



Operation Smile

OPERATION SMILE KENYA

📍 KENYA | 2026



OUR FORMULA FOR TRANSFORMATION

At Operation Smile, we believe safe, essential surgery is a human right. For over 40 years, we've transformed lives, strengthened health systems and built sustainable solutions.



We partner with local volunteers, medical leaders, health ministries, universities and non-governmental organizations to bring essential surgical care closer to patients' homes, starting with cleft surgery and comprehensive care. Together, we transform health systems by training and equipping local professionals, strengthening infrastructure and building capacity for sustainable care.



Operation 100 is our bold strategy to bring essential surgical care closer to patients' homes by investing in frontline health workers and strengthening district hospitals.



By focusing on district hospitals, we're bringing care closer to patients, creating access to surgical care, building local capacity and fostering stronger health systems and communities.



Education is a force multiplier. We equip frontline health workers with the skills and resources to deliver sustainable, high-quality care independently for their communities.



Operation 100 is just the start.

We're breaking down barriers to surgical care and advancing health equity, so no one is left behind.

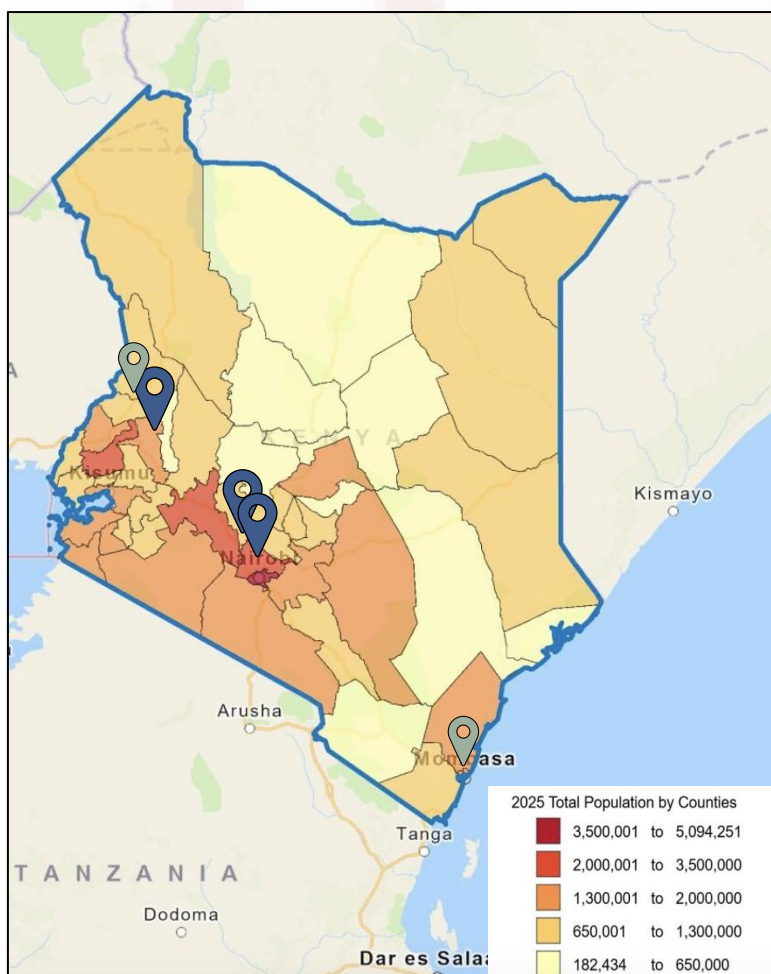


BRINGING CARE CLOSER TO HOME

To ensure that every child has access to care close to home, we equip local healthcare providers with the skills and resources to deliver high-quality care. Through our hub-and-spoke model, hubs provide direct patient care while training and supporting providers in under-resourced communities, the spokes. This approach strengthens local healthcare systems and builds the expertise needed to sustain care for generations to come.

Our hubs are **AIC Kijabe Hospital** in Kijabe, a teaching and referral hospital and our current Operation 100 site; **Kenyatta University Teaching, Referral & Research Hospital** in Nairobi, a national teaching and referral hospital; and **Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital** in Eldoret, which serves western Kenya and parts of Uganda, South Sudan, northern Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Kenyatta University and Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital will begin year-round surgical care as Operation 100 sites in Fiscal Year 2027.

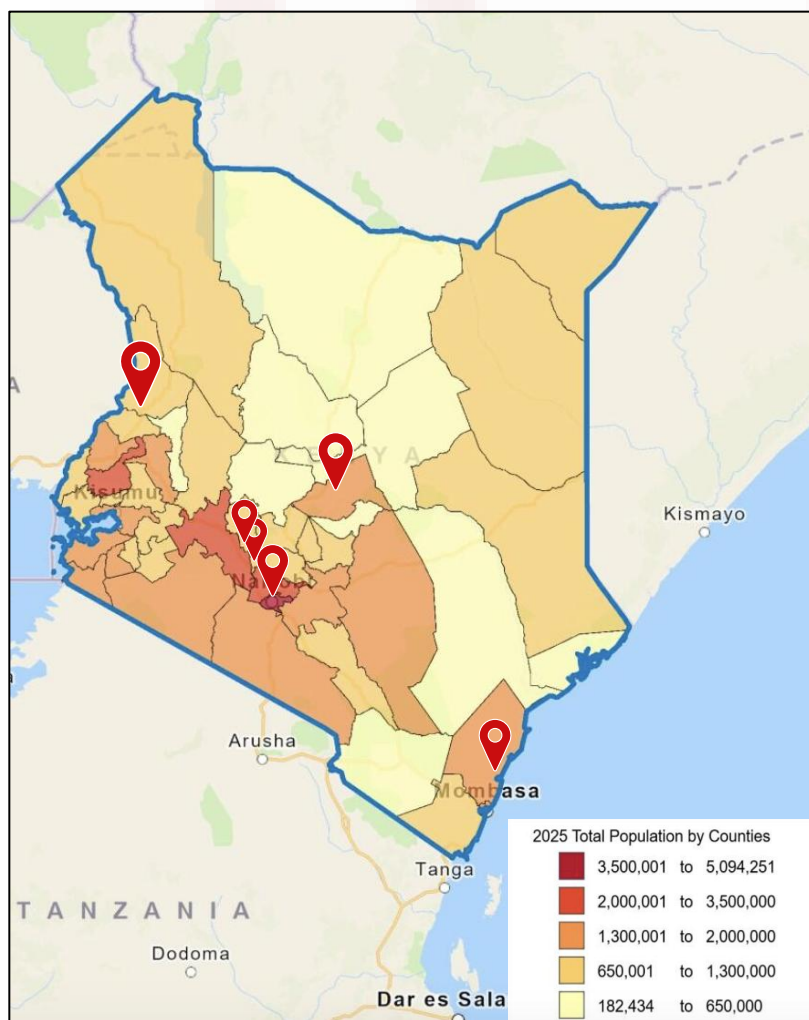
Our spokes are **Port Reitz Hospital** in Mombasa, a sub-county hospital on the coast, and **Kitale County Referral Hospital** in Trans Nzoia County, a county referral and teaching hospital in western Kenya.





COMPREHENSIVE CARE ACROSS KENYA

Operation Smile delivers comprehensive cleft care across seven sites, expanding access to multidisciplinary services and ensuring patients throughout Kenya can receive the care they need: **Kenyatta National Hospital** and **Kenyatta University Teaching, Referral & Research Hospital** in Nairobi, **AIC Kijabe Hospital** in Kijabe, **Kitale County Referral Hospital** in Kitale, **Maua Methodist Hospital** in Meru County, **St Crispin Hospital** in Naivasha and **Kilifi County Hospital** in Kilifi.



THE NEED



One in 500-750 births

It is estimated that, worldwide, a child is born every three minutes with a cleft condition — about one in every 500 to 750 births.

Shortage of health workers

Kenya has just two specialist surgical workers per 100,000 people, which falls short of the target set by The Lancet Commission on Global Surgery of 20 providers per 100,000 population. The shortfall of Kenya's medical professionals is exacerbated by a mass brain drain. Between 30 to 40% of the estimated 600 doctors who graduate in Kenya annually move to other countries.

Limited hospital capacity

The Lancet Commission proposed that at least 80% of the population should live within two hours of a hospital that is equipped to perform the three bellwether procedures: laparotomy, cesarean delivery and open fracture care. Although 90% of Kenyans live within two hours of a hospital, just 52% of the country's surgically equipped hospitals are capable of laparotomy. This suggests that the proportion of hospitals capable of performing all three bellwether procedures is 52% at most.

Financial burden

The Lancet Commission proposed that, to meet populations' needs, countries should achieve 5,000 surgical procedures per 100,000 population. In Kenya, medical providers perform just 263 procedures per 100,000 people. The insufficient number of surgical procedures exacerbates the impact of high out-of-pocket expenses, making it even more challenging for patients with cleft conditions to access care. 36% of the population is at risk of impoverishing expenditure for surgical care, while 21% risks catastrophic expenditure for surgical care.



OUR IMPACT IN KENYA

Since 1987, Operation Smile has helped expand access to cleft care for children across Kenya. Over nearly four decades, we have provided surgery to more than **10,000 patients** born with cleft conditions and delivered comprehensive cleft care to over **12,000 patients**, building a strong foundation for sustainable cleft care nationwide.

But there is more to do.

In July 2026-June 2027, Operation Smile will invest \$969,843 in surgical care, comprehensive cleft care, medical education and health system strengthening, helping more children access life-changing care closer to home while building the skilled local teams needed to deliver it for generations to come.



Program Pillar	Budget
Direct Patient Care	\$441,540
Education & Training	\$190,501
Local Program Operations	\$304,724
Health Policy & Advocacy	\$29,620
Student Programs	\$3,458
Total July 2026 - June 2027	\$969,843

Outputs: July 2026 - June 2027	
Cleft Surgical Patients	236
Oral Health Patients	156
Nutrition Patients	338
Psychosocial Patients	132
Speech Patients	99
Patients Recruited	456
Community Health Worker Trainees	120
Total Training Spots	482

*Estimated costs in USD based on current knowledge and subject to change in response to an evolving healthcare landscape

*Table reflects country-level budget. Operation Smile's global office makes additional centralized investments to support country-level programming



JULY 2026 – JUNE 2027 PROGRAMS



Surgical Care

Operation Smile will continue bringing cleft surgery closer to patients across Kenya so that more people can receive timely care without the burden of traveling long distances.

Ongoing care will continue at AIC Kijabe Hospital, providing patients with year-round access to surgical treatment. Care delivery through Operation 100 will begin at Kenyatta University Teaching, Referral & Research Hospital and at Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital once their cleft-competent teams complete credentialing, bringing sustained surgical capacity to Nairobi and western Kenya and reducing the need for patients to travel farther for care.

Ongoing care will continue at AIC Kijabe Hospital, providing patients with year-round access to surgical treatment. As teams at Kenyatta University Teaching, Referral & Research Hospital and Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital complete their preparation for independent cleft care delivery, Operation 100 will support the launch of ongoing surgical programs, expanding sustainable surgical capacity in Nairobi and western Kenya and reducing the need for patients to travel long distances for care.

Short-term surgical programs at Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital and Port Reitz Hospital will help more patients access timely cleft surgery while strengthening local capacity to deliver care. At Port Reitz, an all-women surgical team will provide a unique opportunity for female clinicians to develop surgical expertise and leadership experience, supporting the growth of a more inclusive healthcare workforce and the next generation of surgical leaders.



Comprehensive Care

Comprehensive cleft care extends beyond surgery to support patients throughout their treatment journey.

Speech therapy services will expand through clinics at Kenyatta University and Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, bringing care closer to patients and helping more children strengthen their communication skills. Training and mentorship for speech therapists will increase local capacity and expand access to these services over time.

Nutrition services will continue across seven care sites, helping children achieve the nutritional foundation needed for healthy growth, safe surgery, and recovery. Through assessments, targeted supplementation, in-home visits, and two nutrition bootcamps, patients will receive the support needed to prepare for treatment and achieve the best possible outcomes.

Psychosocial support will be integrated throughout care, helping patients and families navigate the challenges associated with cleft conditions while fostering confidence, resilience, and overall well-being.



JULY 2026 – JUNE 2027

PROGRAMS

(CONTINUED)



Medical Education

Training the next generation of local medical providers is essential to building sustainable surgical capacity. In addition to delivering patient care, surgical programs will serve as opportunities for medical education, providing hands-on training and mentorship that strengthen the skills of local healthcare professionals and advance long-term cleft care capacity.

Surgeon Exchange Programs at Kijabe and Nairobi will support credentialing of cleft surgical teams, equipping local surgeons with the skills and experience needed to provide safe, high-quality cleft surgery independently. American Heart Association Life Support Training will strengthen emergency response capabilities, ensuring healthcare providers are prepared to recognize and respond to life-threatening emergencies.

Safe Pediatrics and Safe Cleft training delivered in partnership with the World Federation of Societies of Anesthesiologists will strengthen the skills of anesthesia providers across our hub and spoke network, supporting safer care for children undergoing surgery. Participation in local and international conferences will further enhance clinical expertise and promote the adoption of best practices.

Nutrition training at Kenyatta University will help expand access to specialized nutrition care by equipping nutritionists from high-burden regions to train and mentor colleagues within their own counties, extending expertise far beyond the initial training cohort. New this year, nurses from hub and spoke sites will receive advanced training in wound management, critical care and intraoperative nursing, strengthening patient safety, reducing the risk of complications, and ensuring patients receive high-quality care before, during, and after surgery.



Infrastructure and Equipment

Strategic investments in equipment and facilities will strengthen the capacity of hospitals across Kenya to provide safe, high-quality surgical care and support better outcomes for patients. At Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital, renovations and new operating room equipment will enhance the surgical environment and strengthen the hospital's ability to serve patients requiring cleft care.

Investments at AIC Kijabe Hospital will support advanced clinical care, specialized training, and patient monitoring, helping ensure safe care before, during, and after surgery. A phased investment at Port Reitz Hospital will strengthen anesthesia, recovery, and pediatric care services, improving the hospital's capacity to care for patients throughout the surgical journey.





JULY 2026 – JUNE 2027

PROGRAMS

(CONTINUED)



Policy & Advocacy

Operation Smile's partnership with the Ministry of Health will help establish more consistent standards for cleft surgical care across Kenya. National cleft surgical guidelines will be disseminated and implemented to support assessment and treatment aligned with common standards of care, helping patients receive safer and more consistent care regardless of where they are treated. This work also supports the priorities of Kenya's National Surgical, Obstetric and Anaesthesia Plan (NSOAP) by contributing to stronger surgical systems and improved access to quality care. Together, these efforts will help create a more equitable and sustainable cleft care system in Kenya, where patients can access consistent, high-quality care regardless of where they live.



Student Programs

Operation Smile will expand engagement with medical and high school students through awareness initiatives, a local student conference and opportunities to participate in surgical programs and community outreach. These experiences will build awareness of cleft conditions and encourage students to become advocates for patients and families in their communities.



Patient Management

Quarterly community outreach activities in Bomet, Garissa, Lamu, Malindi and Kakamega will engage patient advocates and community health promoters to identify individuals in need of care and connect them with appropriate services, helping more patients overcome barriers to accessing treatment.





FIVE-YEAR VISION



By 2030, Operation Smile aims to contribute to a more equitable, sustainable cleft care system in Kenya, where patients can access safe, high-quality care closer to home and the health system has the local capacity to meet their needs

Port Reitz Hospital in Port Reitz and Kitale County Referral Hospital in Kitale will receive structured training and targeted investment to prepare them to become Operation 100 sites. Once credentialed, both hospitals will join the Operation 100 network and deliver independent, year-round cleft care through fully trained local teams, increasing the availability of treatment.



By 2030, Kenya will have a stronger pipeline of surgeons and physician anesthesiologists equipped to provide specialized and safe cleft care. Through the College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa (COSECSA) and the College of Anesthesiologists of East, Central and Southern Africa (CANESCA), training opportunities will provide healthcare workers with additional clinical experience in critical care, wound management and perioperative care, while continued investment in pediatric anesthesia capacity will support safe surgery for children.



By 2030, cleft surgery will be more fully integrated into Kenya's national surgical system. Operation Smile will continue advancing Kenya's National Surgical, Obstetric and Anesthesia Plan (NSOAP) by supporting the dissemination and implementation of national cleft surgical guidelines and strengthening systems that improve access to quality surgical care.



Patient recruitment efforts will be strengthened by embedding training with county Ministry of Health counterparts and expanding engagement with maternity units to improve early identification and referral to care for patients with cleft conditions. Operation Smile will also engage university and high school students through awareness initiatives and leadership development opportunities, empowering the next generation of advocates and contributors to sustainable cleft care.



By 2030, Kenya will have a more locally led and sustainable cleft care system, with greater hospital capacity, a growing specialized workforce and stronger national referral systems connecting patients to care.





OUR PARTNERS



Operation Smile parents with CANECSA and COSECSA to provide training opportunities for health workers.



Our collaboration with the Ministry of Health and country governments has allowed us to expand cleft care programs across the country.



We partner with the Kenya Society of Anesthesiologists, the Association of the Physically Disabled in Kenya and the Kenya Pediatric Association.



We have joined forces with World Health Federation of Societies of Anesthesiologists (WFSA) to increase training opportunities for health workers.



Operation Smile also collaborates with the Christian Broadcasting Network and with the pharmaceutical company Cipla Limited.



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