

Conrad N. Hilton Foundation

Purpose of Grant: To Test a Social Enterprise Model to Improve Access to High-Quality Surgery in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The Lions Aravind Institute of Community Ophthalmology (LAICO) will work with five carefully selected existing eye centers in Sub-Saharan Africa to help them build their capacity and reach more patients, with a goal of doubling their annual output of cataract operations. Aravind will work with the facilities on surgical training, strategic planning, and business practices. Each facility will attract, train, and add ophthalmic cataract surgical talent to their practice.

This project emphasizes the testing of a social enterprise model to address cataract. The participating eye care facilities have been chosen based in large part on their demonstrated high quality, efficient approach to cataract surgery and their entrepreneurship. They are led by committed ophthalmologists who possess a distinctly entrepreneurial spirit. The project will involve mentoring these entrepreneurial ophthalmologists to build the capacity and reach of their facilities to successfully treat more cataract patients, and do so sustainably.

A critical component of the capacity building described above will involve training. Each of these entrepreneurial ophthalmologists will identify one or two newly graduated ophthalmology residents who can be trained in both cataract surgery and medical practice development to grow the work of each eye care facility. The project will also include strengthening the facilities' information technology (IT) capacity in order to create strong enterprise systems and enable them to efficiently and accurately monitor outcomes.

While Aravind is the lead organization implementing this project, it is ultimately a team effort. Dr. Alfred Sommer, Dean Emeritus of the Bloomberg School of Public Health and Professor at the Wilmer Institute at Johns Hopkins University, will provide guidance, and the Dana Center for Preventive Ophthalmology at Johns Hopkins will provide monitoring and evaluation to assess and draw out learnings from the project for broader replication.

Projected Outcomes over Three Years:

- The annual cataract surgery output will be doubled in the service areas of each facility, as follows:
 - Upper Hill Eye and Laser Centre, Kenya: 5,000 annually
 - Innovation Eye Centre, Kenya: 5,000 annually
 - Fitsum Berhan Specialized Eye Center, Ethiopia: 10,000 annually
 - Desert Community Vision Institute
Eye Foundation Centre, Nigeria: 5,000 annually
 - Kitwe Central Hospital Community Eye Service, Zambia: 7,000 annually
- The high quality of cataract surgeries provided by the target hospitals will be maintained, as measured by the rate of complications and post-surgical visual acuity;
- A combined total of 169 eye health staff will be trained at the five target eye hospitals;
- Identification of a social enterprise model that is replicable, scalable, and sustainable for Sub-Saharan Africa.

About The Participating Facilities:

1. Kitwe Central Hospital Community Eye Service Program, Zambia (Dr. Asiwome Seneadza)

Kitwe Central Hospital Community Eye Service located in Kitwe district on the Copper Belt Province is the third largest government/public Hospital in Zambia. It is a tertiary referral hospital that was built in 1957. The eye department was established in 1974.

2. Innovation Eye Centre Limited, Kenya (Dr. Dan Kiage)

Innovation Eye Centre Ltd (IECL) was started in January 2013. Dr. Kiage was inspired to take this journey after participating in the Hilton Cataract Initiative meetings facilitated by Prof. Sommer. He resigned from his job as Assistant Professor and Head of Ophthalmology at Aga Khan University Hospital, Nairobi, and moved to the densely populated Kisii, 300 KM away from Nairobi. He visited Aravind on several occasions to discuss and develop a plan to develop a high volume eye care facility in Kisii.

3. Upper Hill Eye and Laser Centre, Kenya (Dr. Amos Kibata Githeko):

The Upper Hill Eye and Laser Centre (UHEAL) is a state-of-the-art eye clinic, ophthalmic imaging facility, and surgical centre. It was set up in 2007 by Dr. Kibata Githeko. The current UHEAL outreach program is targeted at treating diabetic retinopathy. Many patients were found to require cataract surgery, for which they were referred to other service providers. This led Dr. Kibata to decide to establish a regional, well equipped and efficiently run eye hospital performing high volume cataract surgery.

4. Desert Community Vision Institute, Eye Foundation Centre for the Prevention of Blindness, Nigeria (Dr. Kunle Hassan)

The Eye Foundation has been running as a Private–Public community-based Tripartite Eye Care System since 1993. This Social Entrepreneurship model of equitable, affordable, and sustainable eye care delivery system has given Eye Foundation a competitive edge. The Eye Foundation Hospital Group consists of five eye hospitals with state-of-the-art facilities and equipment.

5. Fitsum Birhan Specialized Eye Clinic, Ethiopia (Dr. Fitsum Bekele)

Dr. Fitsum Bekele Gezahgn, who previously worked at the government zonal hospital in Mekelle, founded the Fitsum Birhan Specialized Eye Clinic (FBSEC) as a private semi charity eye unit in 2006. He underwent SICS training at Aravind and participated in the LAICO's capacity building initiative in the year 2008. He is one the few surgeons already performing high volume cataract surgery.

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