Operation Smile

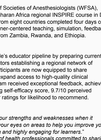
Pathways Connect

A newsletter that celebrates the dedication and achievements of healthcare professionals in training and educators committed to delivering safe, high-quality cleft care

Highlights from the Field

Developing the Next Generation of Clinical Educators - First SSA Regional WFSA INSPIRE Through Clinical Teaching Course

At a Glance



- **28** Operation Smile volunteers
- **8** countries represented (Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, South Africa, and Tanzania)
- **4-day** interdisciplinary educator training
- 3 countries represented on faculty
- 1 growing regional educator network

Why it matters

High-quality clinical education depends on skilled educators. The INSPIRE Course prepares Operation Smile volunteers to become confident educators who can mentor future healthcare professionals and strengthen learning within the Cleft Competency Pathways program.

What happened

In partnership with the World Federation of Societies of Anesthesiologists (WFSA), Operation Smile delivered the first Sub-Saharan Africa regional INSPIRE course in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Twenty volunteers from eight countries completed four days of interactive training in lesson planning, learner-centered teaching, simulation, feedback, and reflective practice, guided by faculty from Zambia, Rwanda, and Ethiopia.

The impact

The program strengthened Operation Smile's educator pipeline by preparing current volunteers to become future clinical educators establishing a regional network of educators across Sub-Saharan Africa. Participants are now equipped to share knowledge, mentor colleagues, and help expand access to high-quality clinical education in their communities. The program received exceptional feedback, achieving a 9.8/10 satisfaction rating, 9.6/10 teaching self-efficacy score, 9.7/10 perceived teaching ability score, and 100% promoter ratings for likelihood to recommend.

Voices from Participants

"The inspire course helps you to identify your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to clinical teaching and also open your eyes on areas to help you improve your teaching skills, making learning interesting and highly engaging for learners."
"I felt part of a truly multidisciplinary team of health professionals committed to sharing knowledge. We learned from one another, respected different perspectives, and built connections that will continue beyond the course."
"The course was didactic, concise, and clear, providing a solid foundation for planning and selecting appropriate methodologies for conveying information without losing sight of its essential purpose."

Pathways in Action

Advancing Cleft Care Education Around the World

AFRICA

Building Biomedical Capacity Across Sub-Saharan Africa.





The SSA Biomedical Regional Training held August 13–15 in Antananarivo, Madagascar, brought together biomedical technicians and engineers from across the region to advance standardized practices, strengthen safety, and support the continued development of trainees and educators in the Biomedical Pathway.

Key Highlights
22 biomedical technicians & engineers
8 countries represented
3 days of training
4 trainer candidates advancing to educator roles
English ↔ French simultaneous translation

From Standards to Practice
The training combined theoretical sessions with practical, hospital-based activities focused on patient and electrical safety; equipment management, reporting, standard operating procedures, equipment testing and troubleshooting, and operating room setup.
A key component was the **Training of Trainers**, with two candidates from Malawi and two from Madagascar beginning their transition toward future roles within the Biomedical Educator team.
By establishing shared practices and strengthening regional educator capacity, the program supports a more consistent approach to biomedical safety and equipment readiness across surgical programs.

Participants' Reflections
I hope to greatly improve my daily work as a Biomedical Technician.
This knowledge will help me to prepare for surgical programs.
The safety of patients, volunteers and equipment is vital to surgical programs and this course will improve my daily practices as a biomed.

Pathways Educator Spotlight: Building Sustainable Cleft Care in Tanzania

In the International Society of Craniofacial Surgery (ISCF'S) Newsletter article "Paradigm Change in Global Cleft Programs: My Tanzania Experience," Dr. Omni Emodi (Israel) reflects on how humanitarian cleft surgical programs are evolving from high-volume surgical outreach to a model centered on **education, mentorship, and sustainable local capacity building**. Drawing on his experience as an **Operation Smile educator** during a surgical program in Mwanza, Tanzania, Dr. Emodi highlights how international surgeon educators worked alongside local teams to strengthen clinical skills, assessment, and real-time feedback to strengthen long-term surgical expertise.
A key takeaway from the program was that success is no longer measured solely by the number of surgeries performed, but by the development of confident local providers who can independently deliver safe, high-quality cleft care. During the program, surgeries were completed while maintaining **dedicated time for surgical instruction and mentorship**. Dr. Emodi notes that empowering local teams through education creates a lasting legacy that extends far beyond a single program, reinforcing the importance of sustainable workforce development in global cleft care.

We extend our appreciation to all Pathways educators whose dedication to teaching and mentorship helps create this lasting impact around the world.

Source: Emodi O. Paradigm Change in Global Cleft Programs: My Tanzania Experience. ISCFS Newsletter, Volume 3, Number 3, July 2026, pp. 31-33.



LATIN AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN

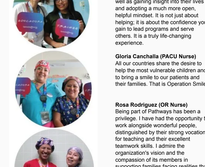
Surgical Program in Colombia
Expanding Pathways to Comprehensive Care

A surgical program at Hospital Susana López de Valencia in Popayán, Colombia, combined multidisciplinary clinical care with an important milestone: the launch of Comprehensive Care Pathways.

Program Snapshot
93 patients assessed | 20 surgeries | 11 professionals in training

With the core Pathways in surgery, anesthesia, pediatrics, and nursing already established, the program expanded the model to include speech and psychosocial care. Eleven professionals trained alongside experienced clinical educators, learning how these disciplines work together throughout a child's cleft care journey.

This expansion supports the development of local multidisciplinary teams equipped to provide care that extends beyond surgery. Delivered in partnership with the Government of Cauca, the program demonstrates how education and local collaboration can contribute to more sustainable models of cleft care.



In Their Words … Pathways Trainees from Peru







Magda Venus Ramos (Pediatrician)
The Pathways helped me develop practical skills for evaluating patients with various surgical conditions, as well as gaining insight into their lives and adopting a much more open, helpful mindset. It is not just about helping; it is about the confidence you gain to lead programs and serve others. It is a truly life-changing experience.

Gloria Canchalla (PACU Nurse)
All our countries share the desire to help the most vulnerable children and to bring a smile to our patients and their families. That is Operation Smile!

Rosa Rodriguez (OR Nurse)
Being part of Pathways has been a privilege. I have had the opportunity to work alongside wonderful people, distinguished by their strong vocation for teaching and their excellent teamwork skills. I admire the organization's vision and the compassion of its members in supporting families facing realities that society still marginalizes. I have felt truly welcomed and am grateful to have experienced firsthand how rewarding it is to transform lives and bring smiles back to so many children.

Pathways Graduate Spotlight - Dr. Biswalo Yango



Since joining the Pathways program in April 2024, Dr. Biswalo, a plastic surgeon at Bugando Medical Center in Tanzania and Saint Augustine Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences, has continued to enhance both clinical expertise and leadership skills through mentorship, visiting professorships, and hands-on training opportunities.
Throughout the program, Dr. Biswalo has been inspired by its focus on sustainable capacity building, health system strengthening, and infrastructure development.
As part of the Pathways journey, Dr. Biswalo participated in short-term surgical programs in Cebu, Philippines, and Mtwara, Tanzania, in 2026. Reflecting on the experience, Dr. Biswalo credits the Pathways program with broadening clinical and leadership perspectives.

Let's Celebrate!

Recognizing the dedication, growth, and achievement of the Pediatrics Pathway Graduates

Wambui Wanyoike	Kenya	Ekua Afful	Ghana
Percival Lemeye	Ghana	Ruth Mkango	Malawi
Mamy Gloire Monkedi	DRC	Julissa Cauccila	Bolivia
Deisy Carolina Florez	Colombia	Edwin Catalan	Guatemala
Jose Luis Calva	Ecuador	Joel Amuruz	Bolivia
Dereti Sintayehu	Ethiopia	Ora Martinez	Bolivia
Leakem Afebacherew	Ethiopia	Carla Aranda	Bolivia
Martha Cudjoe	Ghana	Rocio Bogado	Paraguay
Raul Alibo	Mozambique	Sangwani Ngambi	Malawi

Reconocemos la dedicación, el crecimiento y los logros de los graduados de la Ruta de Pediatría

Learning Opportunities

ALL SPECIALTIES

- Research Spotlight: A new publication led by Dr. Daniel Bradley highlights the impact of Operation Smile's Cleft Surgical Training Program (CSTP). The study demonstrates how competency-based training and mentorship are helping develop skilled cleft surgeons worldwide. Learn MORE.
- Research Spotlight: New research from Operation Smile's International Family Study and global partners suggests that combinations of genetic variants may play an important role in the development of cleft conditions. Click HERE to learn more.
- Webinar: Basic Knowledge of Cleft Lip & Palate. Presented by Dr. Mohamed El-Shazly. October 13, 2026. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM New York time. REGISTER NOW
- Coalition Leadership for Equitable Surgical Care. Learn more HERE.

CLEFT SURGERY

- Surgical Practice, Training, Research, and Publishing in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. Watch Now.

ANESTHESIA

- Webinar in Spanish: Intraoperative Cardiac Arrest. Presented by Dra. Synthia Farfan. October 27, 2026 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM New York time. REGISTER NOW
- Webinar in Portuguese: Anesthetic management of patients with cleft lip and palate.Dr. Beatriz Cardoso. November 3, 2026 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM New York time. REGISTER NOW
- Click HERE to Watch Operation Smile & WFSA webinar: Tips and Tricks for Anaesthetic Management of Cleft Lip and Palate Repair Surgery.

PEDIATRICS

- Click to learn more about Helping Babies Breathe: Leveraging Operation Smile Partnerships for Implementation, Dissemination and Sustainability of Essential Newborn Care Education Programs.

NURSING

- Learn more about Medication Administration and Pediatric Calculations

BIOMED

- Biomed: Orientation and Overview of Common Equipment and Maintenance. Watch here

RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

- Watch this video to learn more about the Pathways Program Evaluations and How to Give and Receive Feedback

Looking beyond Core Specialties? Visit the Comprehensive Care Newsletter to discover more about the speech therapy, nutrition, oral health, and psychosocial Pathways.



Karina Olivo
Nursing Lead



Olabisi Mapederun
Pediatrics Lead



Claudia Garcia
Anesthesia Lead



Seya Mecfin Minoza
Surgery Lead

Let's Keep in Touch!