

# Smile Report



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## A Journey of Hope

We're all facing uncertain times at the moment, including many of our patients and their families. Searching for a better life, Pedro and his family abandoned their home in Venezuela and migrated to Colombia. They settled in the town of Uribia, located 15 km inland from the Caribbean Sea in the northernmost part of South America. The average daily temperature there is 30°C.

Homes in their neighbourhood are tiny and made from thin pieces of wood lashed together with wire and roofed with corrugated metal or whatever materials people can find. But life in

this hot and dusty community is much better than it was before.

From the very moment he was born, Pedro's family had prayed for answers. For seven long years, they tried to get the help they needed to repair his cleft lip and cleft palate – all with no success. Back in Venezuela, Pedro was taunted and called “ugly” by the other children. He was frustrated that his speech made it impossible for people to understand him.

Thanks to you and generous Canadian partners, Pedro found the life-changing medical care he and

his family had been praying for at the Operation Smile Care Centre in Riohacha – just 80 km away. It was here Pedro received his free, safe cleft lip surgery in the summer of 2019. His cleft palate was recently repaired in November 2020, when it was safe for our local volunteers to perform his surgery. Currently in Colombia alone, there are at least 398 other children still waiting for their new smiles.

Today, Pedro can't stop smiling. His mother cried tears of joy when she saw Pedro after surgery and said, “I thank God and I thank you because you made the effort to help us!”

# ESMERALDA'S NEW SMILE

The sparkle in 16-month-old Esmeralda's eyes is hard to miss. Born with a cleft lip, her parents Reyna and Víctor never imagined this could happen in their family. Like so many parents who have never seen a cleft condition before, they were shocked, saddened and more than a little worried for their precious girl. But over time, they assimilated and accepted her condition.

"We found out about Operation Smile Nicaragua after Esmeralda was born because the doctor who was treating her recommended the care centre, explaining that they provided free surgeries to patients with cleft lip. When we received this news, we were happy," Reyna said.

Esmeralda attended our international medical mission in March 2020, but she was suffering from anemia at the time and was not healthy enough for surgery. The pandemic postponed all surgeries in Nicaragua for several months and caused Reyna and Víctor to lose all the hope they had.



Left: Esmeralda, from Nicaragua  
Below: Esmeralda today

Thankfully surgeries resumed in the fall of 2020 and Esmeralda's parents received the call they'd been prayerfully waiting for – she was ready to receive her new smile. "I cried with joy, because I wanted to see her with her lip good," Reyna said. Today, there are over 300 children on the patient registry in Nicaragua waiting for surgery, with more added every week.

Esmeralda has since been receiving ongoing comprehensive care from the care centre in Managua: post-surgery interventions, nutrition advice, speech therapy, and psychological support for the family.



"The centre's care is very good," said Reyna. "It is a blessing of God that it exists because there are mothers who do not realize that there are surgeries for cleft lip repair and the best of all is that it is free and I can only say that I am happy with the results of my daughter's surgery. Thank you to the volunteers and donors who made it possible."

## MARK'S MESSAGE

I can never thank you enough for your partnership with our children and families. It is so important in helping our global teams move forward together and respond to the immediate needs of our patients and their families. This past year has shown just how vital our investing in local activities and training local volunteers is to the impact you're delivering in the countries where we work.

While so many children wait for conditions to be safe for local surgeries, nutrition programs are

helping undernourished infants gain the weight they need to be ready for when they are called. Some small, local missions have begun again where it's safe – a sure sign that hope is on the horizon. Yet just like here at home, local COVID-19 conditions shape the details of our activities and spur us to help our patients even more.

With you by their side, we are laser-focused on the children – innovating what care we provide them now and how best to deliver it. We're focused on and planning for the post-pandemic

world. We're collaborating more than ever with local healthcare partners and volunteers. We know that strengthening local health systems will help deliver current and future cleft surgery and care. A new smile is a gift that lasts a lifetime, and there are so many children just waiting (and counting on you) for theirs. Thank you for being our partner on this ever-evolving journey. We can't smile without you!

### Mark Climie-Elliott, CFRE

CEO and Chief Smile Officer  
Operation Smile Canada







WITH OUR PRESENTING SPONSOR:

**LISTERINE**  
**SMART RINSE**



*Jia Ji and his mother Hu Ling*

## LISTERINE® JOINS LONGEST DAY OF SMILES® TO DELIVER 3,000 NEW SMILES

When it comes to making someone smile, nothing comes together better than LISTERINE® and the Longest Day of SMILES®. As this year's presenting sponsor, LISTERINE® is on board to help deliver 3,000 new smiles and complete care to children with cleft conditions around the world – all by June 20th – the longest day of the year.

“We saw this opportunity for LISTERINE® to partner with Operation Smile as a wonderful way to promote the importance of good oral health for children here in Canada,” said Rozelle Parma, Brand Manager at LISTERINE®. “Additionally, we are helping to increase awareness of Operation Smile's important work, so that they can continue to offer free, life-changing cleft surgery and care to children in other countries.”

The LISTERINE® team is committed to focusing marketing efforts to raise awareness of the Longest Day of SMILES®. Families are encouraged to join the challenge and sign up to raise a smile (or two) of their own. Simply visit [www.longestdayofsmiles.ca](http://www.longestdayofsmiles.ca) or reach out to [givesmiles@operationssmile.org](mailto:givesmiles@operationssmile.org) and join the SMILE movement today.

This year, on Sunday, June 20th, we will be recognizing achievements and celebrating 3,000 smiles raised by our community ambassadors and local supporters who do so much to help our patients and their families.

**“We saw this opportunity for LISTERINE® to partner with Operation Smile as a wonderful way to promote the importance of good oral health for children here in Canada.”**

“Longest Day of SMILES® brings our communities together and always connects them to the children and families we serve,” said Mark Climie-Elliott, CEO and Chief Smile Officer of Operation Smile Canada. “It's our chance to recognize the commitment of so many people across the country who raise awareness of cleft lip and cleft palate, who raise funds for and with us, and who care passionately about helping others. We're thrilled to have LISTERINE® SMART RINSE® as our presenting sponsor this year.”



## INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF HEALTH AND CARE WORKERS

Never before have healthcare workers been so critical to our safety and well-being as right now. To recognize the dedication and sacrifice of the millions of these true heroes at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) has designated 2021 as the **International Year of Health and Care Workers**.

Operation Smile medical volunteers continue to be on the front lines of the pandemic in the countries where they live – a testament to their professionalism and true dedication. Local volunteers are continuing to provide vital care to our patients; small-scale surgeries are occurring where the conditions are safe using local medical professionals. Never out of mind are the tens of thousands of children who continue to wait for their own new smile. We are indebted to every health and care worker and all our Operation Smile medical volunteers. Thank you for keeping us safe, healthy and always smiling.

## THE SKELETONS OF VIVIAN LINE ARE SMILING

Melissa McKerlie and her son Justin are dedicated community ambassadors for Operation Smile Canada. They've delivered 125 (and counting) new smiles since 2018 using Justin's love of skeletons as the platform... well, the "platform" is actually their front yard in Stratford, Ontario.

During their weeks-long campaign in the run-up to Oct 31, this mother and son duo set up a new Halloween-themed display each morning at 6am. No display is ever repeated and they've set up over 140 different displays over the past three years.



Stratford residents are encouraged to drive by, view the displays and support Operation Smile through the Skeletons of Vivian Line fundraising page on the Longest Day of SMILES® website. The fundraiser has grown each year and the Stratford community loves the displays. Melissa, Justin and the Skeletons raised over \$30,000 this year from the community and important awareness about cleft conditions. **Thanks, Melissa and Justin!**

## THE LONG ROAD TO A NEW SMILE

### An Update on Levis

Ten-year-old Levis has a brand new smile thanks to you and the determination of Dr. Armando Siu, the medical director of our care centre in Nicaragua.

One year ago at this time, Levis was scheduled for cleft lip surgery on the last day of a large international medical mission in Managua. He'd waited years for this moment. The arrival of COVID-19 in Nicaragua dashed his hopes, but not his resolve, as the pandemic postponed surgeries. Levis and his mother, Ángela, went home sad, disappointed and the waiting began.

Seven long months passed. During that time, the care centre carefully monitored the pandemic's impact around the country. Stringent new COVID-related protocols were developed to make it possible to conduct small-scale surgical missions when the conditions were safe.

Finally in October 2020 those conditions were right to safely and cautiously resume surgery. Levis' family received the call they were waiting for and once again, made the 16-hour journey by bus to Managua. This time Levis was helping his mother with his new five-month-old baby brother who also tagged along.



Dr. Siu insisted that Levis be one of the first to receive his new smile because his was one of the first surgeries postponed by the pandemic.

After the surgery was finished, Dr. Siu said, "The happiness that showed in Levis' new smile was contagious! The whole family was so happy as they headed home." Thank you, Canada, for giving Levis a bright future ahead.



# EVERY GRAM COUNTS

## Nutrition programs are the lifeline for children waiting for surgery.

Now more than ever, nutrition programs are essential for keeping infants and young children with cleft conditions healthy as they wait for their surgery. Even before the outbreak of COVID-19, the overall health of a child was one determining factor for assessing eligibility for cleft surgery.

Feeding can be difficult for children with cleft conditions and can often lead to undernourished and malnourished patients. Surgery poses a real risk to them.

Our programs are geared to reduce this risk by giving patients the nutritious food they need to gain weight and become eligible for surgery when the time is right.

In Ghana, the nutrition program has been operating on a monthly basis since 2015 (every other month during COVID) led by a team of volunteer nutritionists. Through a partnership with two regional hospitals, patients and their caregivers receive medical assessments, education and training about good nutrition and feeding, and supplements to help malnourished and undernourished infants gain weight.

As the program grows in importance along with the number of patients enrolled, more local nutrition volunteers are being recruited and trained. This will help decentralize the program around the country and bring the care closer to the patients – especially important during the pandemic.



To ensure the safety of patients and their guardians, as well as the volunteers, new COVID-19 safety protocols are part of the program. These include the checking of temperatures, social distancing, setting up hand washing stations, wearing of face masks and face shields by volunteers and guardians, and the regular sanitization of equipment.

In Madagascar, Operation Smile periodically organizes two-day “nutrition boot camps” for its malnourished patients. Patients receive a thorough medical evaluation, while caregivers receive medical guidance and counselling to correctly follow the prescribed nutrition plan. Caregivers can also attend different demonstrations and workshops, such as how to properly prepare a bottle of infant formula, prepare a well-balanced meal, treat water so it is safe to use and drink, and apply good hygiene practices at home. All these details are essential to increase the likelihood that patients gain weight.

At the end of the boot camp, each patient leaves with three kits: one

personalized to the patient to help them gain weight, one for water safety, and one for hygiene.

These programs are helping us establish a new nutrition program in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the second largest country in Africa. Set to begin in March 2021 and made possible with your support, this nutrition program is our first program in the DRC since 2019.

The country will be divided into four zones and a volunteer nutritionist in each zone will train local health workers in remote clinics. Through the clinics, patients and families will be supplied with nutritional supplements, and mothers will receive instruction on feeding using a variety of techniques: breastfeeding, bottles, ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF) or other supplements.

In the country's capital city of Kinshasa, and before the program has even begun, at least 20 patients under age five have already been identified as needing nutritional support.

# MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

As the pandemic continues to unfold in all the countries where we work, there is so much uncertainty – about tomorrow, the next month, and the coming years. While times are uncertain, our resolve to help our patients and their families is not.

The last few months have given all of us an opportunity to think about the past, make the best of each day, and plan for the future. Our strengthened resolve and plan for the future is spelled out in **Roadmap 2021 & Beyond: Smiles Ahead** (see right). The plan is focused on keeping children safe and healthy while they wait for their new smiles, strengthening our ability to provide safe surgery now and address the ever-growing backlog of children waiting for surgery in the future.

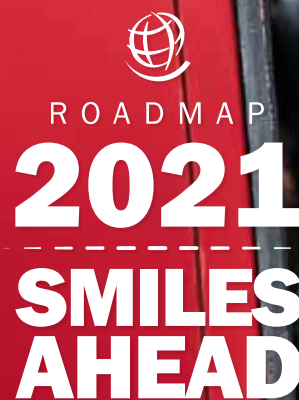
When and where it's safe, small-scale surgeries are slowly and carefully resuming. These surgical "missions" are typically only one or two days in length and deliver new smiles to just a handful of children. It's what we're able to do safely now and it's clearly not enough.

One year into the pandemic, each cleft lip and palate that is repaired seems all that more special now – given the circumstances in which it was delivered: new pre-surgery COVID testing, limited patient travel, extended on-site stays, extensive pre- and post-operative health monitoring of patients and their families, new surgical locations, new COVID-related check lists – the list goes on.

Each new smile is a testament to your unwavering support, and the true dedication of our medical volunteers and healthcare partners. We are moving forward and we just cannot thank you enough for standing with us.



Dr. Bill and Kathy Magee,  
Co-Founders, Operation Smile



## ROADMAP 2021 SMILES AHEAD

### NEW: THE ROAD AHEAD

**Roadmap 2021 & Beyond: Smiles Ahead** is one part of our promise to keep you informed about our future direction and current funding needs. While times are uncertain, our vision and resolve are not. Only you combined with our dedicated volunteers makes our work possible. We face greater obstacles as the pandemic continues to unfold, and we can only move forward together.

*Roadmap 2021* outlines five key areas of focus, investment and impact for Operation Smile Canada:



**Delivering Safe Surgery at the Local Level**



**Battling Malnutrition**



**Investing in Education and Training**



**Pioneering Cleft Research**



**Supporting Local Comprehensive Cleft Care Centres**

You can read the *Roadmap* online at:  
[operationsmile.ca/roadmap](https://operationsmile.ca/roadmap). If you would prefer a printed copy, just give us a call at: 1.844.376.4530. Thank you.





Johana Amar

## AN INSPIRING MISSION EXPERIENCE

Even as a child, Johana Amar had no doubt what she would grow up to be. “I was born to be a nurse,” she said. Another passion of Johana’s is humanitarian work. “I always wanted to be part of a community that helped other people – people impacted by conflict, crises or poverty.”

A professional colleague told her about the work of Operation Smile. Her colleague had been on several missions with Operation Smile and encouraged Johana to investigate further.

Johana volunteered on her first medical mission in 2017 in Managua, Nicaragua. “I had a great experience. I was impressed with how well everything was prepared. No detail was too small and every aspect of patient care was thought through in advance,” said Johana.

She was also impressed with the scope of care provided to patients and their families at the mission site – speech therapists, child life specialists and counselling. “Operation Smile is a very good

organization that uses donations wisely. I saw that on my mission. They work really hard at changing lives and making a huge difference.”

After reflecting on her experiences as an Operation Smile volunteer, Johana decided to make Operation Smile Canada a beneficiary of her retirement funds. “I feel so passionate about helping others and it felt like the right thing to do. So many children with cleft conditions live in silence – they don’t have a voice. I felt it would be wrong to leave them in silence,” she said, explaining her reason for making a lasting gift. “I want to make their lives better.”

“I know that the right things will be done with my gift. Having been on a medical mission, I know the support Operation Smile receives really makes a difference and goes to help the people we serve. I also like the fact that Operation Smile is working for better levels of healthcare, better prenatal care in low- and middle-income countries. It’s an important aspect of long-term change that helps everyone.”

## Why Designate a Charity as a Beneficiary of Your Retirement Fund?

By choosing a registered charity as a beneficiary of your RRSP, RRIF or TFSA, your estate will receive a donation receipt for the full value of your gift, and the tax credit reduces and can even completely offset estate taxes.

It’s a tried and true way of having an enduring impact, one that Johana and a growing number of other Operation Smile Canada supporters have embraced.

## ForeverSmiles Club

The Forever Smiles Club honours supporters who make a lasting gift, such as through wills, life insurance policies and retirement funds. To become a member, please reach out to Ken Butland at: 1.844.376.4530 (direct: 1.647.952.8229) or by email at: [ken.butland@operationsmile.org](mailto:ken.butland@operationsmile.org).

Laura, from  
Colombia



## ALWAYS BE THERE FOR THE CHILDREN

Every gift leads to a smile and means the world to a child who needs your help. A great way to help more children is to become a monthly **SMILE PARTNER**. Giving monthly is an easy, budget-friendly way for you to deliver impact to the children every month. You'll keep them healthy before and after their surgery, ensuring care every step of the way.

After surgery, most children require follow-up care. Laura was born with a cleft lip and palate and has been our patient her whole life. With her mom, Nancy, she first visited Operation Smile Colombia when she was just two days old. Over the years, Laura's had five surgeries, continuous dental and orthodontic work, and ongoing speech therapy. She's grown up to be a vibrant teenager and remains part of the Operation Smile family.


This is just part of your impact as a **SMILE PARTNER**. We're very cautiously resuming local small-scale surgeries where conditions are safe for patients and local medical volunteers. Moving forward together, we will help deliver new smiles to the thousands of waiting children around the world.

Call us at: **1.844.376.4530** or visit [operationsmile.ca](https://www.operationsmile.ca) and become a **SMILE PARTNER** today. Thank you.

**Thank you for changing a child's life with a new smile.**

## WE'RE HERE TO SERVE YOU


From making a donation over the phone, updating your contact information, changing your monthly donor credit card or banking information, to discussing the impact of your gift or how to have lasting impact with a gift made through your will, we're always so pleased to hear from you.

 Contact us  
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Local: 647.696.0600

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