

smile

foundation

IMPACT REPORT

2024



Every Child Deserves to Smile



Heart of Smile Foundation

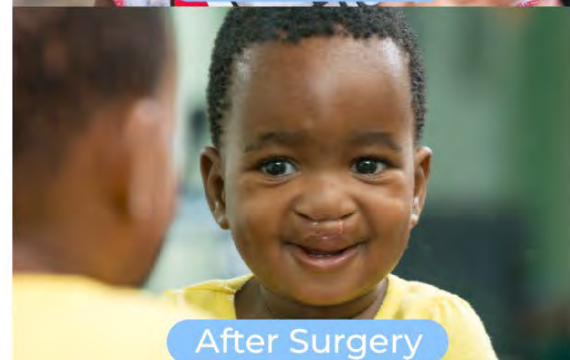
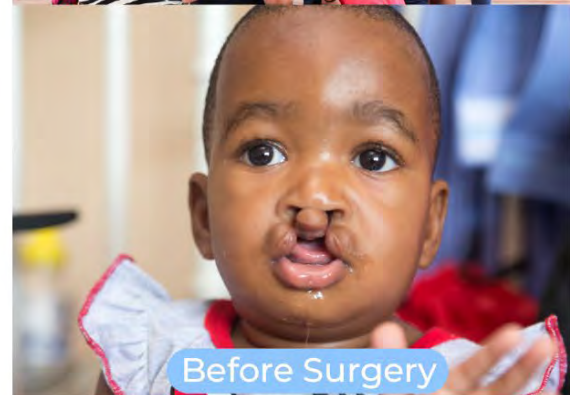
As our **2024 financial year** draws to a close, I give thanks to those who generously supported **Smile Foundation's** mission. Because of your support, we achieved **extraordinary milestones** this year - transforming the lives of hundreds of children with **facial abnormalities and severe burn scarring** and **giving hope** to their families.

These milestones include:

- Conducting over **500 surgeries** across **6 provinces** along with providing **psychosocial support** for the little patients and their caregivers. This is an incredible **30% increase** compared to 2023 - a testament to the impact we're making together.
- Beginning a programme of fortnightly surgeries at **Grey's Hospital in KZN**, as well as providing the hospital with much-needed equipment and televisions for the wards, ensuring a more comforting environment for patients and their families.
- Another remarkable achievement was the **pilot Burns Surgery at Frere Hospital in East London**, where children with severe scarring from burns had their scar tissue released, allowing them newfound freedom of movement - complete with celebratory thumbs-up gestures that reminded us all why we do what we do.
- During the year, we introduced a **Burns Theatre Slate** at **Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital in JHB**, operating every second Friday, and
- Hosted our **first-ever Smile Slate** at **Life Healthcare in Bloemfontein**, assisting 5 children with surgeries at their world-class facility.

None of this would have been possible without your generosity. Your commitment to Smile Foundation's mission continues to inspire us and fuel the work we do. **Here's to another year of liberating children and their families from the challenges of physical and emotional barriers.**

Wishing you all many more smiles
Tarri Parfitt
Chief Executive Officer





UNIVERSITAS ACADEMIC HOSPITAL

Smile Week

11 - 15 March 2024

2 - 6 September 2024

17 - 21 February 2025

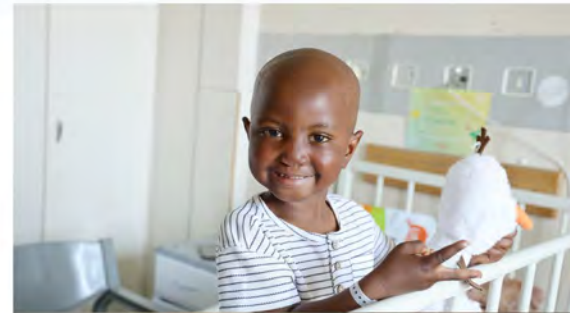
We had the privilege of hosting **three Smile Weeks** at **Universitas Academic Hospital** in **Bloemfontein**, where **61* children** received their forever smiles through life-changing surgeries. These Smile Weeks focused primarily on procedures to correct cleft lips and cleft palates, giving children the chance to smile confidently, speak clearly, and thrive in their communities.

Among the many inspiring stories, two **feature cases** truly stood out. One was a **brave child** who had endured the **trauma of a dog attack**, leaving physical and emotional scars. The other was a courageous young boy who had suffered from **severe burns**, facing immense challenges in their **recovery journey**.

Both **children** underwent **critical procedures** involving tissue expanders, tailored to their unique conditions. This innovative treatment has been truly transformative, paving the way for further reconstructive surgeries and significantly improving their quality of life. Their strength and courage, combined with the dedication of the medical team led by **Dr Nikita Blake**, remind us of the incredible impact Smile Foundation's work has on children and their families.

Thank you to everyone who made these smiles possible!

**17 Children are expecting surgeries in the upcoming Smile Weeks.*



Feature Case

Arrianna, a 9-year-old girl from Sasolburg, survived a life-changing dog attack on 20 September 2022. The attack caused severe scalp injuries, multiple bite wounds, and deep emotional trauma. Arrianna also faced bullying from other children due to her disfigurement, adding to her challenges. Through Smile Week, she received the care and support needed to begin her journey of healing and rebuilding her confidence.



DR GEORGE MUKHARI ACADEMIC HOSPITAL Smile Week

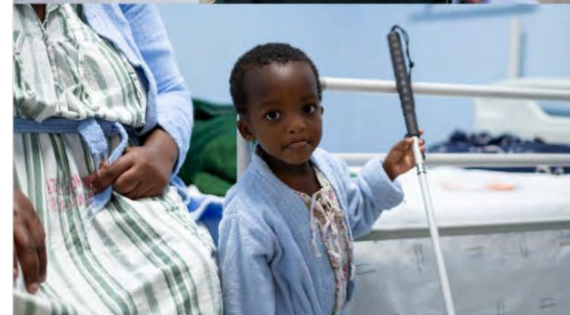
8 - 12 April 2024

We had the honour of hosting a **Smile Week** at **Dr George Mukhari Academic Hospital** in Ga-Rankuwa, where **15 children** received life-changing **surgeries** that will forever impact their lives.

The majority of the surgeries performed focused on correcting cleft lip and cleft palate conditions, which can significantly affect a child's ability to eat, speak, and smile with confidence. These procedures not only address physical challenges but also help to break down emotional and social barriers that many of these children face within their communities.

The transformation of these surgeries goes beyond the operating room, it's about restoring self-esteem, hope, and the freedom to dream without limits.

None of this would have been possible without the **dedication** of the **incredible medical team** led by **Dr Gloria Tshukudu** and the **support** from our **donors**.



Feature Case

Matlhatsi, an 8-month-old baby boy from Rustenburg, was born with a rare lateral cleft lip (Tessier 7 Craniofacial Cleft). This condition caused his mouth to appear unnaturally large, with facial expressions making it even more pronounced. His cleft, which extends from the corner of his mouth to his left ear, affects both the soft tissues and skeletal structures of his face. Through Smile Week, Matlhatsi has taken the first steps towards a brighter, more confident future.

Smile Week

15 - 19 April 2024
2 - 6 December 2024

We had the privilege of hosting **two Smile Weeks** at **Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital** in Kimberley, where **40 children** underwent **life-changing surgeries** that gave them a renewed sense of confidence and hope.

The procedures performed addressed a range of medical conditions, including **cleft lip, cleft palate, and specialised burn treatments**. Many of these children had been waiting several months for their surgeries, and thanks to this initiative, they finally received the care they desperately needed. Beyond physical healing, these procedures also restored self-esteem, improved speech, mobility, and transformed lives.

These Smile Weeks highlighted the **power of teamwork, dedication, and generosity**. The surgeons, anaesthetists, nurses, and psychosocial support teams worked tirelessly to ensure the best possible outcomes. Most importantly, this was made possible by the unwavering support of our donors, whose contributions brought **hope and healing** to these **children** and their **families**.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who made this Smile journey possible...from the **incredible medical teams led by Dr Maria Giaquinto-Cilliers** to our generous donors.



Feature Case

Gomolemo, a 7-year-old burn survivor from Kuruman in the Northern Cape, suffered severe injuries in a devastating shack fire two years ago. Her arms, hands, upper body, and legs were extensively burned, requiring nearly a year of treatment at Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital. During Smile Week, Smile Foundation supported her family by providing transport to and from the hospital, helping alleviate their financial burden as Gomolemo continues her journey toward healing.

AIRPORTS COMPANY
SOUTH AFRICA

FRERE HOSPITAL

Smile Week

6 - 10 May 2024

Smile Week helps connect **young patients** from **disadvantaged backgrounds** with **medical specialists** to provide **corrective surgeries** that families cannot otherwise afford.

During **Frere Hospital Smile Week in East London**, **21 children** underwent life-changing **procedures** led by **Dr Chris van der Walt**, assisted by **Dr Sarita Pandey** and their **incredible surgical team from PE**.

Among the children assisted, was **Zisuncumo**, an 18-month-old boy from Sterkspruit, Eastern Cape, whose name fittingly means **"Bring a Smile."** The year before, he underwent the first phase of his **corrective surgery** to repair the skin and muscles of his lip, improving functionality and communication. During this Smile week, he underwent a **cleft palate repair**, giving him an opportunity to **talk, eat**, and live a **normal and healthy life**.



Feature Case

Alutha, a 1-year-old girl, underwent a transformative cleft lip repair during Smile Week. Her surgery was so successful that her scar is barely noticeable. A true testament to the power of skilled care and compassion.

BEFORE

AFTER



PORT ELIZABETH PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL Smile Weekend

12 - 14 July 2024
8 - 10 November 2024

Port Elizabeth Provincial Hospital in **East London**, in partnership with **Smile Foundation**, hosted two **Smile Weekends**, where **33 children** underwent **life-changing corrective surgeries**. Many of these procedures focused on cleft lip and cleft palate repair, conditions that, if left untreated, can significantly impact a child's ability to eat, speak, and smile with confidence.

Sinethemba, a 9-month-old boy from the rural town of Joubertina in the Eastern Cape, underwent reconstructive surgery for a cleft lip. Due to health complications, his previous surgery had to be delayed. The surgical procedure involved the restoration of his lip continuity, improving his aesthetic appearance, and enhancing the functionality of his mouth, which has now enabled healthy speech development. Little Sinethemba and his family live in a remote area with no access to specialised medical care and through Smile Foundation's commitment to reaching children in such far-off areas, he was able to receive the surgery he desperately needs.

What made this event **truly extraordinary** was the **fierce dedication** of the **surgeons** led by **Dr Chris van der Walt, medical professionals, and hospital staff**, who sacrificed their entire weekend to change the lives of these children. Their commitment, expertise, and compassion ensured that each child not only received **world-class surgical intervention** but also **comprehensive pre- and post-operative care** to support their recovery journey.



Feature Case

Six-year-old Enzokuhle from Kwazakhele in the Eastern Cape sustained severe burns in a household accident when a kettle of boiling water accidentally spilled on her. The injuries left her with disfigurements to her right ear, neck, and scalp.

Enzokuhle underwent ear reconstruction and scalp tissue expander surgery, procedures that have been truly life changing. Previously self-conscious and often teased at school, she now has the chance to look and feel like herself again.



NELSON MANDELA CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL

Smile Relay

22 - 28 July 2024

In celebration of Mandela Month, Smile Foundation united with Operation Smile South Africa and Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital to host the Madiba Smile Relay. This extraordinary Smile Week aimed to provide corrective surgeries for 67 children, symbolising Madiba's legendary 67-year struggle for social justice and his unwavering dedication to changing lives.

For children born with cleft conditions and other complex facial anomalies, access to life-changing surgery is often out of reach. Without medical intervention, these children face serious long-term health challenges, including difficulty eating, speaking, and breathing. Beyond the physical impact, they are also at risk of emotional bullying, social isolation, and low self-esteem. Through this initiative, we are not just correcting facial conditions - we are restoring dignity, confidence, and opportunity.

This Smile Week was made possible through the committed medical team led by Prof Tim Christofides, Prof Chrysis Sofianos, Prof Thendo Netshiongolwe, Prof Mzubanzi Mabongo, Dr Dimitri Liakos and Dr Jason Labuschagne.

Every Mandela Day, South Africans come together to celebrate a giant among men, embracing the powerful belief that each individual has the ability to transform the world. By participating in this Smile Week, medical teams, donors, and volunteers embodied Madiba's spirit of service, ensuring that these children have a brighter future filled with confidence, hope, and joy.



Feature Case

Fourteen-year-old Jessica was born with Moebius Syndrome, a rare condition causing facial paralysis. Unable to smile, frown, or blink, Jessica struggled to connect with the world around her. In addition to Moebius Syndrome, she was born with bilateral clubfeet, requiring corrective surgery and spent much of her early life battling chronic illnesses due to immunodeficiency. Jessica's resilience shines as she underwent life-changing surgery performed by Dr Dimitri Liakos to equip her with confidence to face the world.



STEVE BIKO ACADEMIC HOSPITAL

Smile Week

12 - 16 August 2024

At Smile Foundation, we believe that every child deserves to feel secure, loved, and capable of achieving anything - this is the very foundation upon which dreams are built.

During Smile Week at Steve Biko Academic Hospital in Pretoria, we had the privilege of witnessing this belief come to life as 10 children underwent transformative surgeries, giving them a fresh start filled with hope and confidence.

The extraordinary team of surgeons led by Prof Mzubanzi Mabongo and Prof Solly Selahle, at Steve Biko Academic Hospital not only changed the lives of these children but also gave their families the priceless gift of a new beginning, a chance to face the future with renewed hope and a smile that shines brighter than ever.

Together, we've proved once again that a smile is more than just an expression - it's a symbol of courage, transformation, and the power of community.



Feature Case

Nine-month-old Oritika, born with Goldenhar Syndrome, faces multiple challenges, including a bilateral cleft lip and palate, an underdeveloped ear, clubfoot, a heart defect, and a leg condition. During Smile Week, Oritika underwent cleft lip repair surgery, a life-changing procedure that improved feeding, support speech development and enhanced her emotional well-being and self-esteem. A brighter future begins for Oritika.



TYGERBERG HOSPITAL

Smile Week

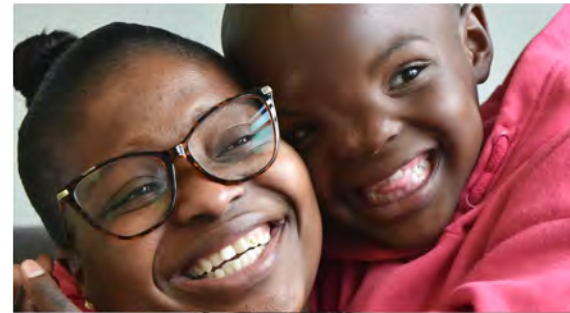
28 Oct - 1 Nov 2024

Smile Week was successfully held at Tygerberg Hospital in the Western Cape. This transformative initiative provided 5 children with vital corrective surgeries, offering them a new lease on life filled with hope, confidence, and brighter futures.

The surgeries were led by renowned experts, Dr. Frank Graewe, Prof. Robert Mann, and Dr. Mosadi Mahoko, all of whom brought exceptional skill and dedication to the operating room. Prof. Mann, a highly esteemed Paediatric Plastic Surgeon from the University of Michigan, participated in the initiative, contributing his extensive expertise in cleft repair and reconstructive surgery.

Beyond the life-changing surgeries, this Smile Week served as an exceptional platform for skills transfer. Both Dr. Graewe and Prof. Mann played invaluable roles in facilitating knowledge-sharing with South African surgeons. Their expertise not only improved surgical outcomes for the children treated but also enhanced the capabilities of local medical professionals, ensuring a lasting impact well beyond the event.

This Smile Week was a powerful testament to the impact of collaboration, knowledge exchange, and compassionate care. Through the dedication of our medical teams, partners, and donors, we continue to create sustainable change, transforming lives one smile at a time.



Feature Case

Seven-year-old Liyana from Khayelitsha, Western Cape, was born with a craniofacial cleft that caused her eyes to be positioned unusually far apart. During Smile Week, she underwent a complex surgery to shift her eye sockets closer together using an intracranial approach. The procedure included initial reconstruction of her nasal area. This life-changing surgery marks an important step toward a brighter and more confident future for Liyana.



CHARLOTTE MAXEKE JOHANNESBURG
ACADEMIC HOSPITAL

Smile Week

11 - 15 November 2024

Smile Foundation successfully hosted a Smile Week at Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital in Gauteng, the very hospital where the first-ever Smile Week was inspired by the beloved Nelson Mandela's passion for ensuring children receive the surgeries they need.

This Smile Week held special significance, as it helped address a significant backlog of corrective surgeries in Johannesburg, caused by the high demand for reconstructive procedures in the region.

Co-ordinated by Smile Foundation, this impactful initiative was led by three distinguished surgeons, Prof. Tim Christofides, Prof. Thendo Neshiongolwe and Prof. Chrysis Sofianos. Both professors brought with them impressive expertise and even bigger hearts, playing a vital role in the success of the week.

14 Children from underserved communities underwent reconstructive surgeries, the majority focusing on cleft lip and cleft palate repairs. These procedures were not only life-changing but lifesaving too.



Feature Case

Amukelani, born with a bilateral cleft lip and palate, underwent life-changing surgery during Smile Week. Her mother, Busisiwe, initially struggled with feelings of guilt and worry about her child's condition. Despite the challenges, Busisiwe's mother, Eudocia, provided unwavering support, embracing Amukelani as a blessing. This successful surgery has transformed their journey, bringing hope, smiles, and new possibilities for their family.



FRERE HOSPITAL

Burns Surgeries

20 - 22 November 2024

Children are among the most frequent burn survivors in Sub-Saharan Africa. In East London, at least two children are admitted weekly to Frere and Cecilia Makiwane Hospitals with severe burns. Many face up to a two-year wait for reconstructive surgery due to high demand and limited resources in Plastic Surgery Units in Gqeberha and Mthatha.

In partnership with Smile Foundation, Frere Hospital, under the leadership of Dr. Milind Chitnis, is broadening its scope from cleft lip and palate surgeries to include critical burn reconstruction procedures. To address the shortage of plastic surgery expertise, Smile Foundation initiated a Mini Smile Week to support and uplift children from underserved communities.

Thanks to volunteer surgeons from the private sector - Dr. Andre Kepler and Dr. Timothy Perks - 17 children in the public healthcare system received life-changing surgeries during this initiative. It also marks the first consecutive Paediatric Reconstructive Surgery Days for burn survivors at Frere Hospital, while offering valuable skills-transfer opportunities for local surgeons.



Feature Case

A young girl with a hand contracted in a fist received a successful contracture release surgery, restoring her hand to a flat, functional position and providing her with renewed mobility and hope for the future.



GEORGE HOSPITAL

Smile Week

25 - 27 November 2024

George Hospital became a place of hope and transformation as Smile Foundation hosted a life-changing Mini Smile Week. Through this impactful initiative, 17 children had their smiles and confidence restored with transformative surgeries.

To ease these psychological effects, Smile Foundation, through its Smile Week initiatives, intervenes early by providing life-changing surgeries to children whose families would otherwise be unable to afford such care. These surgeries not only transform appearances but also restore self-esteem, hope, and the chance for a brighter, more confident future.

When Given was just a year old, a kettle of boiling water left her with severe burns across her torso, causing physical and emotional pain that has lingered ever since. Given underwent a left arm axillary contracture release surgery. This complex procedure removed some of the scar tissue that had restricted her movement, significantly enhancing her mobility, enabling her to perform everyday tasks like dressing herself and picking up objects. With the support of occupational therapy during her recovery, she is on the path to a brighter and more independent future.

This Smile Week was the embodiment of compassion, partnership, and medical excellence all made possible by Prof. Saleigh Adams, Dr. Gertruida Van Niekerk, the medical team and our devoted sponsors.



Feature Case

Eight-year-old Meshay from Blanco, George, born with Treacher Collins Syndrome, has faced significant challenges due to this rare genetic condition affecting facial development, hearing, and basic functions like breathing and feeding. Prof. Adams performed a transformative fat grafting procedure to her zygomatic and temporal areas, enhancing her physical appearance and quality of life. For Meshay, this surgery represents a renewed sense of confidence and the chance to embrace life with joy.



CHRIS HANI BARAGWANATH ACADEMIC HOSPITAL Smile Days 19 Nov - 10 Dec 2024

This **Smile initiative** of 2024 took place at **Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital**, marking the culmination of a year filled with **life-changing interventions**.

This impactful initiative provided **13 children** with **life-changing** plastic and reconstructive surgeries, addressing a range of complex conditions. Procedures included cleft lip and palate repairs, as well as intricate post-burn reconstructions, each one transforming lives and restoring hope. These life-changing surgeries were led by **Dr. Jordan** and **Dr. Chen** and their remarkable medical team.

The impact of these Smile surgeries extends far beyond the operating room. These life-changing procedures not only heal the body but also remove the physical and emotional barriers that prevent children from fully participating in life. For many of these young patients, surgery means freedom from stigma, the ability to smile confidently, and a renewed sense of belonging.

Beyond the children themselves, these **surgeries uplift entire families and communities**, offering hope where there was once uncertainty.



Feature Case

Twelve-year-old Mangaliso's life was forever changed in 2016 when a tragic accident left him severely burned after being electrocuted. Emergency flap surgery saved his life but left a bald area on his scalp that has caused deep insecurity. Mangaliso underwent tissue expansion surgery, a groundbreaking procedure that promotes new skin growth. This life-changing operation will help restore his appearance and confidence, giving him a brighter future.

TYGERBERG HOSPITAL Smile Slates 2024



Smile Foundation, in partnership with Tygerberg Hospital, hosts a dedicated theatre slate every Thursday to provide life-changing surgical interventions for children in need. This initiative is spearheaded by Dr. Mosadi Mahoko and Prof. Nick Kairinos, both renowned for their expertise and commitment to improving the lives of young patients.

This year alone, 94 children have benefited from these surgeries, which primarily address cleft lip and cleft palate conditions. This ongoing collaboration plays a crucial role in addressing the surgical backlog in the Western Cape.

On Friday, 17 January, little Ayla and her mom visited the follow-up clinic, where her mother couldn't contain her happiness. Overjoyed, she exclaimed, "Sy lyk pragtig" (She looks beautiful). Grateful and emotional, she thanked Smile Foundation for making her daughter beautiful.

Ayla's surgery on 21 November 2024 was high-risk, complicated by her mom's undisclosed illness. The operation was critical, requiring ICU care for two days. Despite initial concerns, Ayla recovered remarkably and returned to the ward, showing steady improvement.

Now thriving, Ayla is full of energy, smiles, and joy. Her mom describes her as a "shining light" and is deeply thankful to Smile Foundation and Tygerberg Hospital for giving her daughter a brighter future.



**Ayla's
Transformation
Surgery**



TYGERBERG HOSPITAL Craniofacial Slates 2024

Dr. Arnold Douglas is currently the only craniofacial surgeon working in the public sector at Tygerberg Hospital, making access to this critical care extremely limited.

To bridge this gap, Smile Foundation has partnered with Tygerberg Hospital to increase capacity, improve access, and train future specialists.

Committed to performing two surgeries per month during a 6-month trial, ensuring more children receive the life-changing procedures they need.

This initiative provides direct surgical experience under Dr. Douglas, equipping future surgeons with essential skills in craniofacial surgery and strengthening the medical workforce.

The waiting list for this surgery has already been reduced from over 1 year to just 2-3 months, demonstrating the success and impact of this initiative.

Through this partnership, Smile Foundation ensured that 10 children's lives have changed so far and that more children will undergo craniofacial surgery without a significant waiting time.



Feature Case

Caleb was diagnosed with craniosynostosis and required surgeries designed to relieve pressure on his brain and allow it to grow naturally. Rufaro, Caleb's mother and teacher, put her career on hold to care for him, ensuring he attended every hospital visit. His mom describes him as a curious and observant little boy who loves learning and playing with his older brother and friends. When children ask about Caleb's head, Rufaro proudly says, "His head is so big because he has so much brain - he's fortunate!"



GREY'S HOSPITAL

Smile Slates 2024

Every second Saturday at Grey's Hospital in KZN, children received their life-changing smiles as part of the Smile Theatre Slate initiative. So far 39 children have been assisted with surgeries through this new programme, led by Dr Nikki Allorto and Dr Manti Makakole. The surgeries ranged from cleft lip and palate repairs to treatments for burn scars. Our mission is to create meaningful change across every corner of South Africa.

Lwazi, a young patient at Grey's Hospital, captured everyone's hearts with her chubby cheeks and radiant smile. She exuded joy wherever she went, delighting in taking pictures and charming everyone with her infectious grin. Her mother proudly shared that Lwazi is always smiling and rarely cries - a true bundle of happiness.

Her parents' only child, and her story is nothing short of miraculous. After trying to conceive for six years, her mother could hardly believe it when she finally fell pregnant. When Lwazi was born and the doctor noticed her palate wasn't developed, her mother's response was pure love. She didn't care about the diagnosis, knowing it could be fixed, she was simply grateful to have a healthy baby. She described Lwazi as the greatest gift she has ever received.

Her mother was thrilled to receive the care pack and backpack from Smile Foundation, expressing heartfelt gratitude for the toiletries and gifts.

The smile on Lwazi's face is one that will stay with everyone who met her, a precious reminder of the joy and hope a child's spirit can bring.



Lwazi

A smile patient at Grey's Hospital, whose smile lights up the room.



STEVE BIKO ACADEMIC HOSPITAL

Smile Slates

2024

Every Tuesday at Steve Biko Academic Hospital (SBAH) in Pretoria, we host a Smile Theatre Slates led by Prof. Mzubanzi Mabongo from the Maxillofacial Surgery Department and Prof. Solly Selahle from the Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery which has enabled us to provide transformative surgeries for 55 children over the year, with cleft lip, cleft palate, and other facial abnormalities.

Parents of the children assisted during these surgical slates shared their immense gratitude, expressing how the procedures have transformed their children's lives.

One mother shared this heartfelt message after her child's surgery at SBAH:

"Smile Foundation, words cannot fully express the gratitude we feel for the incredible support you've provided to our family. Thanks to your generosity and unwavering dedication, our children have been able to smile again during a time of uncertainty and hardship. When we were facing the overwhelming challenge of their operation, your kindness offered not just financial help, but also emotional comfort. You gave us hope when we needed it most, and through it, our children found the strength to smile once more. What you do goes beyond just providing assistance – you bring light and joy back into the lives of those who need it most. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for helping us through this journey and for making such a profound difference in our lives. With deepest appreciation."

This message reflects the profound impact of these surgeries, not only restoring smiles but also bringing renewed hope to families.





LIFE ROSE PARK HOSPITAL Smile Slate 2024

7 September 2024 marked the first-ever Smile Saturday Surgery at Life Rosepark Hospital, a groundbreaking partnership between Smile Foundation and Life Healthcare.

This pilot initiative, led by Dr. Shashi Agarwal and Dr. Efraim van der Walt provided five children with specialised reconstructive surgeries, addressing conditions such as cleft lip and facial paralysis.

This initiative relieved pressure on public healthcare, allowing children to access world-class treatment at no cost to their families.

Zaylin, a 6-month-old girl whose grandmother refers to her as “jelly bean” (because she is so tiny) was diagnosed with a bilateral cleft lip and palate, underwent a life-changing surgery to reconstruct her lip and palate on both sides. This procedure restored the functionality needed for proper feeding and speech development. Additionally, her nasal passages were reshaped to improve breathing.

The surgery, completed in just 120 minutes, was a success. A follow-up one week later revealed excellent recovery, marking the beginning of a brighter future for Zaylin.



BEFORE



AFTER

**Zaylin's
Transformation**



NELSON MANDELA CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Burns Slates

Burns Laser Treatment Programme at Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital (NMCH)

The Burns Laser Treatment Programme at NMCH is a transformative initiative in paediatric burn care. With the support of the Avela Foundation who donated a burns laser machine for this purpose, the laser programme is helping children overcome the long-term effects of burn scarring, restoring mobility, confidence, and quality of life.

Burn injuries can leave lifelong physical, emotional, and social scars, especially when they affect key areas like the face, hands, and limbs. Scarring and contractures can limit mobility, impact self-esteem, and hinder a child's ability to perform daily tasks.

Recognising the urgent need for specialised burn care, Smile Foundation expanded laser therapy access in Gauteng. Led by Dr. Ronel Parkhurst, a burn specialist at Chris Hani Baragwanath Academic Hospital, this programme launched in April 2024, ensuring that 17 children from underserved areas benefited from this innovative treatment.



Feature Case

One of the most inspiring cases involved an eight-year-old girl who had severe burns on her face and hands, leaving her unable to smile, hold liquids, or perform basic tasks. She became withdrawn and lost her confidence.

After four sessions of pain-free laser treatment, her transformation was extraordinary. At her final follow-up, she walked in beaming with joy, proudly sharing that she could smile freely and brush her teeth without discomfort. Her confidence was restored, and her mother expressed overwhelming gratitude for the life-changing impact of this treatment.



Umatter - A Community for Burn Survivors - sponsored by Avela Foundation

Umatter is a parent and trauma counselling support group in South Africa dedicated to helping burn survivors restore their self-esteem, confidence, and dreams. By harnessing the power of storytelling, we help families process trauma and rediscover hope.

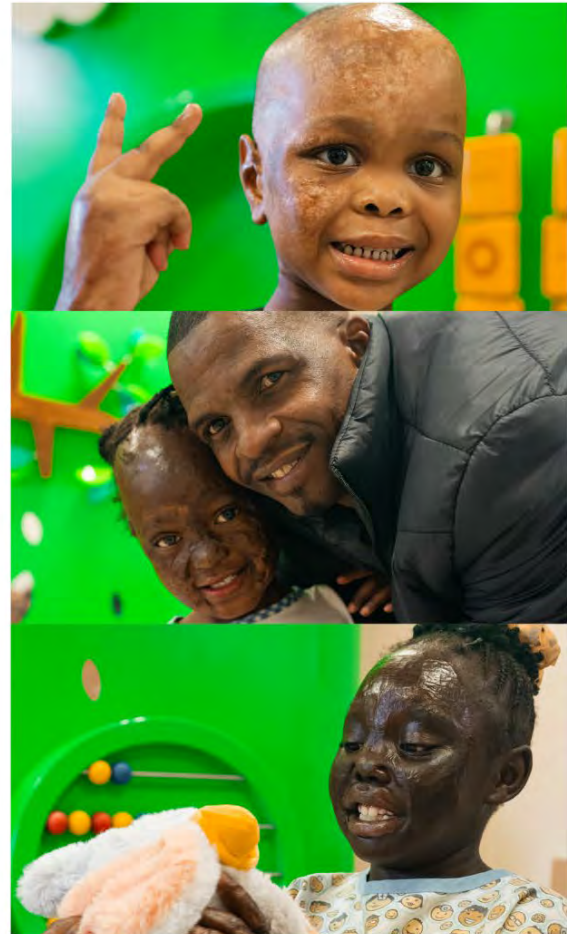
Burn injuries can leave families feeling overwhelmed, isolated, and helpless. Umatter steps in to provide support, meaningful connections, and expert guidance through every stage of recovery.

At Umatter, we believe healing goes beyond the individual. In burn recovery, everyone plays a role. You, your siblings, families, friends, and communities all matter.

Our goal is to ensure no burn survivor or family feels alone.

Burn injuries take a significant mental and emotional toll. Survivors often face challenges such as low self-confidence, social reintegration struggles, and trauma. Umatter addresses these through:

- Trauma counselling and emotional support
- Guidance during laser treatment recovery
- Storytelling and empowerment workshops



Through **community support** and **shared experiences**, **Umatter** helps burn survivors **rebuild confidence** and embrace a **brighter future**.



Cleft friends

CLOSING THE GAP

Cleft Friends is a unique initiative within Smile Foundation, dedicated to supporting parents of children born with cleft lip and palate. It is the only organisation in South Africa that offers parent-to-parent support, providing guidance and reassurance from the perspective of lived experience, rather than solely relying on medical expertise.

As parents who have walked this journey firsthand, we understand the emotions, fears, and uncertainties that come with a cleft diagnosis. Our mission is to uplift and empower new parents, encouraging them to celebrate, love, and affirm their babies at every stage of their cleft journey. Emotional support and positive reinforcement are essential, helping families navigate this path with confidence and hope.

We also equip parents with the right questions to ask medical professionals, ensuring they receive clear, accurate information about their child's condition and treatment options. By fostering open conversations with doctors and specialists, we help alleviate anxiety, build trust, and create a sense of control for parents facing this new chapter.

At Cleft Friends, we believe that no parent should feel alone on this journey. Through shared experiences, encouragement, and community support, we work to ensure that every child receives not just medical care, but also a foundation of love, confidence, and acceptance.



Cleft Friends plays a vital role in supporting families navigating the challenges of cleft lip and palate diagnoses. Beyond the physical impact, these conditions can bring emotional, social, and psychological challenges for both children and their families.



Holistic Approach to Health Care

Beyond Surgery: Holistic Family Support

At Smile Foundation, the focus goes beyond surgical interventions to provide well-rounded support for both patients and their families. This approach ensures caregivers and children receive the care and resources needed during this challenging journey. Support included:

- Accommodation at a sponsored guesthouse, allowing families to stay close to their children during recovery.
- Transport for beneficiaries, removing financial barriers to access vital care.
- Care packs with hygiene products and essentials to meet immediate needs.
- Counselling and peer support, offering families emotional guidance and a sense of connection during their journey.
- Post-surgical medications and dressings, ensuring proper healing and continued care at home.

By addressing both the medical and emotional needs of patients and their families, Smile Foundation provided a compassionate, family-focused experience that supported their journey toward recovery and hope.



smile
foundation

Because of you, Smiles Happen. Thank You



AIRPORTS COMPANY
SOUTH AFRICA



Connecting for Good
**Vodacom
Foundation**



BigShoe
OUR GOAL IS TO HELP CHILDREN

goldrush



adcock ingram



good morning
angels
jacarandalm

a
avela
together to give

DAIKIN

Life Rosepark
HEALTH CARE Hospital



BLUE LABEL
TELECOMS



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Because of you, Smiles Happen. Thank You



Thank you to all the **surgeons, anaesthetists, paediatricians, maxillofacial surgeons, orthodontists, dentists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, psychologists, nurses and hospital staff** for the countless lives you have transformed.

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