FALL 2026

Children's Surgery International

Changing lives, one child at a time.

STORIES FROM MEXICO

VERONIKA SKORICH
CSI COMMUNICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

Eighty-two surgeries is a big number, but the stories behind that number are what matter most.

Those stories belong to children like these:

- A 6-month-old baby waiting with his mother in pre-op for his first cleft surgery.
- Twin brothers needing the same care.
- A 9-year-old with a question for her surgeon.
- A self-conscious teenager seeing the results of a long-awaited procedure for the first time.

These were a few of the patients from CSI's October trip to Hermosillo, Mexico, where our team completed 82 life-changing procedures for 64 children over four days, all at no cost to families. Behind this accomplishment is a partnership 22 years in the making between CSI, Hospital CIMA Hermosillo, Voluntariado CIMA, and St. Andrew's Children's Clinic.

Six-month-old Jesus was the first patient of the trip. When he came out of surgery, his mother held him close, crying and whispering, "I love you. You are my heart. I am so, so proud of you."

Seven-year-old twins Daniel and Noah both had submucous clefts. When Daniel came for screening, their mother mentioned that Noah had the same condition and asked if CSI could help him next year. Both boys were cleared for surgery so Noah didn't have to wait another year for the care he also needed.



Daniel and Noah

Nine-year-old Alexia arrived for a bone graft looking nervous. Her mother encouraged her to ask Dr. Sampson the question on her mind: Would he pierce her ears while she was under anesthesia? She had brought earrings, just in case he agreed. He said yes. A morning of nerves had become something to be excited about. When Alexia woke up, the first thing she did was reach for her earlobes.

Sixteen-year-old Alan had a cleft rhinoplasty and lip revision. Self-conscious about his appearance, he asked for a mirror as soon as he woke in the recovery room. When he saw his reflection, he began to cry. "I'm just so happy," he told his nurse.

(Continued on page 2)



Alexia



Jossiel, before surgery



Jossiel, after surgery

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STORIES FROM MEXICO

(Continued from front)

As a mother, I felt particularly aware of what the parents were experiencing. I saw them struggle to say goodbye as their children were wheeled into the operating room, knowing how hard it is to entrust your child to someone else's care. Later, I saw those same parents welcome their children back, fear giving way to deep peace and joy.

Their faces will stay with me.

They capture what CSI makes possible: not just specialized surgical care for children, but hope for families and the chance for their children to thrive.

This work simply could not happen without our amazing volunteers, our partners, and our donors. Thank you for being part of CSI. Whether traveling with the team to provide exceptional care for these children or supporting our work through donations, you are very much a part of these stories.

2017



2026



Adan
MEXICO

CSI Nurse Cindy Mord first met Adan when he was just 6 months old and came to receive a bilateral cleft lip repair. This October, Cindy reunited with Adan and his mother. Now 10, Adan returned for a bone graft, his third surgery performed by CSI. Cindy was able to quickly pull up a photo on her phone from their very first meeting, showing just how much these children mean to the volunteers who care for them.

"Adan and I … want to thank you for all the care you've provided and for the wonderful work you do year after year…. You are angels in our lives."
—ANA, MOTHER

The impact of your gift ripples toward a more beautiful world.



YEAR-END GIVING CAMPAIGN

In 2027, we're expanding the number of children we can reach — and investing in the people and partnerships that make lasting access to specialized pediatric surgical care possible. Finish this fiscal year with intention by investing in CSI! Help us build local capacity and bring life-changing care to the children and families we serve!

We've launched our year-end giving campaign — a critical part of our annual fundraising efforts.
There are many ways you can make an impact:

- **Participate in Give to the Max Day** on Thursday, November 19 or donate on **Giving Tuesday** on Tuesday, December 1.
- **Watch for our Annual Appeal Letter** in your mailbox this month, featuring a message from CSI Board Chair Garrett Vincent, and make a gift using the enclosed envelope.
- **Donate online** at childrenssurgeryintl.org/donate — a quick and easy way to make a difference.
- **Make a gift through a Donor Advised Fund** (DAF) or a **Qualified Charitable Distribution** (QCD) from your IRA.
- Check page 5 of this newsletter for details on **See's Candies** and **Stone Creek Coffee** fundraisers that ship straight to your door and make great holiday or host gifts to have on hand.

Thank you for your support as we prepare for 2027!

FALL TRIP TO ETHIOPIA

In mid-October, a team of 26 CSI volunteers worked alongside their Ethiopian colleagues to perform 58 ENT and urologic surgeries for children at Tibebe Ghion Specialized Hospital in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia. Procedures included cleft lip and palate repairs, nasal stenosis repairs, and urological surgeries. The team also continued hands-on teaching and collaboration with local medical professionals, strengthening the skills needed to provide specialized surgical care to more Ethiopian children.

Some patients and their families had to travel for days amid difficult conditions and renewed fighting in Ethiopia's Tigray region to arrive at the hospital. Their journeys are a reminder of the obstacles and risks families can face to access specialized surgical care for their children.

More training is already on the calendar! CSI has two more trips to Ethiopia planned before year's end, both focused on targeted pediatric ENT and facial plastic surgery fellowship training. As CSI expands its capacity for this work, more opportunities arise to train local physicians and help more children access specialized care. We look forward to seeing what we can accomplish there in 2027.





> **"[This] partnership represents a powerful model of international collaboration in which compassion meets professional excellence, immediate patient needs are addressed, and sustainable healthcare capacity is strengthened."**
>
> — COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES, BAHIR DAR UNIVERSITY



Meet Dessalegn

Meet Dessalegn. He and his parents traveled to Bahir Dar from the northernmost part of Ethiopia — a two day bus ride — for his second urology surgery. Once he has healed, he will be able to urinate "normally" without worrying about infections.

So often, the results of our medical care go beyond physical health. Many kids like him who haven't had surgery to correct hypospadias can't go to school and have a hard time just being a kid and running around with other kids. For Dessalegn, this final surgery means both functional and social continence.

Our hope is simple: to help children be children.

Shipments to Liberia and The Gambia

Containers full of essential medical and community health outreach supplies are on their way to The Gambia and Liberia to support our CSI teams traveling there in November and in January 2027 respectively. Thanks to our donor support and local partnerships, we are able to source and ship high-quality medical supplies and equipment requested by our international colleagues, such as baby scales, vitals signs monitors, AEDs, and so much more. These essential supplies are donated to the local hospitals so they can continue to meet their patient needs year-round.

Special thanks to our partners at Firestone Liberia, Impact Health The Gambia, Matter, and Murphy Logistics Solutions, who help source and prepare products for the long and expensive journey overseas, as well as to those who donated items and the volunteers who assisted in itemizing and packing hundreds of boxes of supplies.

THE PLACES WE MAY NEVER GO

SIVA CHINNADURAI, MD, MPH, MBA

For more than a decade, CSI's work in Ethiopia has been built around the idea that lasting change comes from investing in people, partnerships, and local capacity.

We are now seeing two powerful examples of just how far that investment can reach.

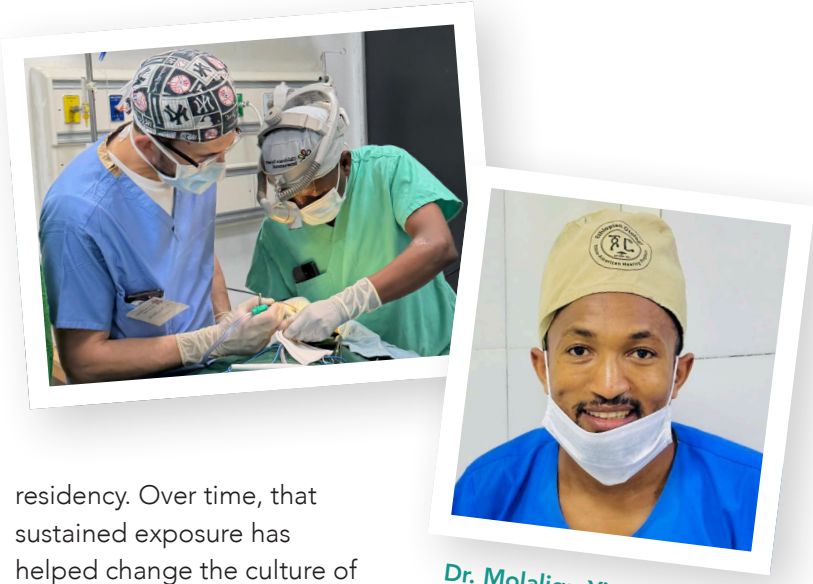
Dr. Kassaw Ketemaw, CSI's first pediatric ENT fellow, is nearing completion of his advanced training. His fellowship was deliberately designed around the needs of children in Ethiopia and the resources available within the local health system.

Through relationships built during CSI's long-term partnership in Ethiopia, new bridges have formed with organizations committed to the same goal of sustainable surgical capacity. Those connections have created an opportunity for Dr. Kassaw to complete an observership in Canada, where he can gain exposure to the few remaining specialized skills needed to complete his fellowship.

His opportunity demonstrates what becomes possible when organizations work together around a shared commitment to developing local expertise. Rather than creating dependence on visiting surgical teams, partnerships can connect local surgeons with the specific resources and experiences they need and allow them to bring that expertise home.

The impact of this approach is also extending far beyond Bahir Dar.

This year marked the graduation of the first cohort of ENT residents at Bahir Dar University who trained continuously alongside CSI teams throughout their residency. Over time, that sustained exposure has helped change the culture of surgical training by building confidence, independence, and an expectation that increasingly complex care can be provided by locally trained surgeons.



Dr. Molalign Yismaw, trained by CSI fellow Dr. Kassaw, is now changing childrens' lives in Somalia.

One of those graduates, Dr. Molalign Yismaw, recently began practicing in Kismayo, Somalia. In September, he performed his first independent cleft lip repair and is currently the only cleft surgeon at his hospital.

The significance of that accomplishment extends far beyond a single patient. Although the region has intermittently received care from visiting surgical teams, Dr. Molalign is now working to establish locally based treatment for children with cleft lip and palate, bringing consistent surgical expertise to a community in need.

CSI has never conducted a surgical trip to Kismayo. The children who will benefit from Dr. Molalign's skills will likely never meet a CSI volunteer.

And that is precisely the point.

Traditional mission trips can provide needed care to the children reached while a team is on the ground. But investing in local surgeons and institutions creates something fundamentally different: the ability for knowledge, confidence, and surgical capacity to travel on their own.

A surgeon trained in Bahir Dar can carry those skills to another hospital, another community, or even another country. That surgeon can care for children, teach colleagues, and train the next generation, allowing the impact of CSI's work to multiply again and again.

By investing in people, partnership, and independence, CSI's influence can ultimately be felt in hospitals and communities we may never visit, bringing specialized care — and hope — to children we may never meet.



Yohannes received cleft lip repair surgery during CSI's fellowship training trip this spring and returned last month for repair of his cleft palate.

Welcome Back, Aisling!



There's a new little member of the CSI family, and we're thrilled to welcome our Director of Operations, Aisling, back from maternity leave! Aisling and her husband welcomed their son, Arjun, in May, and after some well-deserved time getting to know their new arrival, she's back with the CSI team.

Your Generosity Changes What's Possible.

CSI exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in financial health, accountability, and transparency.

GIVE TODAY

Every gift, no matter the size, fuels surgery, training, and lasting change.

Platinum Transparency 2026 Candid.

Charity Navigator ★★★★ FOUR-STAR



See's Candies Fundraiser

Support CSI's mission in the sweetest way possible! Stock up on premium See's Candies treats for holiday gifting — or just treating yourself. CSI receives at least 20% of every purchase, and orders ship nationwide. Spend $75 or more and shipping is free!



The storefront is open through December 4.

SHOP NOW
bit.ly/CSISees2026

Coffee That Changes Lives

We've partnered with Stone Creek Coffee, a Milwaukee-based, B Corp–certified roaster, for a coffee fundraiser that ships direct to your door. Spend $45 and receive free shipping.

20% of proceeds from almost everything you purchase — including our private-label coffee, all other coffee varieties, tea, mugs, and more — will benefit CSI.

IMPORTANT: You must enter code CSI2026 within the discount code field at checkout to ensure your purchase is counted. This coffee fundraiser runs through **December 31** — so there's plenty of time to order again and again.

SHOP NOW
bit.ly/CSICoffee2026



Children's Surgery International

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UPCOMING TRIPS

Ethiopia:
November 6 – 14*, 2026
December 4 – 12*, 2026
February 25 – March 7, 2027
September 15 – 26, 2027

The Gambia:
November 12 – 22, 2026

Liberia:
January 21 – February 7, 2027

Mexico:
October 9 – 13, 2027

*Fellowship training trip







To learn more about this part-time, hybrid role, go to bit.ly/CSIJob