

SMILE TRAIN AFRICA QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Jan-Mar 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 levels to anchor advocacy, the capacity of our partners and programs to strengthen surgical systems, and research infrastructure on global health priorities and policy.

emanjeru@smiletrain.org |
africa@smiletrain.org



TOP STORY: SMILE TRAIN AT 64TH WACS CONFERENCE, SIERRA LEONE



SUSANNAH SCHAEFER CELEBRATES WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

As an Honorary Fellow of WACS, Smile Train President & CEO Susannah Schaefer delivered a keynote speech on the space for women in leadership. She urged women in surgery to complete their studies, seek mentorship, and pursue leadership roles in surgery to influence policy. Schaefer stressed that women bring a unique aspect of empathy and social connection to leadership roles and urged both men and women to be intentional in creating collaborative spaces for female surgical professionals.

ADVANCING CLEFT CARE: SMILE TRAIN'S SYMPOSIUM ON MULTIDISCIPLINARY INNOVATIONS

The Smile Train symposium themed *Propagating Innovations to Improve Multidisciplinary Cleft Care* was a great success!

The session discussed the impact of our "teach a man to fish" model on global surgery. Speakers talked about various issues including engaging governments to commit to prioritizing National Surgical Plans in Primary Health Care as part of health systems strengthening, building the capacity of our partners and programs, fostering multidisciplinary cleft care to improve patient outcomes, leveraging innovation through evidence-based solutions and establishing research infrastructure on global health priorities and policy.

We appreciate medical experts among them Prof. Bernard Jiburum, Prof. Raphiou Diallo, Prof. Peter Donkor, Prof. Emmanuel Ameh, Dr Alhassan Datti Mohammed and Dr Solomon Obiri who reaffirm the power of partnerships in enhancing patient outcomes and elevating the quality of cleft care in Africa



SMILE TRAIN'S COURTESY VISIT TO SIERRA LEONE'S MINISTER OF HEALTH AND SANITATION.

Schaefer, alongside a delegation of Smile Train Africa staff and local partners paid a courtesy visit to the Minister of Health and Sanitation in Sierra Leone, Dr. Austin Demby. During the visit, they discussed the Smile Train programs in the country and identified opportunities for collaboration with government institutions to strengthen surgical care in the country. The visit was a significant step towards making quality and comprehensive cleft care a top priority and more accessible for all.



ADVANCING SURGICAL EXCELLENCE: SMILE TRAIN'S SIMULARE WORKSHOP AT THE WACS CONFERENCE.

We also hosted a highly interactive Simulare Workshop which brought together Oral & Maxillofacial, Plastic, Pediatric, and General Surgeons under one roof. The workshop was led by Dr. Jerry Brown, Dr. Lawrence Sherman, and Dr. Solomon Obiri. The Simulare workshop provided trainees with greater access to safe, high-quality training. By honing their surgical techniques, we empower surgeons to deliver exceptional care to children with clefts.



STRENGTHENING AFRICA'S SURGICAL SYSTEMS: PASHEF RETREAT IN NAIVASHA, KENYA

After the successful First Pan African Surgical Health Forum (PASHeF) in Rwanda in July 2023, a Technical Working Group consisting of health representatives from different African countries held a retreat in Naivasha, Kenya in January 2024. The retreat was attended by delegates from Nigeria, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Zambia to discuss strategies to strengthen Africa's surgical systems. The key objectives of the meeting were:

- ❖ Providing updates on National Surgical, Obstetric, and Anesthesia Plans (NSOAPs) after PASHeF I
- ❖ Developing a strategy to support countries in planning and implementing NSOAPs
- ❖ Integrating continental NSOAP initiatives and reviewing the African Surgical Initiative 2030 report
- ❖ Planning for PASHeF II.

Sincere appreciation to Smile Train VP and Regional Director Mrs Nkeiruka Obi, Prof. Emmanuel Ameh, Prof. Emmanuel Makasa, Prof. Abebe Bekele, Dr Justina Seyi Olajide, Dr Barnabas Ayalande, Dr. Betel Amdeslassie for their time and dedication to steer Africa's Surgical and Anaesthesia policy implementation forward.



PARTNERS IN AFRICAN CLEFT TRAINING (PACT) IN KUMASI, GHANA: EMPOWERING COMPREHENSIVE CLEFT CARE TEAMS

Smile Train, in collaboration with Seattle Children's Hospital, Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and Ghana Cleft Foundation hosted a team of five Comprehensive Cleft Care providers at a five-day workshop. This workshop was held from February 5-9, 2024.

The heart of PACT lies in interdisciplinary team care, patient wellbeing, simulating live scenarios and team dynamics. Participants represented over 8 disciplines, fostering a holistic approach to cleft care. Here are the key highlights:

Patient Readiness Assessment: During the workshop, participants engaged in team discussions about a patient's readiness for safe surgery. This collaborative assessment ensures comprehensive care.

Post-Op Rounds and Challenges: Patients selected for surgery were followed by all attendees during post-op rounds. Together, they discussed complications, surgical challenges, and anaesthesia considerations in a group format.

The workshop delved into topics such as palatal fistulas, anaesthesia challenges, and non-surgical care for children with cleft lip and palate. Nutrition, speech, psychosocial support, and orthodontic health were also key areas of focus.



EMPOWERING CLEFT CARE TEAMS: TEAM CLEFT TRAINING IN MADAGASCAR, NIGERIA, AND TANZANIA

February 2024, Smile Train and Lifebox hosted three impactful Team Cleft Workshops in Madagascar (conducted in French), Nigeria and Tanzania. In total, 60 cleft care providers participated, reinforcing our commitment to comprehensive care.

Team Cleft is a modular multidisciplinary training course that focuses on teamwork and communication in the operating room, specifically cleft teams. The team comprising nurses, anaesthetists and surgeons enables the professionals to learn together.

The course aims to adapt both existing and new capacity-building tools and approaches to strengthen local capacity for safe surgery and anaesthesia in resource-limited contexts, focusing on ToT models that promote local ownership and scalability and include an evaluation framework to assess adoption and impact.

It is designed to help participants to:

- ❖ Improve their knowledge and implementation of safety processes to reduce the risk of sentinel event occurrence during cleft surgeries.
- ❖ Improving their ability to deal with and manage emergencies effectively as a team when they do occur.



ART IMPACT FOR HEALTH: SMILE TRAIN'S HISTORIC EVENT IN NIGERIA

Smile Train proudly hosted its first Art Impact for Health event in Nigeria, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) at the conclusion of the Nigerian National Surgical, Obstetric, Anaesthesia, and Nursing Plan Committee meeting.

This groundbreaking initiative marks the eighth global occurrence of Art Impact for Health and represents a significant partnership with the Nigerian Ministry of Health.

The Art Impact for Health initiative collaborates with local healthcare facilities worldwide to promote healing and communication and enhance psychosocial well-being. Smile Train is actively working towards achieving 'Health for All' by leveraging engaging art and exciting community activities.

During the event, patients were guided by their medical professionals through creative activities that facilitated meaningful dialogues with their families and Smile Train partners. The emphasis was on encouraging self-expression through the powerful medium of art.





REFLECTING ON 22 YEARS OF SMILE TRAIN AFRICA THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: A CONVERSATION WITH MRS. NKEIRUKA OBI

As Smile Train commemorates 25 years of impact across the world, the organization has made remarkable strides in Africa. For over 20 years, Smile Train has been dedicated to providing quality and safe cleft care, capacity building and shaping advocacy for surgical and anaesthesia care through strategic collaborations, research and innovation.

In a candid and insightful conversation, Smile Train Africa's PR and Communication Manager, Emily Manjeru, engaged with Mrs. Nkeiruka Obi, Smile Train's Vice President and Regional Director for Africa. The discussion touched upon several critical aspects:

Female Leadership: Mrs. Obi shared her experiences and insights as a female leader within Smile Train Africa.

Smile Train's Journey: the chat explored the organization's evolution over 25 years, celebrating milestones and acknowledging challenges.

Impact: Mrs. Obi delved into the transformative impact Smile Train has had on countless lives across Africa.

Challenges and Opportunities: They discussed the road ahead, recognizing both challenges and exciting opportunities.

The recording is now available.

<https://lnkd.in/eqnvJ-Ju>

SMILE TRAIN PARTNERS WITH FDI WORLD DENTAL FEDERATION, DENTSPLY SIRONA & HALEON FOR WORLD ORAL HEALTH DAY CELEBRATION.

Every three minutes, somewhere on Earth, a baby is born with a cleft. That's 1 in 700 babies facing unique challenges related to oral health.

These children are particularly susceptible to gum disease, tooth decay, cavities, and more. But here's the good news: these challenges are mostly preventable and when it comes to prevention, everyone has a role to play!

Smile Train proudly joined forces with the FDI World Dental Federation, along with our partners Dentsply Sirona and Haleon, to celebrate World Oral Health Day as a #WOHDOfficialPartner.

Together, we shared a six-episode series for parents of children with clefts. These episodes help parents understand common challenges faced by children with clefts when it comes to good oral health. We emphasize the crucial role parents play in ensuring their child has a healthy mouth for life.

Let's continue to raise awareness, promote healthy habits, and ensure that every child, regardless of their cleft condition, enjoys optimal oral health.

EMPOWERING JOURNALISTS: SMILE TRAIN AFRICA'S MEDIA WORKSHOP IN FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE

The pen is a powerful tool the Media uses in raising awareness about cleft.

Smile Train organized a two-day Cleft Media Workshop in Sierra Leone to improve journalists' knowledge and understanding of cleft lip and palate, improve their understanding of stigma and discrimination, promote the voice of patients affected by a cleft, and develop an action plan to increase the profile of cleft lip and palate.

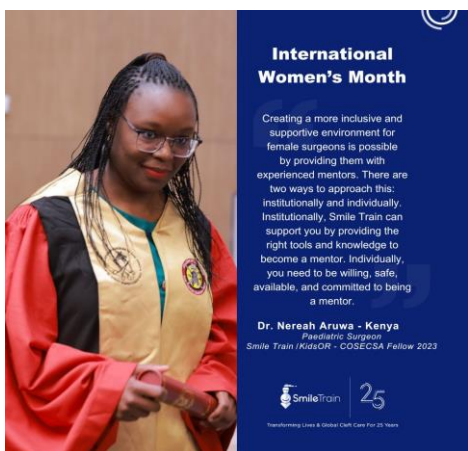
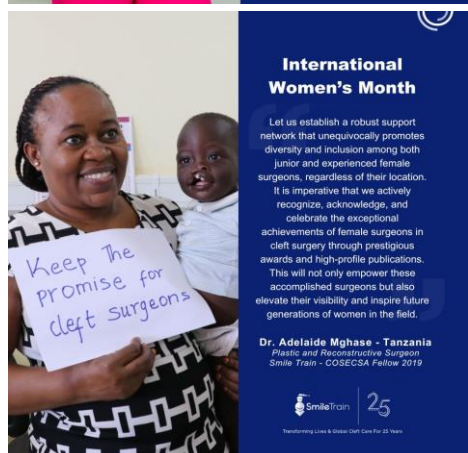
This is an effort to raise awareness about cleft lip and palate to drive behaviour change that prevents stigmatization and social exclusion of cleft-affected persons.

Thank you to the Smile Train Africa team in West Africa, the facilitators Dr Aiah Lebbie, Paediatric Surgeon and Mr Khalil Kallon, Executive Secretary, Independent Media Commission, for their commitment to using storytelling to break the stigma surrounding cleft.

The workshop strengthened the knowledge of cleft lip and palate of 11 health journalists thereby enabling them to produce sustainable reports on cleft lip and palate.



In honour of the International Day of the Woman, what is needed to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for female surgeons to flourish as we prioritize #cleft treatment in global surgery and anaesthesia? Here are thoughts from female Smile Train scholars.



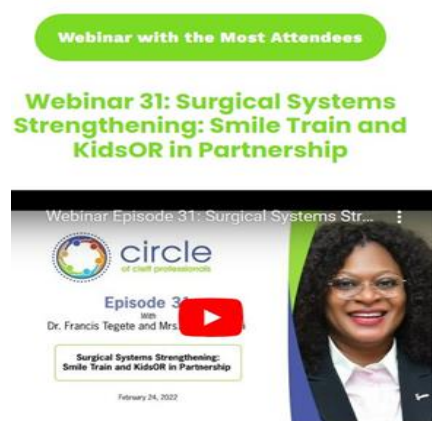
EMPOWERING LOCAL SURGEONS: HANDS-ON CLEFT SURGICAL TRAINING WITH DR. SHUKRI DAHIR FROM SOMALILAND.

Smile Train is committed to transforming lives beyond the operating room. We believe in empowering local medical professionals, nurturing their skills, and building sustainable solutions.

Recently, Smile Train East Africa Horn organized a Hands-on Cleft Surgical Training program led by senior Ethiopian Plastic Surgeons: Drs. Abraham G/Egziyabher and Ataktie Baraki with a General Surgeon Dr. Shukri Dahir from Somaliland. Drs. G/Egziyabher and Baraki, helped Dr. Dahir take charge of cleft care within her community and gain hands-on experience in real surgical procedures under their guidance.

We are continuously working on strengthening the network between surgeons, nurses, and anesthesiologists to form a cohesive team and advocate for comprehensive cleft care.

We appreciate Dr. G/Egziyabher, Dr. Baraki and Dr. Dahir for being a catalyst for change.



CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE: MRS. NKEIRUKA OBI RECEIVES AWARD FOR SAFE AND QUALITY CLEFT CARE ADVOCACY.

Smile Train Africa celebrates Mrs Nkeiruka Obi, Vice-President and Regional Director for Africa at Smile Train, for receiving an Award of Recognition at the Healthcare Federation of Nigeria's (HFN) Annual Conference. Her tireless efforts in championing safe and quality cleft care have made a significant impact on countless lives.

"I receive this on behalf of our wonderful medical professionals across Nigeria and Africa whose passion and commitment inspire Smile Train to continue reaching the most underserved communities with safe and quality cleft care all year round," said Mrs. Obi.

The 2024 Conference, themed "Bridging Gaps in Healthcare: Public-Private Integration as a Powerful Catalyst for Sustainable Growth," underscores the importance of collaboration. HFN advocates for policy reform to actively support and drive growth in the private healthcare sector.

Congratulations, Mrs. Obi, and heartfelt gratitude to the entire Smile Train Africa team! Together, we create brighter smiles and transform lives.

Exciting News! 🎉
Our webinar, Episode 31 on Surgical Systems Strengthening in partnership with KidsOR, was featured as most highly attended in CoCP's 5-year history!

Thank you to everyone who joined us for this impactful event.

The Circle of Cleft Professionals (CoCP) is a worldwide network of cleft professionals and cleft charity leaders with an interest in promoting Comprehensive Cleft Care in resource-constrained contexts.