

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES BAMBINO GESÙ CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL 2020

SUMMARY REPORT



Bambino Gesù
OSPEDALE PEDIATRICO



THE MISSION OF BAMBINO GESÙ CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

In line with its mission and with the principles defining its identity, the goal of Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital is to bring its clinical and scientific knowledge to the world, particularly to those areas where they are most needed, through the training of local healthcare professionals.

The projects are based on specific agreements signed with the Governments or the healthcare authorities of the countries concerned, as well as with international humanitarian organizations, and usually include on-the-job training sessions delivered at partner hospitals by teams of operators coming from Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital, as well as periods of residential training in Rome, dedicated to the local medical and nursing staffs.

The choice of the paediatric specialties on which the training is focused is based on the analysis of the needs expressed by the countries asking for the intervention of Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital. Currently, the Hospital is mainly active in Africa, Asia, Middle East, and Latin America.

COOPERATION PROJECTS

The COVID-19 pandemic brought a historical change in the international cooperation for development. On the one hand, the actors of cooperation suffered a sudden standstill of fieldwork activities and, therefore, had to re-adapt the intervention tools and strategies they had been using until then; on the other hand, the issue of global health has become a top priority in the agenda of national governments, international agencies, non-governmental organizations, and civil society. The direct and indirect impacts of the pandemic on the most fragile population groups are now evident, and include the lack of access to care, the temporary suspension of essential healthcare services, as well as the repercussions in terms of poverty.

Since March 2020, the International Activities Department of Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital has implemented a dual strategy aimed at ensuring continued support to its partners, also during the sanitary emergency, through remote case management, study webinars and sharing of healthcare and good practice protocols; at the same time, the Department has been looking for a long-term solution allowing for the continuation of excellence medical and nursing training activities in those countries that need it most.

MEDTRAINING: OUR PLATFORM FOR TRAINING IN PAEDIATRICS

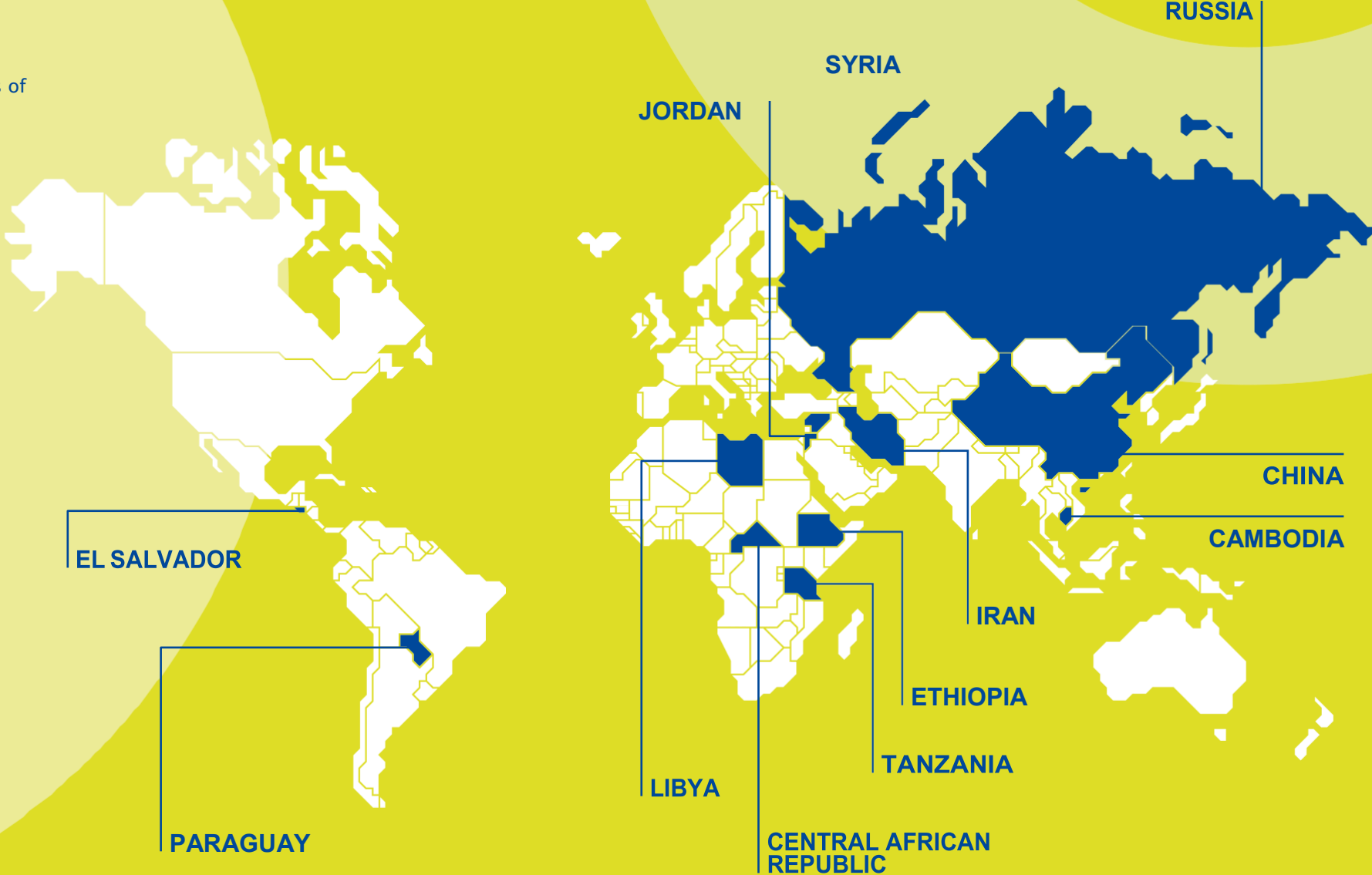
In 2020, we started designing an e-learning platform specifically dedicated – both in terms of technological structure and teaching contents – to developing countries, focused on all the areas of paediatrics. The training is addressed to contexts with limited technological infrastructures, where technological equipment (PCs, digital classrooms, etc.) is not available to the whole population, and the use of smartphones is widespread; therefore, the platform has been conceived to allow for access from any device (including smartphones) with no specific IT requirements.

A smartphone, a browser and a data line are the only requirements to access the platform. Furthermore, considering that the internet connection (cable or wireless) is not much widespread, the platform allows for the download of contents (when a data line is available), that can be studied later in offline mode.

The training courses available in the platform mirror the contents of the training projects (translated into multiple languages) that Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital is carrying out in different countries of the world. The implementation of a single platform for training in paediatrics allows to make the training available to a much wider user base, by offering free access by the healthcare facilities and operators of developing countries that have the same training needs.

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

2020 most relevant initiatives of international cooperation



CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The project, launched in 2016 within the framework agreement between the Vatican's Secretariat of State, the President of the Central African Republic, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Teaching, continued also in 2020 with academic training (both distance and in-presence) at various African universities. In January, a team from Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital and Milan Humanitas University gave life to a working group composed of university and hospital managers, as well as executives from the Ministry of Health of the Central African Republic, focused on *leadership* and *team building* issues. Furthermore, a local physician could benefit from a six-month training program at the Department of Paediatrics of Bambino Gesù. The Hospital also supported the ordinary maintenance works for the new centre for therapeutic re-nutrition, which was inaugurated in Bangui the previous year, and supplied PPE for the fight against the pandemic. Furthermore, an illustrated tale was printed, dedicated to children and their parents, to raise awareness and reduce the numerous accidents due to the improper use of caustic soda.

ETHIOPIA

Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital is a partner, together with Tor Vergata University of Rome, of the three-year *Newborn Survival Project*, carried out by Doctors with Africa CUAMM and

funded by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). The collaboration, whose main goal is the reduction of neonatal and child mortality through the improvement of neonatal intensive care units (NICUs), involves three Ethiopian hospitals (Tulu Bolo District Hospital in Tulu Bolo, St. Luke Hospital in Wolisso, and St. Paul Teaching Hospital in Addis Ababa). In 2020, due to the international context following the Covid-19 pandemic, some activities were continued in distance mode. Online meetings were organized by Bambino Gesù Hospital for the review, aimed at the publication on international journals, of the scientific research on the satisfaction of parents about the NICUs of the three Ethiopian hospitals, and for the rescheduling of the training activities of the last year of the project.

TANZANIA

The project with St. Gaspar Referral and Teaching Hospital in Itigi, managed by the Congregation of the Fathers of the Precious Blood, supports the training of the local medical staff in the field of plastic and maxillofacial surgery. The agreement includes regular missions to itigi by a team of physicians from Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital, as well as periods of residential training in Rome dedicated to the Tanzanian operators. In 2020, a Tanzanian clinician, who arrived in Italy the previous year, could continue his training program at the Department of Plastic and Maxillofacial Surgery of Bambino Gesù Hospital. During the year, the trainee was able to acquire the skills and techniques





needed for different surgeries, like otoplasty, oculoplasty, rhinoplasty, cleft palate surgery, as well as hand and foot surgery. To remedy the impossibility to carry out missions on the spot, distance meetings were organized for St. Gaspar Hospital's staff to discuss the management of complex cases.

LIBYA

Intensive care, neonatology, haematology, cardiology and cardiac surgery are the paediatrics specialties at the heart of the agreement signed on January 30th, 2020, by the World Health Organization Country Office in Libya and Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital. This three-year training project is dedicated to clinicians and nurses from two Libyan children's hospitals (Tripoli and Benghazi). In the same year designated by the World Health Organization as the year of the nurse, a part of the project was dedicated to training in paediatric nursing care. Initially, the project included periods of training of the medical and nursing staffs of the two Libyan hospitals at Bambino Gesù headquarters; however, the pandemic breaking out shortly after the signing of the agreement led to a standstill of the activities planned. Efforts were thus concentrated on the systematization of the educational material that will form the basis of a distance training course in Arabic language in paediatric nursing care, which will be provided through the platform.

SYRIA

This training project, based on a cooperation agreement with the World Health Organization Country Office in Syria, came to an end in September 2020. The collaboration focused on training in the field of laparoscopic surgery, interventional radiology, intensive care and cardiac surgery, through on-the-job training missions at Damascus University Children's Hospital by a team of clinicians and surgeons from Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital. The four missions planned for 2020 were cancelled due to the pandemic and to the subsequent closure of the Syrian borders. Nevertheless, the collaboration continued throughout the year with requests for consultations and discussion of cases by the Syrian physicians of Damascus Hospital to their OPBG colleagues.

JORDAN

The eight-year agreement between Bambino Gesù Hospital and the Comboni Missionary Sisters managing the Italian Hospital in Karak aims at ensuring the presence and the continuous improvement of free healthcare in the field of paediatric neurology, neuropsychiatry and neurorehabilitation for the population of the province of Karak, among whom there are many Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Although the pandemic prevented Bambino Gesù clinicians' teams to carry out their rehabilitation program on site during 2020, they will not to abandon the young patients, their families, the Combonian community and the local healthcare staff, led Bambino Gesù Hospital to

plan and launch online sessions for technical training and remote consultation on complex clinical cases. The sessions focused on the neurorehabilitation of patients suffering from diplegia, spastic quadriplegia and dystonia secondary to cerebral lesions, and on child neuropsychiatry, with patients suffering from delayed motor development and autism.

IRAN

The assessment activities for the new cooperation requests continued, leading to a series of preparatory meetings for the signing of the agreement between Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital and the Zanjireh Omid International Charity Institute, the Foundation headquartered in Teheran and independent branch of the French *La Chaîne de l'Espoir* (The Chain of Hope), that for over ten years has been providing free healthcare to disadvantaged Iranian children. The meeting highlighted the need to establish a collaboration for the development and implementation of cooperation projects for the transfer of knowledge and skills in the field of paediatric neurosurgery. The agreement, which will be signed soon, will include remote consultation activities for complex cases requiring neurosurgery, residential training for the Iranian healthcare staff in Italy, and on-the-job training missions to Iran by teams of clinicians from Bambino Gesù Hospital.

CAMBODIA

Bambino Gesù Hospital has been active in Cambodia for more than ten years, providing healthcare support

and training at the Takeo Referral Hospital (TRH), by virtue of a cooperation agreement between the Apostolic Nunciature and the local Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2020, the activities of the Mobile Clinic, a project launched the previous year, continued despite the limitations due to the pandemic. 25 visits were carried out on the field, during which 137 young patients were referred to the TRH for further examination (107 of whom underwent surgery). Furthermore, the Hospital continued to provide economic support to specialistic care and surgery for the most deprived children, whose families could not afford the costs of the national healthcare, thus allowing for the treatment of 143 patients (107 of whom referred by the Mobile Clinic). At the same time, a campaign was carried out to raise awareness among families on the need to contribute, even in the smallest way, to healthcare costs, thus overcoming the welfare culture and encouraging a culture of community; the funds raised will help a greater number of poor patients. In addition to that, throughout the year numerous remote consultations were offered for complex cases.

PARAGUAY

This project, funded entirely by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was launched in the framework of the cooperation agreement signed in February 2020 by Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital and the Italo-Latin America Institute (ILLA), aimed at improving the professional skills of the healthcare staff of Acosta Nù Children's Hospital (Asuncion) in the field of epilepsy surgery.



The launch of the project coincided with the outbreak of the pandemic, immediately requiring the reorganization of the training programme. Bambino Gesù specialists, through a continuous dialogue with the Acosta Nù healthcare staff, developed a training programme including numerous webinars and remote case management sessions for the discussion of complex clinical cases. Throughout the year, ten training sessions were provided, with a total of 14 healthcare professionals trained. Furthermore, Bambino Gesù Hospital supported the Paraguayan colleagues concerning Covid-19, by providing remote consultations and by sharing its protocols for emergency management.

EL SALVADOR

This project, funded entirely by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was launched in the framework of the cooperation agreement signed in February 2020 by Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital and the Italo-Latin America Institute (ILLA), aimed at improving the professional skills of the local healthcare staff. During this first year, characterized by the pandemic, activities were focused on supporting Benjamin Bloom Children's Hospital (El Salvador) in the management of the Covid-19 emergency, by providing remote consultations and by sharing Bambino Gesù protocols for emergency management.

RUSSIA

Bambino Gesù Hospital is committed in Russia through specialist training programmes in the field of neurology and neurosurgery, dedicated to the medical staff of Morozov Children's Clinical Hospital (Moscow) and of the Moscow Research and Clinical Center for Neuropsychiatry. Throughout 2020, the collaboration between Bambino Gesù specialists and the Russian physicians continued.

CHINA

Bambino Gesù Children's Hospital is active in China by virtue of a three-year framework cooperation agreement with the Children's Hospital of Hebei Province (HBCH), located in Shijiazhuang, which expired in November 2020. The cooperation, involving all paediatric specialties, was based on six-month training periods at Bambino Gesù Hospital dedicated to Chinese clinicians, and focused on different paediatric specialties. In January 2020, the two Chinese clinicians attending their training programme at Bambino Gesù Hospital were called back home because of the pandemic, and in-presence training activities were interrupted. Nevertheless, the cooperation continued, as asked by the counterparty, though conference calls organized to discuss complex cases.





International Activities
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