Through his work at the Genesis Foundation, John Harwood affected tremendous change for youth in South African nations. His basic mission engendered development of a clearer understanding of different cultures and the social issues of countries within the southern Africa region. Before the appeal of apartheid in 1991, John’s philanthropy provided basic health care training for South African mothers and teachers, built and sustained hospitals and schools in Black townships and homelands, and invested in microenterprise for thousands of Black South Africans.
In 1991, John’s work provided guidance for positive change during South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation process, which sought to "restore justice" after apartheid and heal historic wounds – a profound transition. Many say that “the relative peace that reigns today in a relatively integrated South Africa feels miraculous. Unlike so many countries that have been through similarly profound transitions, South Africa retains strong democratic institutions, including high-quality media, decent courts, and a well-organized civil society.

“I like to think that this is John’s legacy and life dream realized.” – Stephanie Wolf, friend and colleague

One of the basic health stations created and supported by John’s philanthropy – replicated in several Black townships.

John Harwood’s heart and philanthropy largely belonged to South African children who were denied education and health care.