



Operation  Smile
Australia

IMPACT REPORT 2025

Farida, Ghana

Co-Founders' Foreword

As we reflect on 2025, we are encouraged by the measurable progress made toward improving access to safe, timely cleft and craniofacial care across the regions we serve. This year, with your support, Operation Smile Australia contributed to programs that delivered essential surgeries and strengthened local clinical capacity in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Our focus remains clear: providing high-quality care while investing in sustainable health systems. In 2025, we expanded surgical education, mentorship, training initiatives, and equipping local teams to deliver comprehensive cleft care and manage complex cases with increasing independence. These efforts are critical to long-term impact and improved patient outcomes.

We continued our craniofacial work in Manila, while supporting the development of a new cleft care centre in Cebu, Philippines. We also broadened our regional outreach to ensure children living in remote or underserved areas can access the treatment they need.

Your partnership made this possible. Thank you for enabling us to deliver evidence-based care, support local providers, and improve health equity for patients and families worldwide.

With appreciation,

Sue Lewandowski

Co-Founder & Board Secretary,
Operation Smile Australia
(BSc, GradDipPhysio)

Dr Richard Lewandowski

Co-Founder & Board Chair,
Operation Smile Australia
Plastic & Reconstructive Surgeon (MBBS,
MPhil, FRACS)



About Us



A group of patients waiting for surgery in Antananarivo, Madagascar

Vision

A world where every person has access to safe and timely surgical care - and every child can thrive with dignity and opportunity.

Mission

Through our expertise in treating craniofacial conditions including cleft lip and palate, we provide safe, lifechanging surgery to people in need, while strengthening local health systems and empowering medical professionals.

Why our Work Matters

At Operation Smile Australia (OSA), we are committed to closing the gap in access to essential surgical and health care services — beginning with treatment for craniofacial conditions including cleft lip and palate, along with comprehensive, long-term support. By tackling barriers such as distance, financial hardship, limited health infrastructure, and shortages of trained specialists, we work to ensure that high-quality, life-changing care is brought closer to the children and families who need it most.

Impact at a Glance

A Global Impact

The following highlights from 2025 reflect the hard work and dedication of the volunteers, employees and supporters who make this possible. Through their efforts, we can continue to deliver safe surgical care, expand access to treatment, and strengthen health systems across multiple regions. Your support allows us to reach more people in more places, closer to where they live, reducing the financial and emotional burden for families.



15 Surgical programs

For 2025, OSA supported 15 short-term surgical programs across 3 regions and 7 countries: Guatemala, India, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Rwanda.



1,368 Patients evaluated

We evaluated over 1,368 patients through medical programs, care centres and partner hospitals. Of these, 679 patients received surgical care in areas where access is limited.



81 Health care workers trained & mentored

Empowering local health professionals through training and education creates lasting surgical solutions, often multiplying the impact of their learning within their communities. This year, 81 local healthcare providers participated in structured training and mentorship. One partner hospital in the Philippines gained access to Stryker drill units, enhancing confidence and capability to perform complex craniofacial surgery. Additionally, one healthcare professional completed an OSA advanced scholarship, receiving training and mentorship in Brisbane, further expanding local expertise.

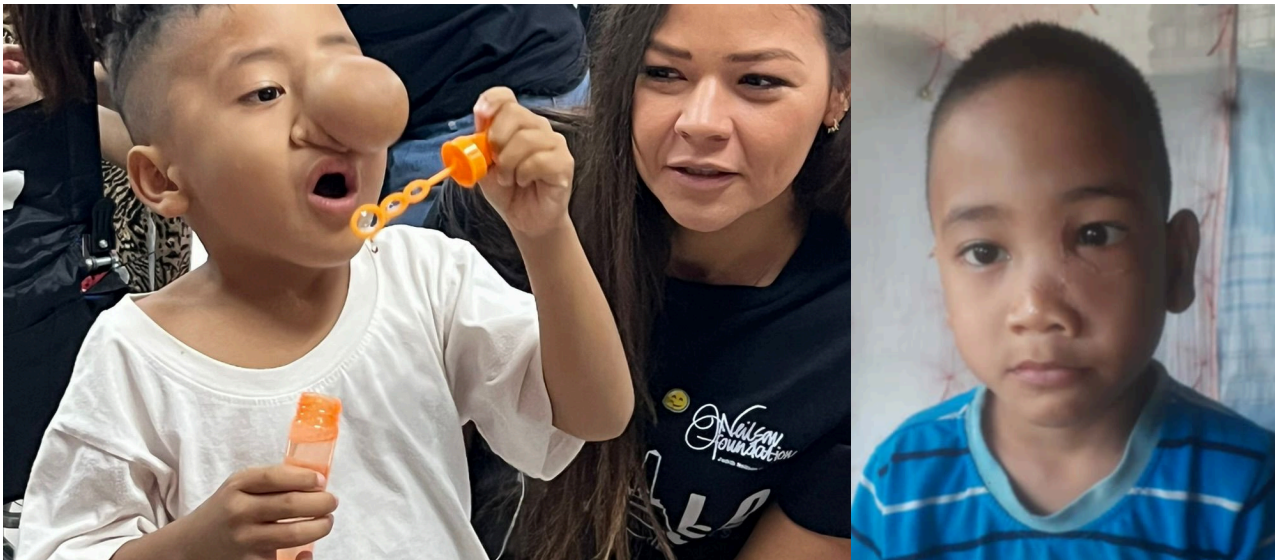


9 Partnering hospitals

We worked with 9 partner hospitals and provided resource investments in the Philippines. These investments are increasing surgical capacity, enhancing training opportunities and laying the foundation for continuous care beyond surgical programs.



Zambian surgeon Dr Mildred Nawagze under mentorship of Dr Wheeler, Cebu Philippines, May 2025



Marlon aged 5 at screening day from Philippines, Oct 2025

Two months post-surgery

Hope Restored

A long road to healing —finally complete.

When five-year-old Marlon from Tago laughs with his older sibling, it's hard to imagine how much he has overcome. Today, he is preparing to start Grade 1 — healthy, confident, and ready for the opportunities ahead. Yet just a few months ago, even breathing safely was a challenge. Marlon was born with a rare craniofacial condition called Nasoethmoidal Encephalocele, which affected his eating and breathing and left him vulnerable to chronic infections.

His parents, Rocelyn and Charlito, worked tirelessly to keep him safe, despite financial hardship and the long distances to specialist care. In 2023, Rocelyn carried Marlon on a six-hour journey to Operation Smile Australia's Craniofacial Program at East Avenue Medical Center in Manila — a trip filled with hope. But upon arrival, doctors found he had pneumonia, making surgery too dangerous. The same thing happened when they returned in 2024. Because specialised craniofacial surgery is available only during OSA scheduled programs, Marlon had no choice but to wait — a wait that stretched nearly two years.

This is the reality for many families across the Philippines: long travel, limited access to specialist teams, and the constant fear that the next chance for treatment may slip away. In October 2025, everything changed. Marlon was finally strong enough for surgery —and his transformation was immediate.

"Marlon has improved so much," Rocelyn says. "He gained weight, he talks confidently, and he's the centre of attention now."

For Rocelyn, the journey was emotionally and financially difficult. She worked as a housekeeper far from home to support her children, carrying the constant worry of Marlon's condition. The surgery brought relief she had prayed for.

Today, Marlon's future is brighter because supporters like you helped make specialist surgical care available to families who need it most. His story is a reminder of the resilience of parents, the dedication of health workers, and the extraordinary impact of donors working together to ensure every child has the chance for a healthy, dignified life.



Dr Charles Davis & Dr Nicole David (Filipino surgical trainee) Manila, October 2025



New patient on screening day, Vijayawada India, November 2025



Pre/post nurse, Katrina Adam with Patient in Cebu Philippines, June 2025



Leading on the craniofacial surgery Dr Jio & Dr Lia, Manila Philippines, October 2025

Bridging the Gap

When Dr Jio Santos first stepped into the operating theatre to lead a craniofacial surgery in October 2025, it marked a defining moment—not just in his career, but in the future of craniofacial care in the Philippines. For children born with craniofacial conditions, access to surgery can transform their lives—opening doors to education, confidence, and community inclusion.

Dr Santos, a young Filipino Plastic Reconstructive Surgeon at East Avenue Medical Centre, has grown alongside Operation Smile Australia's craniofacial program since its launch in 2023. Under the mentorship of surgeons like Dr Richard Lewandowski, he gained advanced technical skills, leadership experience, and the confidence to guide his own surgical team through complex cases.

Equally inspiring is Cheryl, a scrub nurse at East Avenue Medical Centre. When the program began, she required a mentor nurse to double-scrub with her for every procedure due to nervousness and unfamiliarity with the implants. Today, Cheryl scrubs confidently and independently, demonstrating excellent technique and composure.

Her growth highlights how the program strengthens the entire surgical team—ensuring lasting, sustainable care for patients. By empowering local professionals like Dr Santos and Cheryl, Operation Smile Australia is helping close the gap in surgical care and ensure children can access life-changing treatment closer to home.

Dr Santos explains, "We can train more surgeons to practice in areas that don't have surgeons there... so the care we provide in big centres can also reach the provinces". Rather than simply training healthcare providers, the program equips local teams to independently manage complex craniofacial conditions, creating a ripple effect that benefits entire communities.

Since the program began in the Philippines, over 32 patients have been screened, 20 craniofacial surgeries performed, and more than 62 volunteers from Australia and New Zealand have supported care and training. Each trained local specialised healthcare professional provides care to hundreds of patients over their careers, dramatically improving access to surgical care in underserved regions.



Leading on the craniofacial surgery Dr Jio & Dr Lia Manila, October 2025

“

These surgeries aren't about us - the surgeons or volunteers. They're about the patients, and how a simple surgery can transform their whole life," Dr Santos reflects - a reminder at the heart of everything Operation Smile Australia does.

Looking ahead, Dr Santos, Cheryl and their team will continue expanding craniofacial services throughout the Philippines. With local healthcare workers increasingly taking leadership roles, Operation Smile Australia's program promises lasting, sustainable impact—transforming not just individual lives, but entire communities.

Champions of Change

Operation Smile Australia's impact in 2025 was made possible by the extraordinary dedication of our volunteer medical teams, whose skill, compassion and generosity delivered life-changing surgical care and strengthened local health systems through training and mentorship. We offer our heartfelt gratitude to our volunteers, our staff, and the families who support them—their commitment and sacrifice remain at the heart of our mission and make lasting change possible for the communities we serve.



Local and Volunteer Healthcare Professionals on screening day, Manila, October 2025

Nurses

Alice Tait
Alison Cooper
Amanda Stahlhut
Amy Edwards
Anna Venetsanakos
Cecile Jesse
Christine Plumb
Claire Pounsett
Emma Jackson
Hannah Stapleton
Jane Harnischfeger
Janet Perry-Watson
Jenny Aspinall
Julie Franich
Katrina Adam
Lynette Shands
Marnie Rowney
Matthew Josey
Meg Swain
Melissa Cullen
Natalie Lawrence
Ruth Hudson
Stacey Collins
Terry Collier
Tina Haffenden

Anaesthetists

Hannah Brown
Kim Fuller
Sharon Maconachie
Stacey Swinkels

Pediatric Intensivist

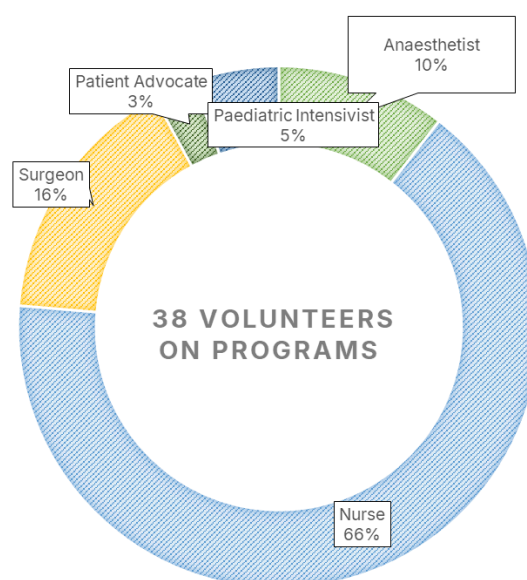
Thomas Boakye
Rahul Joshi

Surgeons

Agadha Wickremesekera
Charles Davis
Jonathan Wheeler
Mark Hanikeri
Mark Lee
Richard Lewandowski

Patient Advocate

Jackie Arnold





These surgeries don't just change a face — they change a life. What seems like a week of work for us, or the price of a restaurant meal from a donor, is the greatest gift we can give someone.

— Cecile Jesse, Pre/Post-Op Nurse

Seeing the transformation in these patients' lives brings tears to my eyes every time. The gratitude of the families is overwhelming.

— Janet Perry-Watson, Nurse

Watching a local anaesthetist go from hesitant to fully confident within two days made me incredibly proud. That's long-term impact.

— Dr Stacey Swinkels, Anaesthetist

Partners in Impact

Operation Smile Australia's achievements are made possible by the remarkable individuals, community groups, foundations, philanthropic partners, business partners, and corporate sponsors whose generosity strengthens our mission. We also extend our heartfelt thanks to Operation Smile Inc. and other Operation Smile Foundations around the world for their ongoing support and collaboration. Whether through financial contributions, professional expertise, or countless in-kind donations, your commitment advances our shared vision of a world where every person can access safe, timely surgical care—and every child can thrive with dignity, health, and opportunity. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and the transformational impact you help create.

Corporate & Philanthropic

Australian Philanthropic Services
Australian Stockbrokers Foundation Ltd
Austbrokers Comsure
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Community Bank Logan
Corrs Chambers Westgarth
Elite Medical
Emirates Foundation
FC Lawyers
Fitzpatrick Family Charitable Trust
Flight Centre Business Travel
Dr Geoffrey Speldewinde
Trustee of the Geoff Booth Foundation
The Trustee For Estate Of The Late
William Harding Denton
Henk
Hull Family Charitable Fund
Ian Palmer
Invisalign Australia
Judith Neilson Foundation
Lions Australia
LJ Hooker Property Partners
Macquarie Group Foundation
Morgans Foundation
Pamela Cory
Phillip Bray
Pickles Foundation
PromoCollection
Rose Porteus
Ruth & Will Hudson
Scrub Turkey
Stening Foundation
Stryker Australia
Susan Duff
Vision Homes – Dixie Morante

Community Partners

Brisbane Broncos Football Club
Filippino Australian Brisbane Society Inc.

Griffith University Orthodontics Society
OS Monash University Student Club
Vietnamese Students Association
Youth Charity Society

Industry


Australian Cleft Lip and Palate Association
Australasian Foundation for Plastic Surgery
Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists
Australian Society of Anaesthetists
Australian Society of Plastic Surgeons
New Zealand Association of Plastic Surgeons
New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

Medical & Hospital

Cebu Centre of Excellence, Philippines
Christus Muguerza Hospital Betania, Mexico
Dr. Pinnamaneni Siddhartha Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Foundation, India
East Avenue Medical Center, Philippines
Hospital Infantil Juan Pablo II, Guatemala
Hospital Nacional Daniel Alcides Carrión, Peru
Hospitales Puerta de Hierro, Mexico
Mater Hospital, Brisbane
Queensland Children's Hospital, Brisbane
Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital
Rwinkwavu District Hospital, Rwanda

OSA Ambassadors

Jamie Durie
Keiara, Kurt & Mila Moore
Piper Butcher
Portia Bennett
Sharyn Ghidella
Sister Angela Mary Doyle AO

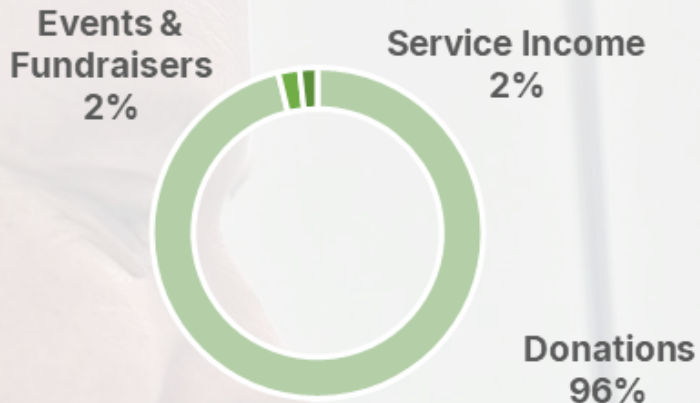
A photograph of three men standing in a modern, brightly lit interior space. The man on the left is wearing a dark blazer and light-colored trousers. The man in the center is wearing a light-colored button-down shirt and light-colored trousers. The man on the right is wearing a light-colored checkered shirt and dark trousers, and he is gesturing with his right hand. Behind them is a curved wall with a large, illuminated display. The display features a quote in bold black text and a name in white text on an orange background. To the right of the quote, there is a small, framed image of a medical device. The floor is a light-colored carpet, and the ceiling has exposed pipes and lights.

**"If your tools don't work,
make them work.
If you can't make them work,
make some that do work."**

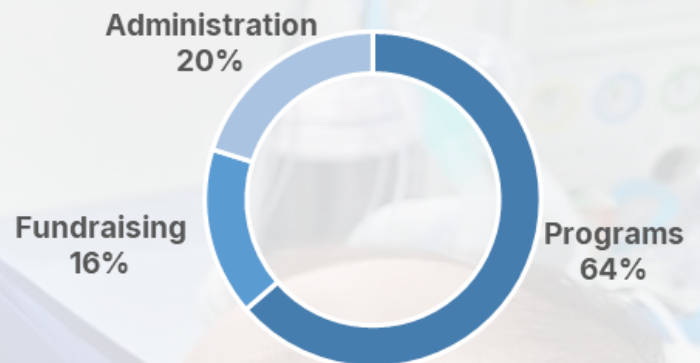
Dr. Homer Stryker

Financial Highlights

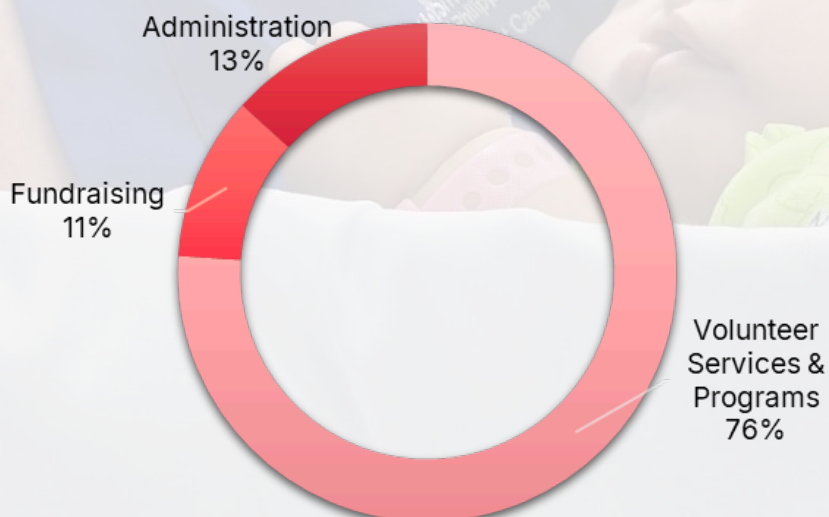
Where the money comes from



Where the money is spent



The real value is priceless*



*The value of volunteer services reported here is based on rates determined by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) which, given the highly specialised nature of our volunteers, is a significant underestimation. The above figures represent a more realistic, although still conservative estimate. This chart illustrates the real impact if OSA had to pay for this invaluable expertise.

What's Next




Emmanuel, Ghana

In 2026, OSA will continue to ensure that children born with cleft and other craniofacial conditions have access to safe, timely surgery, while strengthening local surgical capacity, expanding education and training opportunities, and fostering international collaboration.

 **Manila, Philippines – Craniofacial Program:** We will advance into the fourth year of the five-year partnership with East Avenue Medical Center, with increasing leadership by local surgical teams in complex craniofacial cases and expanded multidisciplinary training.

 **Durgapur, India – Craniofacial and Complex Cleft Program** - Support will focus on advanced surgical training and coordinated case management, enhancing the local team's capacity to manage complex cleft and craniofacial conditions independently.

 **Cebu, Philippines – Centre for Cleft Education:** Cebu will continue its development as a regional training hub, offering structured education for surgeons, nurses and allied health professionals, and creating additional pathways for local clinicians to lead training activities.

 **Vietnam – Program Assessment:** A fact-finding assessment will evaluate hospital capacity, partner readiness and opportunities for long-term collaboration in cleft and craniofacial care.

 **Global Cleft Program – Mexico, Morocco, Madagascar, Tanzania & more:** Through Operation Smile's Global Cleft initiative, OSA will contribute to expanded surgical programs and capacity-building across priority sites, supporting safe, timely surgical care for children in low- and middle-income countries.



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