

# Ophthalmic

## Mercy Ships Programme Fact Sheet

Updated January 2012

### *Blindness and Visual Impairment in Developing Nations*



Assan & Alusan, Liberia  
Cataract Removal



Desire, Benin  
Conjunctivitis



Alexis, Nadège, Ricardo,  
Benin, Cataract Removal



Surgery Ward



Cataract Operation



Patch Removal



Post-Operative Exam



Training

*Lives transformed  
through hope  
and healing...*

Eye conditions treatable in their early stages in developed nations are frequently left untreated in the poorest parts of the world and often lead to impairment or blindness.

The majority of blindness cases are curable and could be avoided by prevention and early treatment. Being blind in developing countries often means being considered an outcast. In fact, most blind children do not survive past the age of five.

### Cataract

Outside developed countries, cataracts remain the leading cause of avoidable visual impairment affecting 50% in Sub-Saharan Africa. A cataract is a clouding of the eye's lens which impedes the passage of light. Although most cases of cataract are related to the ageing process, occasionally children can be born with the condition, or cataracts can develop after eye injuries, inflammation, or as a result of ocular diseases. Cataract surgery is one of the most cost-effective treatments that can be offered in developing countries.

### Statistics (source: WHO)

- 45 million people are blind worldwide. Most of the world's blind – some 87% – live in poor nations where eye care is inaccessible.
- About 85% of all visual impairment could be avoidable globally.
- Correction of refractive errors could give normal vision to more than 12 million children (ages five to 15).

### *Transformational health care through Eye Care Programmes*

Mercy Ships aims to prevent the effects of blindness by providing specialised medical treatment. Mercy Ships uses hospital ships backed by land-based programmes to deliver free specialised health care to the world's forgotten poor.

Mercy Ships ophthalmic surgeons perform free, vital eye operations to restore patients' sight and improve their quality of life.

### Ophthalmic Surgery

Cataracts are the most common cause of avoidable blindness worldwide. However, most incidents of cataract blindness are curable and sight can be restored with a low-cost, 20-minute eye operation. Mercy Ships cataract operations are performed using the latest methods and technology. Mercy Ships eye surgeons perform procedures to correct pterygium (growths on the cornea of the eye), strabismus (the medical term for crossed eyes) eyelid deformities, and replacing painful or disfiguring blind eyes with prostheses.

### Capacity Building

In addition to the surgical focus, Mercy Ships provides opportunities for non-formal training and mentoring for local surgeons and eye health providers. This training will help build the in-country capacity to provide eye services.

### Accomplishment

Since 1978, Mercy Ships has provided over 33,400 eye operations and performed more than 222,600 eye consultations.