

Proposed Roger Milla Centre of Excellence

Specialist care and reconstructive surgery for children across Africa | Cameroon |
September 2026

Purpose of this note

To set out the project's medical and social ambition, together with the studies, partnerships and decisions needed before any construction commitment. The centre remains at the planning stage: its site, final scope, funding and timetable have not been settled.

Ambition

To welcome children from across Africa, particularly those living with the effects of noma, facial malformations or congenital conditions, and provide specialist care free of charge according to their medical needs.

1. Background and rationale

Noma is a serious disease that begins in the mouth. Early detection and treatment are essential; people who survive an advanced stage may need reconstructive surgery, rehabilitation and follow-up care. The World Health Organization added noma to its list of neglected tropical diseases in December 2023.

Specialist surgery remains difficult to access for many families, particularly when care requires travel, several procedures and prolonged follow-up. A needs assessment must document the affected populations, existing capacity and useful partnerships before the centre's scale is determined.

2. Objective and beneficiaries

The overall objective is to improve equitable access to quality specialist care through a coordinated pathway with existing health facilities in Cameroon and partner countries.

- Proposed priority beneficiaries: children living with the effects of noma or with facial malformations or congenital conditions, from different African countries.
- Admission criteria, patient referrals, travel arrangements and family support will be defined with the authorities and medical partners.

3. Services to be assessed

- Specialist consultations, diagnosis and preoperative assessment tailored to identified needs.
- Maxillofacial and reconstructive surgery, anaesthesia, inpatient care and postoperative services.
- Rehabilitation, nutritional and psychosocial support, and remote or local follow-up with partner facilities.
- Prevention, early identification and continuing training for health teams in cooperation with existing programmes.

4. Free care and financing model

Free care for admitted children is central to the programme's ambition. Sustaining it requires funding for procedures, medicines, equipment, professionals, rehabilitation and follow-up over time. An economic study will need to define the cost of care pathways, funding sources, eligibility rules and oversight mechanisms.

The figure of €200 million sometimes discussed is a working assumption. It is neither an approved budget nor secured funding. No activity volume or opening date can be guaranteed at this stage.

5. Location and preparatory steps

A location in the Yaoundé-Nsimalen area of Cameroon is being considered. The precise site and its availability remain to be confirmed. The project must obtain the necessary approvals and fit within national health policies.

- Establish a preparatory committee with health authorities, professionals and technical partners.
- Conduct a needs assessment; develop a medical plan; and examine land, technical, environmental and financial feasibility.
- Define the architectural plan, operating model, financing strategy and cooperation agreements before any investment decision.
- After approval, prepare construction, equipment procurement, recruitment and phased commissioning.

6. Governance, safety and monitoring

Governance arrangements must define the responsibilities of the Roger Milla Program, the future medical leadership, authorities and partners. Clinical protocols, patient safety, data protection, financial transparency and audit mechanisms must be established before opening.

Indicators to be developed include access times, patients treated, quality and safety of care, follow-up outcomes, training delivered and the cost of free care. Numerical targets will depend on the needs assessment.

7. Partnerships sought and next decision

The Roger Milla Program invites authorities, healthcare institutions, universities, professionals, public bodies, foundations, businesses and funders to contribute to the preparatory phase. The immediate decision sought is agreement from partners to launch the studies, refine the medical plan and establish a credible financing strategy.

Contact

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Medical sources: [WHO](#), ["Noma" fact sheet](#) and [announcement of 15 December 2023](#).