

CASE STUDY

NASA / European Space Agency

Children Unite Against Child Abuse Campaign

Celebrities for Humanity (CFH) • South Africa, Belgium, USA & Europe • 2007–2008

Founded and led by Sharm Pillay, Celebrities for Humanity (CFH)— in partnership with NASA & European Space Agency & Children In Wonderland, an NGO based in Belgium.

1,200

Student artwork entries

10+

Celebrity Ambassadors

9M

South Africans reached

R5,000

Total operational budget

THE MISSION

Celebrities for Humanity (CFH) was founded by Sharm Pillay in 2005 with a clear purpose: leverage the influence and reach of celebrities to amplify causes that could not achieve national attention alone. South Africa's women and children at risk— facing epidemic levels of abuse, poverty, and neglect — were the primary focus.

The Children Unite Against Child Abuse Campaign was CFH's most ambitious initiative: a multi-country, multi-partner awareness campaign that would take children's voices — literally — into space.

THE CHALLENGE

CFH had no government funding, no corporate sponsor, and no operational budget beyond R5,000. Sharm had to design, recruit for, manage, and execute a bi-national campaign involving a partner NGO in Belgium, NASA, the European Space Agency, local and international celebrities, schools across South Africa, and national television — with no paid staff and no safety net.

This was pure operational resourcefulness under constraint: the most powerful proof of what it means to build something meaningful from almost nothing.

WHAT WAS BUILT AND EXECUTED

- Designed the full campaign concept, competition mechanics, and judging framework from scratch — a first-of-its-kind initiative in South Africa
- Recruited and coordinated a panel of local and international celebrity judges including Gardner Cole (USA) and South African ambassadors Breyton Palse, Tammy-Anne Fortuin, and Christina Storm
- Engaged schools nationally, generating 1,200 individual student artwork entries — each a unique creative expression against child abuse
- Managed the full judging process: celebrities reviewed all entries and selected the top 30 South African semi-finalists
- Coordinated a parallel judging process with partner NGO Child Protect in Belgium, who ran the same campaign independently with Belgian students
- Negotiated and managed the NASA / European Space Agency partnership, securing commitment to carry winning artwork aboard Space Shuttle Atlantis
- Oversaw submission of winning artwork to NASA's Kennedy Space Centre for the STS-122 mission — the artwork flew at 17,600 mph, 213 miles above Earth, for 40 days

- Brought Keith Kenneth on board as a registered Board Director of CFH. His mentorship, governance insight, and networking — including his personal contacts at SABC — were instrumental in securing prime-time national television coverage of the launch

The moment that defined the campaign

When the South African and Belgian semi-finalists were reviewed together, something extraordinary was discovered: two students — from different countries, different cultures, different languages — had independently arrived at the same creative vision and the same message. They had never communicated. They had never met. Two children, thousands of miles apart, speaking in unison against child abuse through identical artistic expression.

Both pieces of artwork were selected. Both flew into space.

THE RESULTS

- 1,200 student entries received nationally — every one a child's voice raised against abuse
- Winning artwork from South Africa and Belgium launched aboard US Space Shuttle Atlantis (STS-122), 7 February 2008
- Prime-time SABC national television coverage, arranged through Board Director Keith Kenneth's media contacts — reaching approximately 9 million South Africans
- Full international bi-national campaign executed across two continents on a R5,000 budget
- 10+ celebrity ambassadors mobilised, including one international ambassador (USA)
- Formal partnership secured with NASA / European Space Agency — the artwork certified by Astronaut Leopold Eyharts, French Air Force
- Featured in Destiny Magazine, Destiny Man, Psychologies Magazine, and Entrepreneur Magazine
- Named “Champion of Change” and “Woman to Watch” by national press

“Sharm Pillay, founder of the Celebrities for Humanities Organisation (CFH), believes she's been training her entire life to fulfil her destiny of aiding change in humanitarian issues.”

— **Destiny Magazine, 'Champion of Change: Woman to Watch', January/February 2010**

WHAT THIS DEMONSTRATES

Running a zero-budget, bi-national, multi-partner campaign to a SABC prime-time outcome is not a communications achievement. It is an operational one. Every element — partner coordination across two countries, celebrity management, school outreach at scale, NASA relationship management, national media placement, and judging logistics — required systems, stakeholder management, and relentless execution under pressure.

For founders building something from nothing, Sharm Pillay has already proven she can do exactly that — and deliver outcomes that are genuinely extraordinary relative to the resources available.

Sharm Pillay — Founder, Celebrities for Humanity · Fractional Operations Manager, ProficientOBM

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