



2022  
SUMMER

# Smile Report

Operation Smile  
Canada

## Inside

- Expanding Surgeries
- Opening New Care Centres
- Giving Others a Chance



## Newfound Strength

Luz Clarita is a strong little girl who is surrounded by an equally strong family. Born with a cleft lip and palate in Las Rocas, Mexico, Luz Clarita was abandoned by her mother shortly after she was born. “Since she is the first niece in the family, we were very excited for her birth and became close to her just like we are with her father,” explained her aunt Roxana, “so we decided to help out.”

Luz Clarita is being raised by her grandmother, two aunts, an uncle, and her father.

Getting Luz Clarita the cleft care she needed was a priority for the family. A friend of her grandmother’s thought, “...there had to exist a charity that could help us out with a surgery for our girl. He started to do some research and found Operation Smile,” Roxana said. Through Facebook, he learned more about the surgery and care that Operation Smile provides to children with cleft lip and palate in Mexico.

“He called the organization and found out there was going to be a surgical program in Guadalajara soon, so he booked an appointment, gave us the contact information and we called directly to confirm,” said Roxana.

Roxana and Luz Clarita travelled 18 hours by bus to reach the surgical site in Guadalajara in September 2021. She and her family worked extra hours to afford the cost of the trip. Thankfully, Luz Clarita was healthy enough to receive surgery that repaired her cleft lip.

“Everything went great,” said Roxana. “We are happy because the surgery was successful. I am speechless and I can’t find words to express how grateful I am with everyone at Operation Smile.” Roxana sent photos to Luz Clarita’s father as soon as it was possible. “He is very happy and eager to see her. We want to go back and show him her new smile.”

Operation Smile  
Canada



## The Decade Ahead

Every patient we have the privilege of serving – with surgery or ongoing comprehensive cleft care – is precious. From the moment they arrive at a surgical site or care centre for screening, care, a warm embrace, or the help they didn't think was possible, they are treated as family – our family. It's what we do and it's a guiding principle to treat each patient as if they were a member of our own family.

The past 2.5 years have been difficult for everyone because so many children needed our help... and needed hope. We found ways to provide both and as things begin to change for the better in many countries, we know now that **it's time to do more.**

The decade ahead provides you, and us, with a profound opportunity to do more to help children with cleft conditions.

We've set a goal to impact the lives of one million patients over the next decade by having **more people caring for more patients in more places.** To do this we'll **INCREASE** how many people are providing cleft and essential surgical care, **REDUCE** the obstacles patients and their families face when trying to access care, and **BUILD UP** local hospitals so they have the appropriate equipment, supplies, personnel, training, and physical spaces to provide high quality, safe essential surgery and cleft care.

These are exciting times at Operation Smile and I invite you to learn more about our plans. Please reach out to me directly at: 1-844-376-4530 Ext 106. I look forward to speaking with you.

A stylized black ink signature of Mark Climie-Elliott.

Mark Climie-Elliott, CFRE  
CEO & Chief Smile Officer  
Operation Smile Canada

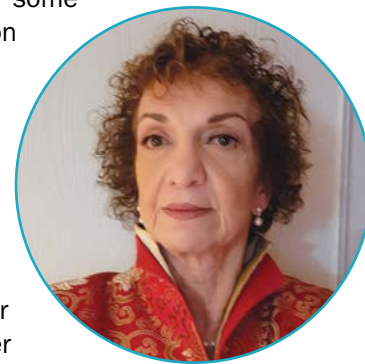


## Giving Others a Chance

For Kyla Carson, supporting Operation Smile is very personal. Born in Cairo, Egypt, in the early 1950s with a cleft lip and palate, her condition was considered by the hospital staff to be a sign of the devil. She was placed in a basket outside a hospital window and left to die. She was saved on her third day of life but only after her mother demanded to see her.

Growing up, Kyla felt terrible shame, guilt and stigma about her cleft condition. She has endured a total of 18 surgeries and at age 47, underwent surgery to realign her upper jaw. Years of psychotherapy helped her understand that she was not responsible for her cleft condition nor should she feel ashamed of it.

Her personal experience led her to become a psychotherapist. She uses her experience to help others, saying, "some people have scars on the inside, mine are on the outside, but everyone has scars."



Kyla's strong self-esteem has been a gift to so many other people, including her daughter who was born with a cleft lip. "Self-esteem is a key to success in the world. The sooner a child receives surgery, the sooner their self-esteem will recover. I know that surgery absolutely changes a child's life for the better. That surgery also impacts the parents and future descendants. The impact is multi-generational."

The gifts she wants to give children today are a new smile and the chance at an education. "They won't get that if they're hidden away in a dark corner because of something out of their control."





*Top: Rafael with medical volunteers at screening day, Petén, Guatemala.  
Below: Jonathan from Belize.*

## New Care Centres Open

### Expanding Access to Care

An Operation Smile care centre is often the first place where families who have children with cleft lips and cleft palates see other children with similar conditions, share the same worries as other parents, and find comfort as their children receive the cleft care they need.

Distance and cost, however, are the primary obstacles many patients and their families face in accessing cleft surgery and care. To improve access to care, Operation Smile in Guatemala opened a new care centre in Petén in February 2022.

This new centre brings exceptional comprehensive cleft care and surgeries closer to patients living in the country's northern region and in Belize. It will strengthen future surgical programs in the regional hospital of San Benito in Petén, and enhance our partnerships with local municipalities and medical authorities throughout the region to help raise awareness about cleft conditions.

The centre has already served as a beacon of hope and care for Jonathan, whose family travelled from Belize to Petén to ensure he received free and safe cleft care. Jonathan received consultations in five medical specialties - pediatrics, nutrition, dental, genetics, and psychosocial care. He was scheduled for his first cleft surgery a month before his first birthday. "Operation Smile in Guatemala

gave me the security and peace of mind I needed. When we arrived at the clinic in Guatemala, they answered all the questions I had, and they have always been attentive to my son," Jonathan's dad, Jeremy, shared. The centre in Petén has delivered over 80 cleft surgeries since its opening and is one of three new care centres planned for Guatemala.



Similarly, Operation Smile in Honduras opened its new care centre in San Pedro Sula in March 2022 to expand access to care in the northern regions. Since opening, the centre has provided over 40 consultations in plastic surgery, speech therapy, dental and psychosocial care and has delivered over ten cleft surgeries. The centre recently began performing weekly cleft surgeries and offers pre- and post-operative care. Children who live in the northern region and receive follow-up cleft care virtually will now receive in-person consultations at the new centre.

The generosity and commitment of our partners and global volunteers allows Operation Smile to continue to deliver cleft surgery and care in remote areas through these new centres, transforming lives one smile at a time.



*Below: Sebastián (right)  
with his friend Miguel*

## Sebastián

Maria discovered when she was five months pregnant that her baby would be born with a cleft lip and cleft palate. “Why me?” she remembers thinking, filled with fear.

After he was born Sebastián could only be fed with a syringe. Maria researched the support she would need while still pregnant and was able to bring Sebastián to Operation Smile Mexico when he was just 10 days old. It was there that the first-time mother found the help for Sebastián she so desperately needed.

“When I saw other people with the same condition as Sebastián, I was moved,” Maria recalls. “I knew I was not the only person going through this process.”

Though he was too young for surgery at the time, Operation Smile partners like you ensured Maria received special feeding bottles so Sebastián could get the nutrition he needed. He received virtual speech therapy during the pandemic, and was eventually scheduled for his first cleft repair surgery in Puebla.

“When they gave me the news that Sebastián would have his surgery, I felt very nervous, very excited... but very happy because I knew that afterwards everything

would be different,” says Maria. As the mom handed her son to Operation Smile’s medical volunteers, she remembers thinking, “I am giving you almost everything I have.”

Seeing Sebastián after his surgery was very emotional for Maria, who describes the experience as a complete change.

Now the two-year-old’s smile shows his curious and playful nature. Maria is exceptionally grateful to Operation Smile partners for giving her family a new beginning.

“Operation Smile is very humane, very caring, very noble... amazing people who give everything so we are well.”



There’s more to this story.  
Watch the video at  
[operationsmile.ca](https://www.operationsmile.ca)





Surgeon Joëlle Horace in Tamatave,  
Madagascar, April 2022.  
Photo: Jorgen Hildebrandt

## More Surgeries and More Smiles

### Surgical programs expand

While the pandemic continues to shift the way Operation Smile works worldwide, we are so happy to be offering surgical programs in **17 countries!** Here are some highlights from just a few places where your generosity is bringing hope and healing to children with cleft conditions. Thank you!

#### Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Operation Smile is conducting roaming surgical pre-screenings throughout Kwilu province in the DRC, reaching families who may not be aware of the help available for their children with cleft lip and palate. Though only one credentialed surgeon is available between two hospitals in the DRC, you helped provide **25 life-changing surgeries** to children since July 2021. Approximately 185 health workers have also joined education sessions on cleft conditions to better support their patients.

#### Egypt

In an Operation Smile first, you enabled the launch of a dedicated cleft-rhinoplasty surgical program in Egypt. This program provides surgeries to reshape the noses of children and adults who've undergone cleft repair surgeries. In March 2022, **17 patients** received rhinoplasty procedures from Operation Smile Egypt's volunteer surgical team. The program also provided dental procedures, cleft repair surgeries, bone grafts, and trained other interested surgeons from across Egypt and Libya. Since its launch in August 2021, the program has directly benefited **101 patients**.

#### Morocco

In just two days, **21 patients** received 40 surgical procedures via two Operation Smile surgical programs in Morocco. These specialized ENT (ear, nose and throat) surgeries were conducted by medical volunteers in the cities of Rabat and Casablanca in January 2022.

#### Madagascar

After a long delay because of the pandemic, **142 patients** received a total of 223 surgical procedures in Tamatave in April 2022. Just over 40% of the patients receiving surgery were part of our important nutrition program. Expanded at the beginning of the pandemic, this nutrition program saved lives and made 62 malnourished patients healthy enough for surgery.



Alejandro (centre) with his friends prior to surgery, Riohacha, Colombia

## Expanding Cleft Care in Colombia

### A Five-Year Commitment

A major new investment in cleft surgery and care in Colombia was made this year by Operation Smile Canada. Nearly \$850,000 was invested to provide more cleft care in the La Guajira region in northern Colombia. The investment is part of a five-year program commitment to our patients and the region.

La Guajira is an administrative region and desert peninsula that juts into the Caribbean Sea and borders on Venezuela. It is one of the poorest regions in all of Colombia where nearly 54% of the population lives in poverty. The region is also home to many refugees from Venezuela who seek a better life beyond that country's borders.

Operation Smile has been active in this region for over 20 years and is the only cleft care organization working there. "The need for a greater and more sustained presence in La Guajira is great," said Marcela Forero, Executive Director of Operation Smile Colombia. She added, "Many of the estimated 22,000 patients with cleft conditions in Colombia live there. It's a long way to travel to Bogotá and most people can't afford the expense. With this investment, we can provide care closer to home."



**"We know it is time to do more and that means having more people caring for more patients in more places."**

Operation Smile will strengthen its existing partnership with Nuestra Señora de los Remedios, a public regional hospital in the city of Riohacha. The funding allows for more cleft surgery and care in the region, provides lodging and travel for patients, increases training for volunteers and staff, and enables the hiring of specialized medical staff in partnership with the hospital.

Expanding cleft care in La Guajira is the first of many steps being taken by Operation Smile towards our goal of impacting the lives of a million more patients over the next decade. "We know it is time to do more and that means having more people caring for more patients in more places. We see this program investment as a vital way to prove that we can expand cleft and essential surgical care along with comprehensive cleft care in a country or region," said Mark Climie-Elliott, CEO of Operation Smile Canada. "Essentially, it is doing the work of providing cleft surgery and care while simultaneously helping provide all types of resources to the local health system to strengthen it so that even more work can be done."





## Moisés

Moisés surprised his mother, Cindy, when he was born with a cleft lip and palate in Honduras. His cleft condition went undetected throughout her pregnancy. While she was initially flooded with fear and worry, Cindy was thankful for the news she received soon after. Her doctors assured her that Moisés would receive the free and safe cleft care he needed from Operation Smile in Honduras. Moisés' journey to a new smile, however, was not an easy one.

Moisés experienced difficulties feeding and was underweight due to his cleft condition. His first cleft surgery was postponed twice as he dealt with recurring illnesses. Operation Smile volunteer and pediatrician Dr. Jennifer Viera treated Moisés and provided Cindy with nutritional information and our nutrition kit to help Moisés gain the weight he needed before his surgery.

In July 2021, Moisés was assessed and finally approved for surgery to repair his cleft lip at our surgical program in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Cindy remains grateful to Dr. Viera and our global volunteers for the unwavering support and care Moisés received. He will continue to receive dental and speech therapy at our care centre until he's ready for his cleft palate surgery. With his new smile, Moisés is a happy and healthy boy today because of your continued support and generosity.

## Two Decades of Dedication

### Helping Children to Speak

It's been an incredible 20 years since Vancouver-based speech therapist Megan Kleisinger first volunteered with Operation Smile.

"I wrote my thesis on parental attitudes and beliefs towards cleft lip and palate," she explained. "So when I heard about Operation Smile through another master's student, I knew I wanted to get involved."

Megan's first time supporting a surgical program was in 2002, when she travelled to the Philippines. Since then, she's provided patient screening and speech therapy support at a total of 10 international surgical programs. Megan most recently volunteered in Bolivia in March 2022. She said it was a particularly meaningful experience because it followed the untimely death of Dr. Victor Hugo Arteaga, the medical director of Operation Smile in Bolivia and one of the surgical program's biggest champions.

"We very much carried out the program in his honour," she explained. Bolivian children received an incredible 93 cleft repair surgeries over six days. Part of the comprehensive cleft care offered by Operation Smile includes speech therapy, which is important for children whose cleft conditions often prevent them from speaking or hinder their ability to produce certain sounds.



*Megan with a student volunteer translator in Bolivia.*

When asked what she finds most rewarding about volunteering with Operation Smile, Megan says it's helping to empower families.

"Volunteers from around the world, across all different kinds of professional backgrounds, are coming together for a common cause," she reflected. "It's amazing how quickly our patients learn to produce new sounds and words with the guidance of a speech therapist."



## New: Cycle for SMILES

Join us for a global charity ride that combines passion, determination, and community in celebration of Operation Smile's four decades of transforming children's lives around the world through surgery and comprehensive cleft care.

**Cycle for SMILES** invites cyclists of all abilities to gear up to help children get the cleft surgery they need and the care they deserve. Build a ride for the road, cycle in-studio or form a virtual relay – with **Cycle for SMILES** the possibilities are endless! Team up with your family, friends, and fellow riders to hit your fundraising goal!

Join the **Cycle for SMILES** challenge today and help us launch a bold, impactful 10-year plan to impact the lives of one million patients.

For more information go to: [operationsmile.ca/cycleforsmiles](https://operationsmile.ca/cycleforsmiles) or contact us at:



## 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, during and after their surgery ensuring care every step of the way.

More and more surgeries are resuming where it's safe for patients and medical volunteers. Together with you, we can help deliver life-changing surgery and comprehensive cleft care to thousands of children who want nothing more than a new smile.

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



Britany, age 15,  
from Honduras

## 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  
by phone:**

Toll-free: 1.844.376.4530 or  
Local: 647.696.0600

**By email:**

[ca-supporters@operationsmile.org](mailto:ca-supporters@operationsmile.org)

**By mail or  
in person:**

375 University Ave., Suite 204  
Toronto, ON M5G 2J5

**Visit our  
website:**

[www.operationsmile.ca](https://www.operationsmile.ca)

@operationsmilecanada

/operationsmilecanada