

SMILE TRAIN AFRICA
**QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER**

October - December 2024

Smile Train provides free cleft surgeries and comprehensive cleft care across 42 countries in Africa, with 230+ active partners and 390+ treatment centres. Since 2002, Smile Train's local medical partners have provided more than 170,000 life-changing cleft surgeries across the continent.

Our Comprehensive Cleft Care (CCC) services include psychosocial support, nutrition, surgery, speech therapy, orthodontics, ENT and dental care.

We elevate local medical capacity, raising the safety and quality of surgical and anaesthesia care by offering curriculum-based educational scholarship programs.

Smile Train leverages strategic and innovative partnerships at the local and international level to anchor advocacy, the capacity of our partners and programs to strengthen surgical systems, and research infrastructure on global health priorities and policies.

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WE MADE HISTORY AGAIN ON WORLD SMILE DAY®, BREAKING A 2ND GUINNESS WORLD RECORD!

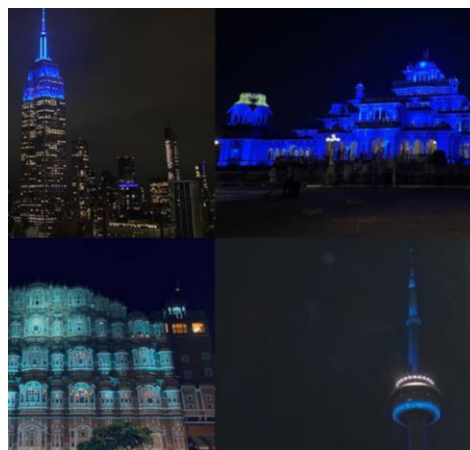
On October 4, we celebrated not only the 25th anniversary of Smile Train and World Smile Day® but also set a Guinness World Records™ title for illuminating 64 landmarks around the globe in Smile Train blue! From the CN Tower in Toronto to the BT Tower in London, and the Rizal Monument in Manila, smiles lit up the world!

This was a day that celebrated the beauty of every smile and ensured they were seen! We reached over a million people with our message, making it our most impactful celebration yet.

A highlight for Africa was lighting up the iconic GTC Tower in Nairobi: to show solidarity with cleft-affected individuals and raise awareness about clefts.

[WATCH THE VIDEO.](#)

[SEE THE FULL RECAP HERE:](#)



AND THE WORLD RECORD CAMPAIGN WAS ONLY PART OF OUR ACTIVITIES ACROSS AFRICA THAT DAY!

Miss Universe Somalia and Smile Train Ambassador, Khadija Omarr joined us in celebrating the power of smiles and the incredible work we are doing to transform lives in Africa.

[WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

St. Francis Community Hospital: In collaboration with the Kenya Society of Plastic and Reconstructive and Aesthetic Surgeons (KSPRAS), Smile Train supported a record-breaking 79 free cleft surgeries at St. Francis Community Hospital in Nairobi.

Bela Risu Medical Centre (BMC): Our partner in Kenya hosted a delightful family-fun day for patients and their caregivers. The event was filled with laughter and joy, not just from the children running around, but also from adults who had received free cleft surgeries at the hospital. Among them were Sylvester AKA Slymosh, a talented poet and stylist, and Vivian Mansaray, a model and author. [WATCH THE VIDEO](#)

Global Cleft Foundation: Our partner in Zimbabwe organized a family-fun day led by Dr. Wayne Manana and psychosocial support collaborator, Mrs. Danai Magandi.

Thank you to all our partners and supporters for making World Smile Day a memorable celebration.





CLEFT PROFESSIONALS FROM ACROSS AFRICA GATHERED IN HARARE, BOTH IN PERSON AND VIRTUALLY, FOR THE 7TH PAN AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF CLEFT LIP AND PALATE (PAACLIP) CONFERENCE. THE THEME WAS "REORGANIZATION AND REPOSITIONING FOR EXCELLENCE."

The conference began with inspiring presentations from the Guest of Honor, Permanent Secretary of Zimbabwe's Ministry of Health and Child Care, Dr. Aspect Maunganidze, Smile Train President, and CEO, Susannah Schaefer; Keynote Speaker Dr. Richard Hopper, and Smile Train Global Medical Advisory Board member; and outgoing PAACLIP President, Dr. Asrat Mengiste.

Participants discussed restructuring cleft care approaches to improve service delivery, enhance care quality, increase accessibility, and foster collaboration. Sessions featured insights from comprehensive cleft care specialist groups, including leaders in nutrition, paediatrics, nursing, orthodontics, psychosocial counselling, speech and anaesthesia.

The conference also included scientific sessions with lectures, abstracts, and poster presentations from over 100 specialists in cleft care from Africa and beyond.



SMILE TRAIN ORGANIZED VARIOUS ACTIVITIES FOR THE PAACLIP CONFERENCE IN HARARE, EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF ONGOING EDUCATION SO HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS CAN CONSISTENTLY DELIVER QUALITY SURGICAL CARE FOR CHILDREN IN NEED.

A Simulare Medical interactive workshop trained attendees on surgical techniques, reinforcing Smile Train's commitment to continuous education.

A Smile Train Symposium, chaired by Mrs. Nkeiruka Obi, Vice President and Regional Director for Africa, and co-chaired by Getaneh Siyum, Sr. Program Manager for East Africa, began with welcome remarks from Dr. Nicole Bouba, Program Director for West & Central Africa. The session on access to care focused on enhancing safety and quality at Smile Train partner hospitals, with insights from Joseph Kariuki, Sr. Program Manager for East & Southern Africa, and Ewa Rumprecht, VP Programs Data & Technology.

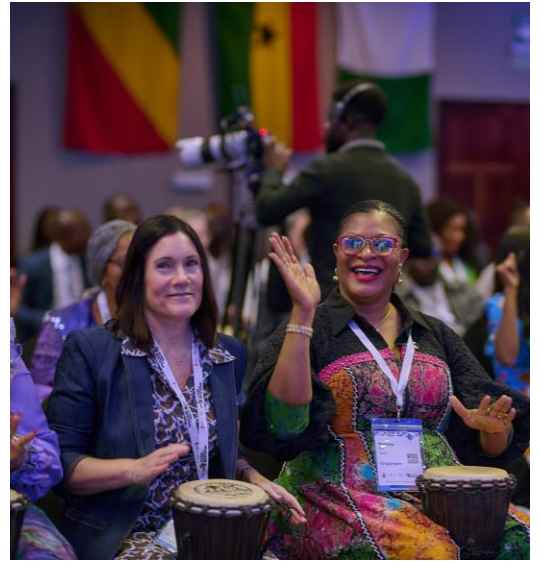
One panel discussion explored safety and quality from multiple perspectives. Moderated by Smile Train President and CEO, Susannah Schaefer, panelists, including Smile Train partners Dr. Francis Tegete (Tanzania), Dr. Adamson Phiri (Senegal), Dr. Franck Zomene (Cameroon), Prof. Adeola Olusanya (Nigeria), Dr. Mekonen Eshete (Ethiopia), and Prof. Emmanuel Ameh (Nigeria) discussed safety protocols, the importance of a multidisciplinary approach, accountability, and government collaboration.

The symposium also featured a session on nurturing the next generation of cleft care leaders. Highlights included a Power Talk on mentorship by Dr. Oti Aria, a plastic surgeon from Nigeria, and the launch of the Smile Train Africa Alumni Network (STAAN) by Patrick Mwai, Manager of Education & Training for Africa.

Our heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected PAACLIP Bureau led by Prof. Adeola Olusanya (Cleft Surgeon).

Our thanks also go to our medical partners, whose dedication continues to shape the cleft ecosystem, and to our donors and partners like Kids Operating Room, Lifebox Foundation, SPOON Foundation, and many more, whose unwavering support keeps Africa smiling.

PAACLIP CONFERENCE IN IMAGES





SMILE TRAIN-LIFEBOX TEAM CLEFT TRAINING WAS A SUCCESS IN THE DRC

From November 26 to 28, we conducted our first Smile Train-Lifebox Team Cleft training in the DRC. This two-day event brought together 22 participants from our partner hospitals: CBCA, @HEAL Africa RD Congo, Nyantende Hospital, and Polyclinique du Millenaire.

We also hosted a Training of Trainers (ToT) session for seven potential trainers, including surgeons, pediatricians, anesthetists, nurses, and anesthesiologists.

Thank you to our amazing trainers: Dr. Baraka Balolebwani William (Bukavu), Dr. Noel Ndayisenge (Liberia), Dr. Romaric Ngezahayo (Bujumbura), Florence Douet (Goma, ICRC), Hagay Musiyenene (Goma, CBCA Bethesda), and Dr. Jean Pierre Kigayi (Goma, Heal Africa).

The Team Cleft workshop aims to strengthen the technical skills of operating room staff by improving interpersonal relations through good communication and team cohesion, to ensure safe patient care quality and safety



SMILE TRAIN WAS FETED IN GHANA FOR EXCELLENCE IN HEALTH SUPPORT AND SUSTAINABILITY.

We're thrilled to share that Smile Train received an Excellence in Health Support and Sustainability award in recognition of exemplary institutional social responsibility at the Ghana Philanthropy Awards 2024 in Accra.

This recognition highlights Smile Train's commitment to sustainability and health support through our innovative approach of empowering local healthcare workers to provide cleft care in their own communities. Specifically, this award recognizes our establishment of a Cleft Leadership Center in Ghana and our focus on training Ghanaian professionals to ensure children in need everywhere in the country have continuous access to high-quality treatment.

The Ghana Philanthropy Awards are designed as an initiative to identify and publicly recognize outstanding social responsibility at both the corporate/institutional and individual levels.

Thank you to all who voted and showed support for Smile Train.





THE 4TH GRADUATION AND 2ND SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE OF THE COLLEGE OF ANAESTHESIOLOGISTS OF EAST, CENTRAL, AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (CANECSA) TOOK PLACE IN BLANTYRE, MALAWI, ON DECEMBER 5.

Ten scholars graduated, including Smile Train Fellow Dr. Rumbidzai Gremu from Zimbabwe, who was designated the overall best student. Dr. Gremu is eager to expand anesthesiologists training and enhance the provision of safe and quality cleft surgical care within Africa.

“I want to express my deepest gratitude to Smile Train for the gifts and support throughout my training journey and during our recently held CANECSA graduation. May Smile Train’s territory continue to expand. Thank you,” said Dr. Gremu.

Dr. Liz Igaga, Smile Train's Director for Program Safety, highlighted the transformative impact of our partnership with KidsOR on our project to equip operating rooms across Africa with solar panels. This initiative has significantly improved power reliability in operating rooms, ensuring safer and more effective cleft surgeries for countless children.

Dr. Igaga also discussed Smile Train and Lifebox's advocacy efforts through a Capnography Action Letter. This letter, signed by Ministries of Health, organizations, professional societies, hospitals, and individuals, calls on the World Health Organization and national decision-makers to adopt capnography in low-resource settings. Key points include elevating capnography standards in the WHO-WFSA guidelines, including capnographs in the WHO Surgical Safety Checklist, and recognizing capnography as essential in national anesthesia guidelines.

We celebrate CANECSA for their unwavering partnership and dedication to training anesthesiologists across Africa. Their commitment is instrumental in advancing safe and effective anesthesia practices, ensuring better surgical outcomes for patients throughout the continent.



SMILE TRAIN, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE OF NIGERIA, HOSTED THE 5TH NSOANP-SMILE TRAIN NATIONAL CLEFT CARE STAKEHOLDERS' FORUM AT CENTENARY HALL, IBETO HOTEL, ABUJA, ON DECEMBER 12 AND 13.

The forum began with remarks from Mrs. Nkeiruka Obi, Smile Train's VP and Regional Director for Africa, and a keynote speech by Nigeria's Permanent Secretary of Health & Social Welfare. Mrs Daju Kachallu, represented by the Director, Hospital Services, Dr. Jimoh Salaudeen.

They also delved into priorities and how to best implement the roadmap laid out in the National Surgical, Obstetrics, Anaesthesia, and Nursing Plan (NSOANP), fostering partnerships and collaborations to strengthen surgical systems.

The forum concluded with breakout sessions on advocacy, research, capacity building, and funding, followed by a comprehensive plan for the sustainability of cleft care in Nigeria.

A big take-out from the conference is that the Government has now put a budget line for NSOANP.

Thank you to all our partners and participants for their dedication and contributions. Together, we are making a difference!





SMILE TRAIN'S "NURSING CARE SAVES LIVES" CURRICULUM IS EMPOWERING NURSES FOR BETTER PATIENT CARE

Smile Train held in-person Nursing Care Saves Lives training sessions across the DR-C, Tanzania, and Kenya in September and November. Our "Nursing Care Saves Lives" curriculum highlights the crucial role nurses play in patient care and safety. This program equips nurses at Smile Train partner institutions with essential skills to provide high-quality care for children undergoing cleft surgery.

Tanzania: Selian Hospital in Arusha hosted a transformative training session for eight nurses, two nurse anesthetists, two medical attendants, one nutritionist, and one surgeon. The sessions were led by Rona Breese and Salome Mugini.

DRC: Bureau Diocésain des Œuvres Médicales (BDOM) Nyantende Hospital in Bukavu welcomed 15 participants from four Smile Train treatment centers: Nyantende Hospital, Katana Hospital General de Reference, MONVU, and Ciriri. The training was facilitated by Martine Makulu and Hagay Musienene.

Kenya: Fifteen dedicated nurses from Gertrude's Children's Hospital, Care Hospital, and St. Francis Community Hospital participated in the training. Special thanks to the trainers, Lilian Macharia, Bob Okeyo, and Agnes Thuo, for their invaluable contributions in enhancing local capacity.

Thank you to all our partners and facilitators for making these training sessions a tremendous success!



SMILE TRAIN PARTNER CENTRE EJO HEZA SURGICAL CENTRE HOSTED A StART PEDIATRIC BLS TRAINING IN KIGALI, RWANDA, FROM DECEMBER 2 TO 5.

Facilitated by Rona Breese, a nurse training consultant educator and curriculum co-developer for Smile Train Africa, and Dr. Amos Zacharia, a Smile Train partner anesthesiologist in Tanzania, the training brought together six anaesthesia providers and two surgeons.

The training commenced on December 2 with 12 participants, followed by a Training of Trainers (ToT) for three trainers over the next two days. On December 5, these newly trained trainers conducted BLS training for six new participants.

A post-training survey revealed that participants felt that it left them feeling more confident in performing urgent CPR/BLS on infants and children, and in effectively managing cardiac arrest situations.

Smile Train's StART Pediatric BLS training aims to enhance the capacity of healthcare teams to recognize and respond effectively in paediatric emergencies, while providing multidisciplinary healthcare professionals with contextual training in pediatric assessment, immediate intervention, and basic life support.



PRIORITISING NUTRITION FOR CHILDREN WITH CLEFTS ENHANCES SAFE, QUALITY SURGERY.

Ensuring proper nutrition before and after surgery is crucial for children with clefts. The nutrition training and resources we provide to our partners play a vital role in achieving this.

Smile Train organized a training session from September 23 to 27 for our partners in Somone, Senegal.

The training brought together 11 participants, including surgeons, pediatricians, and nutritionists from Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, -Bissau, Mauritania, Republic of Congo, and Senegal.

Facilitated by Dr. Barbara Delage, Smile Train's Director of Global Nutrition, and Dr. Yasmine Sanogo, a Paediatrician and Nutritionist from Burkina Faso, the training focused on the crucial need to prioritize feeding and nutrition for children with clefts.

By equipping our partners with the necessary knowledge and resources, we ensure that children with clefts receive quality care and support. Together, we are making a difference, one smile at a time.





THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF EAST, CENTRAL, AND SOUTHERN AFRICA (COSECSA) HELD ITS 24TH SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE FROM DECEMBER 4 TO 6 IN HARARE.

A highlight for Smile Train was celebrating the graduation of 17 Smile Train Scholars.

New Smile Makers:

Paediatric Surgery:

- Dr. Axelle Aimée Nduwimana (Rwanda)
- Dr. Bienvenu Mbida (DR-C)
- Dr. Bvumi Tembo (Malawi)
- Dr. Senior Banda (Malawi)
- Dr. Sandra Mukandona (Zimbabwe)
- Dr. Raphael Mwita (Tanzania)
- Dr. Mohammed Sultan Salim (Tanzania)
- Dr. Boyd L. Zimba (Zambia)

Plastic Surgery Fellowship:

- Dr. Paulin Burambu (Burundi)
- Dr. Peter Majeme (Uganda)
- Dr. Simon Kazibwe (Uganda)

Post-Fellowship Cleft Certification:

- Dr. Patricia Shinondo (Zambia)
- Dr. Richard Miti (Malawi)
- Dr. Ashenafi Ytbarek (Ethiopia)
- Dr. Samrawit Gimray (Ethiopia)

We celebrate these graduates alongside their lecturers. We also take this opportunity to congratulate COSECSA for celebrating their 25th anniversary.

Cleft Care Symposium

On December 5, Smile Train hosted a two-part Cleft Care Symposium, featuring:

- Dr. Mekonen Eshete from Ethiopia, on the evolution of cleft care in Africa.
- Panel 1:** Strengthening cleft care interlinkages, moderated by Mr. Patrick Mwai.
- Panel 2:** Power of partnerships in cleft care, moderated by Mrs. Nkeiruka Obi.

Simulare Medical Workshop

Smile Train organized a Simulare Medical workshop to:

- Provide high-quality surgical education
- Ensure continued learning
- Train other surgeons in cleft treatment
- Improve cleft surgical outcomes

It was facilitated by ST alumnus and plastic surgeon Dr. Owen Muzinda of Zimbabwe.

[Watch video](#)





CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN MEDICAL LEADERSHIP: SMILE TRAIN AFRICA MEDICAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS EARN NEW ACCOLADES

We are proud to celebrate the outstanding achievements of some of our Africa Medical Advisory Council (AMAC) members who continue to make significant contributions to cleft care and beyond.

Dr. Asrat Mengiste - Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon at the College of Health Sciences, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia, was shortlisted for the prestigious Paul Farmer Leadership Award, recognizing his exceptional dedication and leadership in the medical field.

Professor Adeola Olusanya - Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeon at the Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, College of Medicine, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, was elected first female President of the Pan African Association of Cleft Lip and Palate (PAACLIP).

Dr. Alhassan Datti Mohammed - Consultant Anesthesiologist and Senior Lecturer at Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital and Senior Lecturer at the College of Health Sciences, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria, was appointed as the President of the Nigeria Society of Anesthesiologists.

Professor Emmanuel A. Ameh, MBBS, FWACS, FACS, FRCSI, was inducted as an Honorary Fellow of the American College of Surgeons. [WATCH VIDEO](#)

Professor Mekonen Eshete, MBBS, FWACS, FACS, was promoted to Full Professorship by Addis Ababa University at Yekatit 12 Hospital Medical College.

We are incredibly proud of these distinguished professionals and their unwavering commitment to advancing cleft care and healthcare in Africa.

Join us in celebrating their remarkable accomplishments and dedication to improving lives through quality healthcare.



HONORING A SMILE HERO - DIKEMBE MUTOMBO

Dikembe Mutombo was a Hall of Fame NBA player, but those who knew him best understood that he was, first, a Hall of Fame humanitarian.

Smile Train had the privilege of working closely alongside him at the hospital he opened in his hometown in the DRC in honor of his mother, Biamba Marie Mutombo.

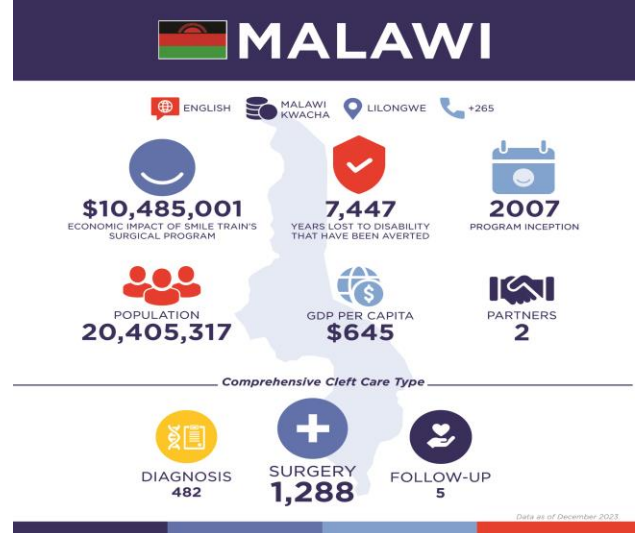
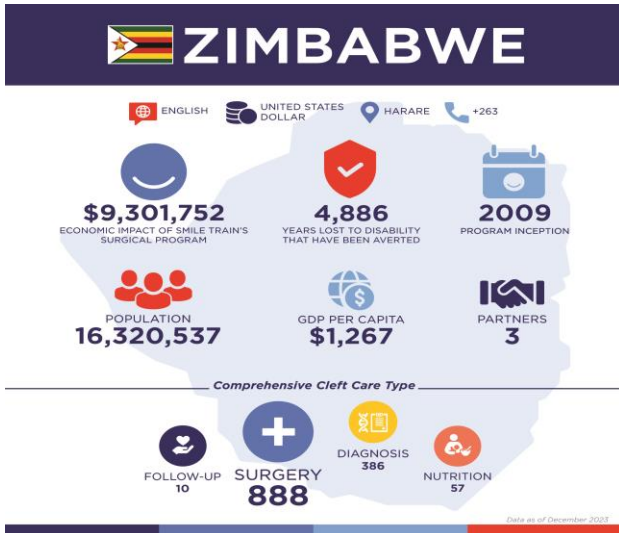
Since 2017, we have helped over 540 beneficiaries receive free, life-changing cleft surgeries together. Dikembe took immense pride in our collaboration, often visiting patients and sharing how meaningful this work was to him.

"Dikembe Mutombo's legacy is a beacon of hope, reminding us that one person's dedication can indeed change the world. As we continue our mission, we carry forward his spirit of compassion, ensuring that his dream of a healthier, happier DRC lives on through every smile we help create." said Deborah Bora Zawadi, Smile Train Program Manager, DRC

As we honour the memory of this extraordinary man, we celebrate the countless smiles and second chances he made possible. His legacy will continue to inspire hope and health for children in the DRC for generations to come.



DID YOU KNOW?



The 880+ cleft surgeries Smile Train has supported in Zimbabwe since 2009 have not only touched thousands of lives, they've infused an extra \$9,301,752 USD into the local economy.

The 1,200+ cleft surgeries Smile Train has sponsored in Malawi since 2007 have not only touched thousands of lives, they've infused an extra \$10,485,001 USD into the local economy.

1 IN 700 BABIES ARE BORN WITH A CLEFT LIP AND/OR PALATE GLOBALLY. CHILDREN WITH UNTREATED CLEFTS CAN FACE PHYSICAL DIFFICULTIES EATING, BREATHING, HEARING, AND SPEAKING. CLEFT TREATMENT ALLEVIATES MANY OF THESE CHALLENGES, ULTIMATELY ENABLING THEM TO THRIVE.

Learn more about clefts.

A cleft occurs when certain body parts and structures do not fuse together during fetal development.

Unilateral cleft lip

Cleft palate only

Bi-lateral cleft lip and palate

Bi-lateral cleft lip

Unilateral cleft lip and palate

Clefts can involve the lip and/or the roof of the mouth, which is made up of both hard and soft palate.

Around the world, many children with clefts will never receive the reconstructive surgery they need.