

VISION FOR ALL

ELEVATE TRAINING TODAY FOR A BLINDNESS-FREE TOMORROW

THE MISSION:

Design, build, and equip a self-sustaining eye care center that educates, trains, and ultimately empowers the people of Honduras to eradicate preventable blindness in their country. Create a model for care that can be scaled to other countries in the region and the world.

THE IMPACT:

Alleviation of preventable blindness in Honduras by training young ophthalmologists and allied health professionals to provide excellent and efficient eye care in an economically sustainable system.

THE PROBLEM:

1. There are an estimated 160,000 Hondurans living with visual impairment due to inadequate access to eye care. Only the top 10% of Hondurans can afford private practice eye care, leaving the remaining bottom 90% without adequate access. Poor access along with aging populations is causing an increasing number of people to suffer with visual impairment.
2. There are only ~100 ophthalmologists in Honduras, and only approximately half of those perform surgery. Training for new ophthalmologists is limited, with only 2 to 3 residents graduating each year at the only residency program in the country. Additionally, the one residency program is itself limited by inadequate resources and too few faculty. This combination of factors has resulted in a workforce unable to provide surgical eye care for the approximately 10 million Hondurans.
3. In 2023, the World Bank estimated that 51.3 percent of the population of Honduras lives below the threshold for poverty, and it is among the poorest countries in the region. To be sustainable, an eye care center must cross-subsidize services in order to serve the poorest in the population, and such a system requires careful planning and development.

THE SOLUTION:

Although the problems outlined above are immense, ACE Global believes that the current trend of increasing blindness in Honduras can be reversed with a multi-pronged approach. Three crucial elements are necessary for this to work:

1. Train more surgical ophthalmologists. ACE Global has created the first-ever ophthalmology fellowship program in Honduras through which young surgeons from the region

receive world-class training. This is accomplished through the dedicated work of volunteer ophthalmologists from both Honduras and abroad, as well as through partnerships with US Universities (Emory University, University of Illinois at Chicago, and Bascom Palmer.)

2. Implement efficient, effective systems of eye care delivery. ACE Global creates efficient, high-volume systems and provides the highest quality eye care through an approach that includes training the entire eye healthcare team of clinic staff, operating room staff, and physicians. The system-based approach maximizes capacity within our facility and prepares our fellows to function within such a system once they finish their training.
3. Create new eye care facilities that serve as referral centers for the surrounding regions via a network of satellite clinics. This model minimizes travel for both patients and physicians but extends care to previously isolated populations and provides better access for all Hondurans.

To meet each of the above three needs, ACE Global must build C-STAR: The Center for Surgical Training and Research. In 4 years, we have grown from one Honduran fellow to five per year, and we have participated in the education of over 20 resident physicians. We have exceeded our capacity at all four of the training facilities we use, and there is no space to train additional doctors. With a new facility, we can meet all three of the above needs by increasing the number of ophthalmologists that we train, establishing high-volume systems of efficient eye surgery, and creating a referral eye care center surrounded by a network of satellite clinics. The new facility will have the capacity to perform 10,000 surgeries per year, allowing for a significant reduction in the 160,000 visually impaired Hondurans, and providing excellent, affordable and accessible eye care for years to come.

The facility will be 23,000 square feet (2,136m²). It will include:

- 6 operating room beds in a modern ambulatory surgical center.
- Specialty clinic areas for anterior segment, oculoplastics, retina, and pediatrics.
- Optical shop
- Laboratory
- Pharmacy
- Primary care clinic
- Simulation lab for teaching basic and advanced surgical techniques
- Research wing
- Guest House to accommodate both our short-term teaching travel teams and long-term housing for our international residents and fellows.

By offering efficient, high-volume care, we will be able to offer ALL eye surgeries and services at price points that 80-90% of Hondurans can afford. A key facet of this approach is that no patient will ever be turned away for financial reasons, and all will receive the care they need, regardless of their ability to pay.

OUR NEEDS

To make this dream a reality and to make Honduras the first LMIC in the Western Hemisphere to reverse cataract blindness, we need help. We are asking for partnerships with individuals, organizations, and private industry. ACE Global is actively fundraising for this project, and our preliminary budget is \$2.5 million. The backlog of physicians who need our training programs and the patients who will benefit from these services is growing too fast. Please join us in our effort to prove there are solutions that will work.

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