

In 2010, thanks to the organization of successful surgical missions and scientific workshops, Smile Train Italy developed a great position on international cooperation focused on health-care and quality of life. Smile Train Italy's working group had a good year, carrying out of nine surgical missions, operating 537 babies with cleft lip and palate and other facial deformities, with the entrance of the organization in the activity of social network, and the realization of training courses based health-care and clinical research addressed for many physicians and nurses.

Smile Train Italy works with great autonomy and plays a crucial role in health provision for babies with cleft lip and palate in many developing countries.

The influence of the global financial crisis is spreading out to almost all areas in society significantly, affecting also health-care industry and medical job market. Furthermore, in this scenario, thanks to the support of volunteers, friends and partners Smile Train Italy has managed to complete the planned missions, projects and activities reaching the following results: carrying out of nine surgical missions operating 537 babies; continuation of existing projects based on health-care and clinical research; planning of many fund-raising activities; creation of professional collaborations and relationships (by means of social network collaboration tools for example Facebook, but also through the MMI Network).

The volunteers of Smile Train Italy have given their valuable support to the following under-developed countries: Indonesia (Tarakan – Tarakan Public Hospital), the Democratic Republic of Congo (Kinshasa – Cliniques Universitaire de Kinshasa), Haiti (Port-au-Prince), Bangladesh (Gaibandha – The Emirates Friendship Hospital Ship), Tanzania (Dar Es Salaam – Mbwani Hospital), Ethiopia (Addis Ababa) and Iraq (Nasiriyah – Military Base Camp Mittica).

In addition, at the end of October 2010 an assessment mission has been conducted in Benin in order to verify the possibility of carrying out a mission of plastic and reconstructive surgery in 2011. In 2010 the surgical missions have been completed successfully thanks to the professionalism of the following health-care specialists: plastic and maxillo-facial surgeon, paediatric surgeon, anaesthesiologist, paediatrician, nurse and a mission coordinator. Moreover, the association has renewed its support on behalf of all those little and young patients with serious deformities and therefore can not be operated on the spot. So in 2010, Smile Train Italy has planned the trip and stay in Italy for nine babies (accompanied by their parent) in order to undergo plastic surgery in the Italian hospitals with which the organization teams up for years.

Regarding the fund-raising activity, Smile Train Italy has organized many events such as theatrical performance, fund-raising dinner, sms campaign, auction of wine, setting up of stands in many exhibitions and photographic exhibition with the main goal to give back smiles and to donate the hope of a new life to many babies.

Smile Train Italy developed also some activities and projects in the field of scientific research; proposals and/or scientific projects are based on Health Systems Strengthening (HSS) in developing countries improving access to primary health-care and maternal and infant health.



Smile Train Italy with the technical support of the Italian Society of Gynaecology and Obstetrics (SIGO) planning to develop a scientific research for the protection of maternal and child health by means for the supplementation of folic acid for Congolese pregnant women. This protocol study aims primarily to perform a possible research in the field of prevention and care for congenital disorders. The study is progressing also thanks with the support of the Medicus Mundi International Network and its members who have expressed interest in the research.

At the end of 2010 and the beginning of 2011, Smile Train Italy has organized a technical-medical workshop focused on the treatment of cleft lip and burns. The meeting was organized with the cooperation of the hospital “Arcispedale S. Anna”, Department of Paediatric Surgery, and with the precious support of the Italian Red Cross of the city of Ferrara. In this workshop

Smile Train Italy presented a report about humanitarian missions and the projects conducted in 2010 and also showed a number of future initiatives, activities and implications for further health workforce strategy. During the meeting the President and the collaborators of Smile Train Italy had the great pleasure of getting to know Dr. Fabian Schumacher, a representative of Medicus Mundi Italy, who attended the conference as a speaker, presenting the activity of the Medicus Mundi International Network. Moreover, in this workshop Smile Train Italy developed a training course addressed to the maxillo-facial surgeons and specialists, performing live reconstructive and plastic surgeries (by means of the operational support of video conferencing). The workshop was a success and it proved to be an exceptional scientific, cultural and social experience.

We end our short report with the testimony of a volunteer nurse, who participated in the surgical mission in Bangladesh from 22 to 30 April, 2010. This testimony shows the true love and passions of the volunteers of Smile Train Italy for these babies and their families.

“The mission is ended. I came back home in my hectic and aseptic daily life. I wish I had more time to reflect on ‘why and how’, on my feelings, reflections and thoughts. Our western country is very different, we are always rushing, always late and we do not have time to reflect and think about our feelings. Upon our arrival in Bangladesh, the initial impact was certainly not the best maybe because we were tired from the journey or excited for the adventure with the seaplane. Instead of flying on the water’s surface the plane sped up ... above the clouds. Despite the operating difficulties I confess that it was the most incredible experience of my life and it was the most beautiful mission! My great admiration is certainly addressed to the whole team, our complicity was perfect and I loved the intimacy that is created between us. A great thank is also addressed to local people, to the extraordinary doctors and nurses, they pampered and supported us and they actively participated in the surgery’s activity both in the operating room and recovery room. The people were very kind, hospitable with us, proud and dignified. All this love can be glimpsed by the eyes of the mothers and seeing their little babies ‘changed’ they embraced us at the end of surgeries.”

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