could not walk and could not use my hand, now I can walk with my new leg, maybe the arm will also heal," he says as he walks to the car to go back to his home in Sebokeng, beaming from ear to ear. h normally functioning arms. While the prosthetic limb will enable him to reach places he could not before, it would do wonders for his self esteem," says Ndlovu who also uses a prosthetic leg.

Frans Moraba with Lucas Ndlovu

THABO MKHIZE