

25

Transforming Lives &
Global Cleft Care For 25 Years



SmileTrain

2024

ANNUAL REPORT



Rajib, Indonesia

Letter from the CEO



Susannah Schaefer with a Smile Train patient in India

Our 2024 fiscal year (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024) was a pivotal moment in Smile Train's history — one defined by profound milestones and momentum.

For one, we celebrated our 25th anniversary — a quarter century of empowering local medical professionals to deliver transformational cleft care, every day, in communities around the world. Since our founding in 1999, we've evolved from a bold startup into the world's largest cleft-focused organization. This was no accident, and we would not be where we are today without the dedication and generosity of so many, including our incomparable medical partners, our extraordinary staff, and, crucially, our steadfast supporters.

Thanks to you, during our 2024 fiscal year, we:

- Enabled **nearly 100,000 life-changing cleft surgeries** across **78 countries**.
- Surpassed 2 million **Smile Train-supported cleft surgeries** since our founding – **more than every other charity combined**.
- Published a **groundbreaking economic impact report** showing that **our work has contributed \$69 billion to the global economy** and that the average Smile Train-sponsored surgery yields a **150x return on investment**.

You will see more on these achievements and beyond in the pages that follow — and the updates and wins in this report represent just a fraction of the many things we have to celebrate from our 2024 fiscal year. Still, another child is born with a cleft every three minutes, and your support remains critical in ensuring that every one of them has access to safe, high-quality, comprehensive cleft care and is able to live a full and healthy life.

Thank you to our donors, partners, and community. You make this vital work possible.

Here's to the next 25 years — and to the countless more lives we'll change together.

Susannah Schaefer
President & CEO



OUR VISION

A world where everyone has access to safe, high-quality comprehensive cleft care and is able to live a full and healthy life.



Jesús, Mexico



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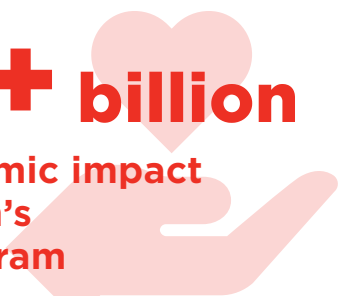
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Our Impact

\$69+ billion

global economic impact
of Smile Train's
surgical program



2,000,000+

cleft surgeries

for people of all ages since
our founding in 1999



One Goal

**to give every child with a cleft
the opportunity for a full and healthy life**



**Every
3 minutes**

another baby is
born with a cleft



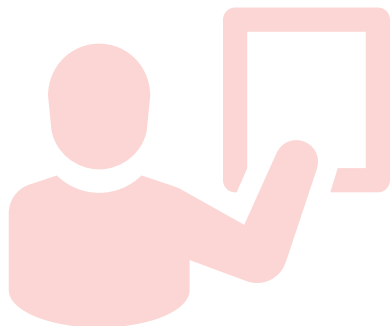
95+
countries

where Smile Train
has sponsored
free cleft treatment



48
countries

where Smile Train
supports comprehensive
cleft care



100,000+
training opportunities

20,000+

trained medical professionals—

including surgeons, anesthesiologists,
orthodontists, and nutritionists around the world



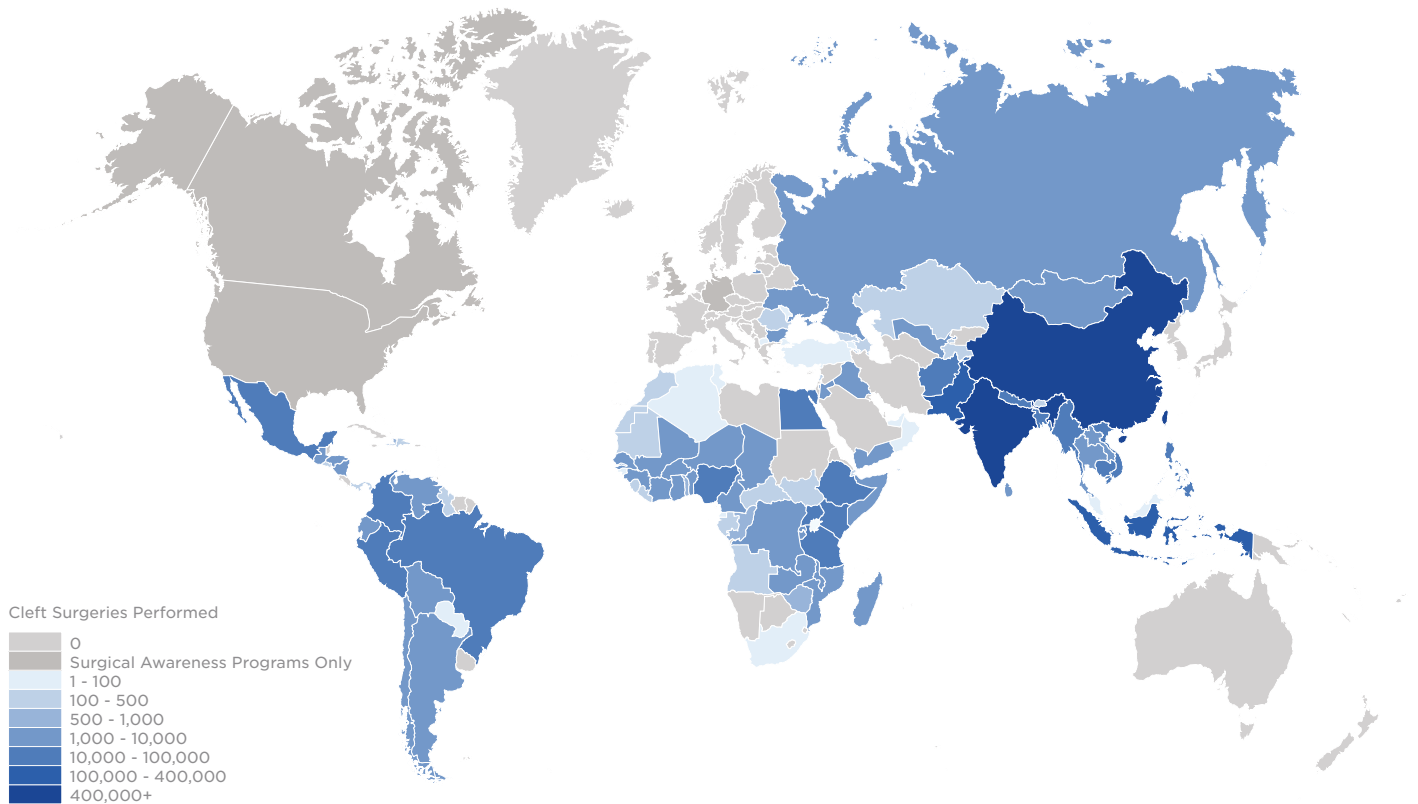
Every 5 minutes

a child receives life-changing cleft
surgery from a Smile Train partner



Where We Work

The map below represents all the life-changing cleft surgeries we've sponsored since our founding in 1999. But this map shows more than surgeries. It is a testament to the power of partnership. Smile Train partners with in-country medical professionals to support safe and quality cleft treatments for patients in their own communities. This sustainable approach makes us more efficient and effective than mission-trip based organizations, enabling patients to receive timely, high-quality care year-round and close to where they live.



Map as of November 2024

*Smile Train has provided support for cleft organizations in the U.S. and U.K.

Smile Train, Inc. can accept donations worldwide and has fundraising programs in Brazil, Germany, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Philippines, U.A.E., U.K. and U.S.

Our Model

Our “teach a person to fish” model empowers local surgeons and other cleft professionals to better care for their own communities. This approach is scalable, resilient, and, most importantly, effective. By strengthening local expertise and resources, Smile Train ensures that communities can care for themselves today and for generations to come, while unlocking access to cleft care for people in some of the world’s hardest-to-reach places.

Comprehensive Cleft Care

While critical, surgery is often only one leg of the cleft journey – and every cleft journey is different. Smile Train is committed to treating the whole patient through multidisciplinary programs that provide access to important comprehensive cleft care services, including:

- **Feeding & Nutrition**
- **Surgery**
- **Oral Health**
- **ENT and Audiology**
- **Speech Services**

Our comprehensive approach enables Smile Train partners to provide the individualized care that each patient needs to not only heal but thrive.

COMPREHENSIVE CLEFT CARE IN ACTION

Fundación Ayninakuna, a Smile Train partner nestled high in the Bolivian Andes, works with young patients and their families to provide top-of-the-line, comprehensive cleft treatment that encompasses their entire healing journey.

From initial evaluation and nutritional counseling through surgery, follow-ups, orthodontics, speech therapy, and more, Ayninakuna addresses the specific needs of each cleft-affected baby, child, and adolescent that they serve.

“I always tell my patients, we meet each other when they are born, sometimes a week old, and we discharge them at 17,” explains dentist Dr. Yolanda Santiváñez.



The entire Ayninakuna staff shares Dr. Santiváñez’s approach, working to build close relationships with the patients and families under their care from day one. That human connection, they know, is essential for successful cleft treatment – and is built into Smile Train’s model.

Smile Train’s focus on the whole patient ensures that our beneficiaries have access to the wraparound cleft care they need – beyond just surgery – to live their fullest, healthiest, and most productive lives.

FY24 Non-Surgical Intervention Highlights



Speech: 74,902



Orthodontic: 13,305



Nutrition: 7,517

See what Comprehensive Cleft Care looks like and watch Dr. Santiváñez in action





“Thank you for everything. I really appreciate it on a personal level. My academic training would never have happened without Smile Train. I have benefited in terms of education, exposure, networking, and personal and career growth — opportunities I would never have had on my own. Because of that change in my life, I now want to involve others, like my students. I don’t think most donors truly realize the impact they are making. Yes, there are the numbers of surgeries you sponsor, and that’s important. But the individual impact you are having on our lives — it’s incredible. Education of providers is essential. That’s where the growth is. Please keep doing what you’re doing.”

- Dr. Tsitsi Sithole



Local Expertise. Global Impact.

Core to the success of Smile Train’s work is our focus on “training the trainer.” Investing in education and training not only helps bolster safety and scale global access to high-quality cleft care today but also empowers the next generation of surgeons and medical professionals. In doing so, Smile Train is helping to break down barriers to more than just access to care.

ZIMBABWE’S FIRST FEMALE PEDIATRIC ANESTHESIOLOGIST

Growing up in Harare, Zimbabwe, Dr. Tsitsi Chimhundu-Sithole followed her love of science to medical school. Driven by a passion for working with children, she wanted to pursue pediatric anesthesia, but there were no opportunities to pursue that specialty in Zimbabwe at the time.

She went to Kenya for training, having earned a Smile Train-sponsored fellowship at the College of Anaesthesiologists of East, Southern and Central Africa (CANESCA) in Nairobi. Each year, Smile Train supports some of Africa’s most promising anesthesia trainees through CANESCA fellowships.

Once her fellowship was complete, Tsitsi could have pursued potentially more attractive and higher paying positions outside of Zimbabwe. Instead, she decided to return home to practice in Harare. In doing so, she became Zimbabwe’s first female pediatric anesthesiologist.

“I decided to stay because I belong here; I owe it to my family and my community,” she said. “The beauty of Smile Train lies in the fact that you empower the locals to perform surgery, anesthesia, and everything else that is involved in cleft care. I grew up here. I know the background, the people, the struggles they have. I know how they live; I speak the language and can relate to them more deeply.”

Now a Smile Train partner, Tsitsi is making a life-changing difference every day for children in her hometown. But she did not stop there. In addition to her clinical work, Tsitsi teaches at the University of Zimbabwe, helping to empower the next generation of local anesthesiologists.



A Year to Remember



Rajib (L) and Alim (R)

2 MILLION SURGERIES

Rajib and Alim: A Smile that Spans Generations

In a small and remote riverside village in South Sumatra, Indonesia, a father and son made history together. Alim, whose untreated cleft cost him his education and livelihood, never imagined a different future for his son Rajib — until both received free cleft surgeries thanks to Smile Train.

Rajib became the beneficiary of Smile Train's 2,000,000th surgery. Alim's surgery was the 2,000,001st.

Their story is one of resilience, hope, and generational transformation — and it's just one of the thousands made possible by Smile Train this year.

[Read their full story and watch the video](#)



Cover of Smile Train's economic impact report

A 150X RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Our Global Economic Impact

Our work not only improves the health of patients and communities — it also meaningfully uplifts economies around the world.

In the spring of 2024, we published a study quantifying the global economic impact of Smile Train's surgical intervention program, capturing the real-world return on our investments in communities worldwide.

It found that in 25 years, our surgical program has boosted economies globally by a staggering \$69 billion, yielding an average return of \$60,000 for the local economy for each \$400 surgery — a more than 150x return on every dollar invested.

Most importantly, we have given our patients a combined 12 million productive years of their lives back that would have otherwise been lost.

[Read the full report](#)





Shoba Lonappan with a Smile Train patient at Jubilee Mission Medical College Hospital, Thrissur, India

HONORING A HEALTHCARE HERO

Sister Shoba Lonappan

For 17 years, Sister Shoba has been the heart of the cleft ward at Smile Train partner Jubilee Mission Medical College Hospital in Thrissur, India.

Never forgetting how her parents sacrificed everything so she could be educated, Shoba now leads with empathy, skill, and unshakable devotion. She's helped more than 10,000 children receive care — and has changed countless more lives.

In May, we were honored to recognize her at our 25th Anniversary Gala with the “Teach a Woman to Fish” award.

[Watch her acceptance speech and read more](#)



Poster for the film *Every Day After*

FACING MEDIA STIGMA

Cleft Community Advocacy at SXSW

Representation matters — and this year, Smile Train led the global conversation on how media portrays people with facial differences.

At global thought leadership forum South-by-Southwest (SXSW), we hosted a panel called “Changing Faces: Media Representation and the Path to Positive Portrayals of Facial Differences” featuring filmmakers and cleft advocates, including Jeremy Shipp — a writer for Disney’s *Firebuds* — who created the first animated character with a cleft, voiced by his own cleft-affected son, Henry.

The panel emphasized the importance of equitable media portrayal and lifted up *Every Day After*, a 2023 documentary capturing the trials and triumphs of a young Smile Train patient in the Philippines.

[Learn more about *Every Day After* and watch the trailer](#)





A cleft surgery at KATH, a Smile Train partner in Kumasi, Ghana

Safety First, Every Time

ADVANCING SAFER SURGERY VIA CAPNOGRAPHY

Safety is Smile Train's top priority. Cleft surgery is life-changing — but like any procedure, it carries risks, especially in settings with limited resources. One of the leading causes of anesthesia-related harm is a misplaced breathing tube, which can lead to serious, even life-threatening complications within minutes.

The capnograph — a tool that monitors a patient's breathing during surgery — is the global standard for detecting these errors, yet remains unavailable in many low-resource operating rooms due to cost and infrastructure barriers.

To close this gap, Smile Train and safe surgery nonprofit Lifebox co-developed our Smile Train-Lifebox Capnograph — a rugged, affordable device built for low-resource settings, paired with a comprehensive training program for anesthesia providers.

With 350 devices distributed to hospitals in Benin, Ethiopia, the Philippines, and Uganda this year, our partnership is improving surgical safety for children with clefts — and all who enter the OR.

[Read more](#)



Staff Spotlight: **Mobasher Hossain**

Before joining Smile Train, Mobasher Hossain worked across Bangladesh to educate children in slums and support survivors of trafficking. Today, he leads one of Smile Train's largest programs — bringing cleft care to even the most remote corners of the country.

His commitment to justice, inclusion, and community-based care has made him one of South Asia's most fearless and impactful humanitarians.

[Read his full story](#)



Mobasher Hossain with a Smile Train patient





Luci holding a Smile Train patient in Guatemala



Luci participating in ELSA advocacy efforts

Community Spotlight: Luci Capo Rome

Luci Capo Rome, a retired nurse practitioner and author, has dedicated her life to empowering others with clefts and craniofacial differences. Born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate, she draws from both personal and professional experience to strengthen the cleft community and advocate for lasting change.

As a member of Smile Train's Cleft Community Advisory Council (CCAC), Luci helps ensure that the perspectives of cleft-affected individuals shape and guide our work. She is also advancing cleft awareness and health equity through advocacy, including championing efforts to pass the Ensuring Lasting Smiles Act (ELSA) to ensure cleft-affected Americans receive the medical care they need (more on these efforts at smiletrain.org/advocacy).

Luci also shared her journey on Smile Train's Love Meets Joy podcast, where she reflected on self-acceptance, the inspiration behind her memoir *Lucia's Story: My Imperfect Beauty*, and why building community is so vital.

Hear Luci's Story





Donor Spotlight: Sue Hoover



Sue Hoover holding a baby during her Journey of Smiles, Guatemala

A Legacy of Gratitude and Generosity

From her home in the mountains of Colorado, longtime supporter Sue Hoover has cultivated more than just a vibrant garden — she has sown the seeds of lasting impact.

Sue Hoover first discovered Smile Train in 2010. At the time, she began a personal tradition — using her annual tax return to sponsor a child's cleft surgery.

"I thought, you can donate to feed a child, but then after a year, what's going to happen?" she recalled. "Through Smile Train, with the same amount of money, I realized I could save a child's life and give them some hope for their future."

What began with a yearly donation soon became a lifelong commitment. Smile Train is now her top philanthropic priority, and she has designated a Legacy of Smiles gift in her will to ensure her impact continues for generations to come.

Sue has since joined a Journey of Smiles trip to Guatemala, where she met children receiving care, connected with their families, and saw the skill and

"If your donation can change one life forever and give a young child hope, that's incredible."

- Sue Hoover

compassion of Smile Train's local medical partners firsthand. "It transformed my life," she remarked.

"The beauty of Smile Train is — the funds are going to train local doctors to be able to give care. Every penny of the money we donate is used in all the right ways," she reflected.

[Read more](#)



Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

As of June 30, 2024.

ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 12,202,073
Investments - Board-Designated Operating Reserve	91,473,576
Investments - Board-Designated Endowment Fund	259,779,623
Investments - Donor-Designated Endowment Fund	4,887,484
Contributions Receivable	1,619,744
Goodwill	1,320,679
Inventory	134,788
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	2,314,482
Property and Equipment, Net	18,817,524
Total Assets	\$392,549,973

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

LIABILITIES

Grants and Contracts Payable	\$ 7,536,496
Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	5,057,066
Total Liabilities	\$12,593,562

NET ASSETS

Board-Designated Operating Reserve	91,473,576
Board-Designated Endowment Fund	259,779,623
Undesignated	22,252,110
With Donor Restrictions	6,451,102
Total Net Assets	379,956,411
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 392,549,973

Consolidated Statement of Activities

For the year ending June 30, 2024.

SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Contributions	\$ 97,664,214
Contributions In-Kind	85,009,971
Investment Income, Net	34,685,177
Other Income	482,610
Loss in Currency Translations	(39,307)
Total Support and Revenue	217,802,665

EXPENSES

PROGRAM SERVICES:

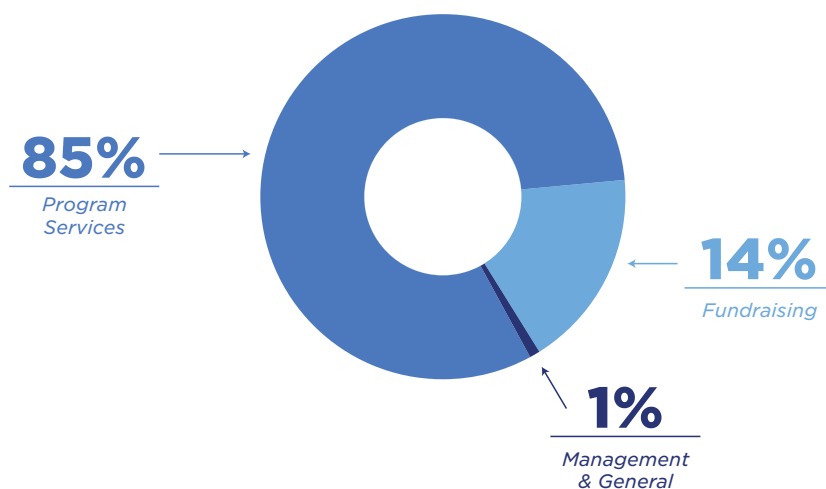
Treatment	131,792,600
Training	9,041,565
Public Education	33,556,348
Total Program Services	174,390,513

SUPPORT SERVICES

Management and General	1,830,043
Fundraising	29,323,199
Total Supporting Services	31,153,242
Total Expenses	205,543,755

Changes in Net Assets	12,258,910
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	367,697,501
Net Assets, End of Year	\$ 379,956,411

HOW WE STEWARD YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS





Corporate Sponsors

HALEON

 **Dentsply
Sirona**



FINSERV



**ashraya
hastha trust**

 **BEVERLY HILLS MD®**
COSMECEUTICALS

LABRADA



 **SBI FOUNDATION**
Service Beyond Banking





Durva, India

25

Transforming Lives &
Global Cleft Care For 25 Years



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