

Greetings from Operation Cleft!

We as Australians and Rotarians have never faced a situation like the present Covid-19 global crisis. The Pandemic brings with it, restrictive lockdowns, social distancing, border closures and nothing but bleak economic and dire health warning news! Our Rotary Clubs are meeting differently and are all under enormous pressure to meet commitments and sustain our many programs. **What does all this mean for a successful 15-year-old Rotary project like Operation Cleft?**

The good news is that through the support and generosity of Rotary Clubs and Rotarians across Australia over these years, **Operation Cleft has been able to complete on your behalf more than 13,000 free life changing surgeries for the poor and disadvantaged cleft suffering children of Bangladesh.**

The situation in Bangladesh due to the virus is devastating, particularly for the millions that live 'hand to mouth'. These are the poor families we work with, the families who benefit so much from our free cleft surgery program. The Cleft surgical program along with all 'non urgent' surgeries was suspended from early March, **yet we are reminded that more than 5000 mothers in Bangladesh this year will give birth to children inflicted with a debilitating Cleft Lip and/or palate issue (14 births per day).**

We are only able to continue to provide these humanitarian life changing surgeries if we have your on-going generous Club support. AUD300.00 (held at this level now for 4 years) will provide for the full costs of a single Cleft surgery.

Our wish is that you can remember Operation Cleft in your Club deliberations this financial year. **We thank you and your club in anticipation of your support in this very different and challenging 2020 year.**

**If you would like us to join your Club 'Zoom' meeting and share the latest OCA news and story, just email us on [info@operationcleft.org.au](mailto:info@operationcleft.org.au) or call 03 9877 9717.**

Kindly find our Winter 2020 e-Newsletter 'Smiles Update' below.

Thank you for helping to transform the lives of these desperately needy children. Your support means that as an outcome from this provision of free surgery, these children can participate in School, benefit from the value of education, enjoy improved health, make and sustain friendships, be accepted in their communities, play normal sport and .... **Smile!**

Thank you,

Yours Sincerely,



PP Bruce McEwen  
Chair, Operation Cleft Australia Inc.

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## Smiles Update - Winter 2020

### Message from our Chair

We need your help! The vulnerable Cleft suffering children of Bangladesh need our continuing support more than ever.

The impact of Covid-19 across Bangladesh and for the millions of poor impoverished families is catastrophic. As you know these are the families we work with, where our Cleft suffering children are found and need our help. The lockdown imposed from early March has been devastating. For example, the closing down of all public transport has left more than 7 million low paid (often paid daily) transport workers destitute without food or money. The daily infection and death rate are growing steeply. But worryingly, just 1,400 Covid-19 tests per million people have been undertaken as of today, May 25th, compared to Australia's test rate of 49,000 per million population. The Operation Cleft surgery program along with all other non-urgent surgery has been suspended since early March.

Our surgeons are busy assisting their colleagues handle the serious public health issues arising from the pandemic.

Why we need your on-going support? Since July 1st Cleft Bangladesh (OCA and our partner) have completed, up until the virus struck, just under 1,300 free Cleft surgeries. This 19/20 year is one of our most successful beginnings in our 15-year history in Bangladesh. The challenge for us is that every day 14 more children are born with a congenital Cleft lip and/or palate issue, and therefore every day without remedial Cleft surgeries the number of untreated Clefts grows sharply.

The WHO and our many local medical experts tell us that the virus curve will flatten, and with the help of a vaccine and/or treatment begin to dissipate. We at Operation Cleft Australia must be ready and organized to take up the challenge on what we know will be an even bigger need than we have ever faced before.

With your partnership and faithful support, we have accomplished in 15 years more than 13,000 life changing free surgeries, providing hope and a future for the poor and disadvantaged children and their families of Bangladesh. These are unprecedented tough and challenging times, new to us all. Together we have been able to see Children's lives transformed; confident to go to school, learn and appreciate the value and opportunities of education, feel and enjoy social acceptance within their extended family/community and to happily SMILE.

Thank you so much for your part in continuing to make the 'Gift of a Smile' possible. Enjoy the stories and news in this Winter Newsletter edition.

Thank you  
Bruce McEwen  
Chair.

## Smiles and futures of these two little cheeky boys are now bright thanks to you.

### **Niloy Bormon's Story**

Niloy Bormon was born in a remote village of Tangail district, about 100 km from the capital city Dhaka. His parents were very sad to see a cleft lip deformity in their child. They had to listen to and endure a lot of negative remarks from their family members and the neighbours. They did not know what to do. But when they came to know about the free surgical services that are provided in our centre, they brought Niloy to us. We explained the situation to them and operated on the baby.

After the surgery they were extremely happy to see the immediate result. Ongoing back to their village, they called us to let us know that all their family members and neighbours are also very happy to see Niloy's birth defect corrected.



## Niloy's life-changing journey...



## Akib Hossain's Story



Akib is a 7 years old boy who was born with cleft lip and palate. Luckily, his parents heard about our Cleft Centre and Akib's lip was operated when he was 3 months old. A couple of months later, his palate was operated too. His mother was blamed for his deformity because people in his village which is nearby Chittagong still believe in the myths of solar eclipse. Now the family knows that the cleft of Akib wasn't the personal fault of anyone. With the age of three years Akib's another heavy blow of fate happened.

Accidentally Akib put pasted chalk (Hydrated Lime/Calcium Hydroxide) into his left eye and afterwards lost his visual capacity on his left eye. With the age of 7 years, Akib needs a Maxillofacial surgery as well. His parents are very happy about the free treatment they receive. As a daily labour with a monthly income of only 8000 Taka it won't be possible for the family to pay the treatment. Due to the early treatment, Akib could live nearly a normal live. He is visiting the first class with the other children from his village. Only his voice sounds nasal and proofs how important comprehensive care of cleft is.

The goal of Cleft Bangladesh is to be able to offer children like Akib speech therapy to give them the chance to live without any impairment.

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## Celebrating a Birthday in lockdown?

*You can raise much needed funds to transform a life..*



Birthdays are special days for the families. These special days also remind us how blessed and thankful we are. It gives us an opportunity to reflect on the people who are less fortunate than us. So, we would want to do something for them on our special day.

To transform a child's life and give them a future only costs AUD\$300. Birthdays are great moments to 'Gift a Smile for Life' to a disadvantaged child, that without this corrective surgery, he/she will live their whole life being disadvantaged.

Would you like to raise funds for a Cleft corrective operation in lieu of birthday gifts? Or would you like to donate on behalf of someone celebrating a birthday?

If so, please fill the form below or visit our donation page at

[www.operationcleft.org.au/donate-now/](http://www.operationcleft.org.au/donate-now/)

Also inform us the name and address of the person who is celebrating to [info@operationcleft.org.au](mailto:info@operationcleft.org.au) so we can send a Gift Certificate.

**Snapshot**

**14,252**

Total of free operations achieved  
to date.

**AUD\$300**

Operation Cost maintained for five con-  
secutive years despite a 5% inflation rate.

**70%**

Funds from Individuals, Schools, Private Sector  
and Trusts for 2019-20 Financial Year.

**30%**

Support from Rotary Clubs  
for 2019-20 Financial Year.



**All donations no matter how small will help us towards our target of 1,500 cleft operations a year! We thank you in advance for your generosity!**

**You can donate online or send a donation directly to our bank account**

The Account Name: Operation Cleft Australia Inc.

Bendigo Bank

BSB 633 000 Account Number 165 147 935

(Please add your name as the reference and e-mail your name and address to [info@operationcleft.org.au](mailto:info@operationcleft.org.au) so that we can provide you with a tax receipt.)

**Donate a Smile today!**

**Operation Cleft Australia**

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