

2023

ANNUAL REPORT

5

COUNTRIES

11

MISSIONS

665

LIVES TRANSFORMED
THROUGH SURGERY



Operation  Smile
Australia



Our mission is to mobilise Australian and New Zealand volunteer medical teams and send them to countries with systemic healthcare inequality, providing free life-changing and critical surgery to children born with facial deformities, in particular cleft lip and cleft palate. To ensure long-term sustainability of these programs, our medical teams also conduct training for local hospital staff with the long-term goal of program countries taking ownership.

**Operation Smile dreams
of a world where no child
suffers from lack of
access to safe surgery.**

MESSAGE FROM FOUNDER



Dr Richard Lewandowski and team, Manila 2023

2022/23 saw a return to normal with borders opening and travel opportunities increasing. A relief for us as an organisation, for our anxious and eager medical volunteers and for the many patients desperately awaiting surgery.

This year, our volunteers contributed to providing 665 patients with life changing surgery to repair facial abnormalities. That's 665 children and young adults who now have the opportunity to live a normal life, without fear of poor health, stigma and isolation.

We could not have the impact we have without our incredibly generous donors and supporters and our extraordinary medical volunteers who donate their time and expertise to benefit the lives of others. Thank you for your support.

I am confident that, moving forward together, we will be able to reach more children and develop our programs to promote safe and sustainable surgical care in developing countries.

Dr Richard Lewandowski

Operation Smile Australia Co-Founder & Plastic Surgeon



2023 GLOBAL IMPACT



JORDAN
2 Missions
114 Surgeries



PHILIPPINES
3 Missions
150 Surgeries

**665 LIVES
TRANSFORMED BY
SURGERY**



BOLIVIA
1 Mission
59 Surgeries



EGYPT
4 Missions
252 Surgeries



MOROCCO
1 Mission
90 Surgeries

TRAINING & EDUCATION AT THE FOREFRONT

Training is a huge part of what we do at Operation Smile Australia. Our ultimate goal is to equip resource-poor countries with the necessary skills and equipment to take over surgical programs themselves, enabling programs to run year-round and increase our impact.



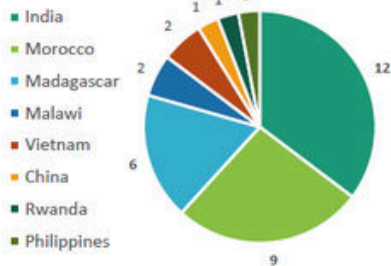
In 2023, 550 local medical staff received training.



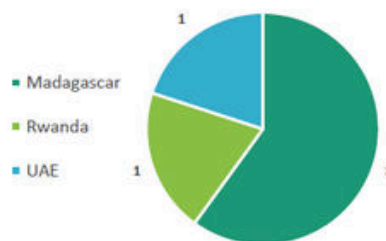
VOLUNTEER GROWTH

Volunteer numbers increased from 2022-2023, with borders re-opening and travel becoming possible again. Volunteer interest also grew significantly, bucking the trend of volunteer declines in other NFP industries.

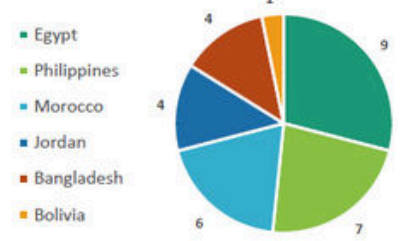
2020
35 volunteers



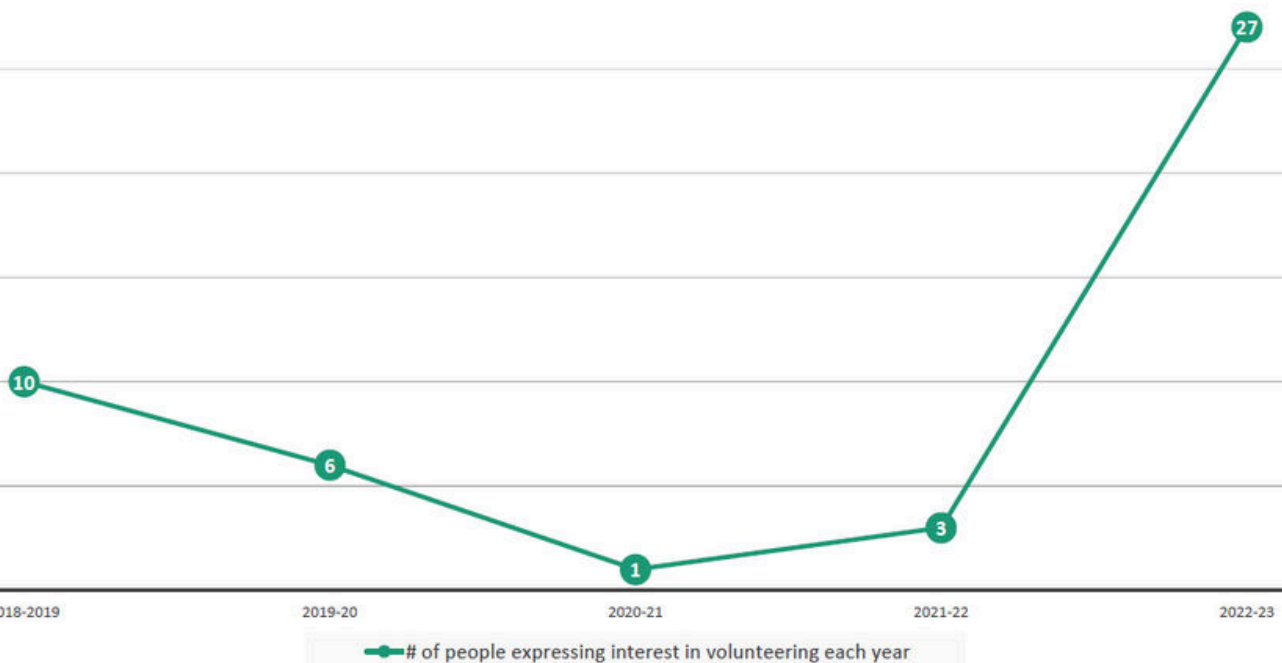
2022
5 volunteers



2023
31 volunteers



of (New) People Expressing Interest in Medical Volunteering for OSA



SURGICAL MISSION



Amman, Jordan



I hear the sound of Muslim prayer calling out over Amman just before Dawn, knowing that it won't be long before the children and families on the ward will slowly start waking up. Dawn breaks and the ward comes alive with the children's chat and play.

I am the night nurse on this Op Smile mission along with two other nurses who have travelled from all corners of the world – Australia, Malawi and England. We are working in the 'Italian Hospital', the oldest hospital in Jordan. Our shifts start at 7pm and we work until 8am. We've formed close friendships quickly and work seamlessly together to provide safe pre-op and post-op care to the 56 children and some adults over 6 long nights.



I miss the children, so resilient, and who would smile and high-5 me every time I saw them and the parents who were so appreciative.

SURGICAL MISSION



Amman, Jordan

The nights are shared with the valuable interpreters that consist of local doctors, medical students, pharmacists and nurses, all volunteering with us, ensuring effective communication between us and the patients and families on the ward. In between regular observations we whisper stories with each other deep into the night, while the hospital is fast asleep.

We learn about each other's cultures, share stories of our lives, and our journey of how we all arrived in this place together at this time. Before I know it, the mission is finished, and I am back in Australia.

I miss the children, so resilient and who would smile and high-5 me every time I saw them, and I miss the parents who were so appreciative of everything we did.

I miss the volunteers who kept us company throughout the night, ensuring we were well looked after with middle eastern food. I miss the breakfast with my night duty buddy's before we slept in the morning, and the dinner before we were taken back to the hospital.

But most of all, I miss the call to prayer in the wee hours of the morning.

Anna V, Night Nurse



NUTRITION PROGRAM Madagascar, Africa



In Antsirabe, 32 children born with a cleft condition and suffering from malnutrition received free medical check-ups, counselling sessions and educational workshops from our volunteers specialising in paediatrics and nutrition. These 32 patients and families also went home with infant formulas, food supplements and WASH (Water Sanitation and Hygiene) kits. Some mothers who had difficulty breastfeeding their babies received breastfeeding kits, such as breast pumps and feeding bottles. Our nutrition program aims to help underweight cleft patients reach the ideal weight to be eligible for cleft surgery.



FROM SWIMMING TO SMILES



Alice Tait (nee Mills), Olympic Gold Medallist turned nurse, put her skills of adaptability and resourcefulness to the test on a surgical mission to Egypt in June 2023 with Operation Smile Australia.

Alice is well-known for her swimming pursuits, having an illustrious career which rewarded her with a total of 20 major international medals, including 2 gold at the 2004 Athens Olympics.

But since retiring in 2012, Alice has traded the swimming pool for the operating theatre, currently working as a paediatric theatre nurse at the Queensland Children's Hospital.

In 2018, Alice came across Operation Smile Australia through a colleague who was about to embark on their first volunteer mission. Her interest was sparked! Here was an opportunity for Alice to share her nursing skills and expertise, aid in the provision of health care to those less fortunate globally and have an immediate and tangible impact on children's lives by helping to repair facial deformities that make it challenging for children to eat, breathe, hear and of course smile.

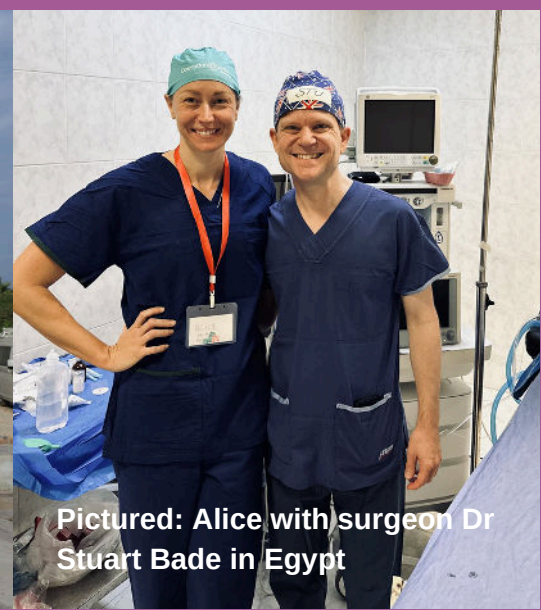
It was a no brainer! Fast forward through COVID, and when surgical missions were back on the table, Alice was first to put up her hand!

When asked of her motivation to join a mission, Alice highlighted that she 'wanted to maximise the benefit of her skills beyond the 4 walls of my hospital and broaden my horizons'.

When reflecting on her experience in Egypt, Alice felt that it had made her 'a better nurse, more knowledgeable and more resourceful'.

Alice shared a story of a young boy, about 4 years of age who walked into his cleft lip surgery on his own, with no parents to escort him in. He did not speak English, or Alice Arabic, so communication was based on gestures. Alice bent down to welcome the boy to the room and he immediately reached for her and they had a hug. 'This was so special to me as I could see the universal language of compassion, and selfishly I was missing my boys back home in Australia – I think I needed that hug too!'

'We are so lucky in Australia to have access to the medical system that we do, any child born with these conditions receives treatment, free of charge. As a mother, I can't imagine how it would feel to have a child born with a facial abnormality and not be able to help them.'



Pictured: Alice with surgeon Dr Stuart Bade in Egypt

LOOKING AHEAD



2022/23 was a great year for Operation Smile Australia. Our impact continues to grow. However, there is more work to be done. Hundreds of thousands of children are still waiting for the surgical care they need and deserve.

In 2023/24, we will be looking to again increase our service delivery.

We're excited to be heading back to the Philippines in October 2023 to re-start our Craniofacial Program. Craniofacial Missions provide surgery to children born with more complex craniofacial conditions that require extensive surgery and the use of a neurosurgeon. In a partnership between Operation Smile Australia, Operation Smile Philippines and East Avenue Medical Centre in Manila, we will embark on a five-year program to provide surgery and related care to children as well as training local medical professionals in surgical techniques to build future sustainability in this area.

We will continue to send medical volunteers on International Cleft surgical missions, provide funding to the Madagascar Nutrition Program and Vietnamese training programs as well as embark on new programs in Bangladesh and India.

THANK YOU

This year has been a success because of you!
Our donors and supporters make our work possible.

We have been inspired by the commitment of our monthly donors, the creativity of our community fundraisers and the participation of attendees at our events. We hope that we can continue to count on you as we keep working to reach the children who are still waiting for surgeries.

We are grateful for the generous support and friendship shown by the following organisations.



Geoff Booth Foundation

Operation  Smile
Australia

LEVEL 3 • QUARTERS BUILDING • MATER HOSPITAL • RAYMOND TERRACE • SOUTH BRISBANE • QLD • 4101 • AUSTRALIA
PO BOX 8046 WOOLLOONGABBA QLD 4102 • PHONE: +61 7 3163 2866 • WEB: WWW.OPERATIONSMILE.ORG.AU

