

SCALING SIGHT:

Ending Preventable Blindness in Guatemala and Beyond

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BACKGROUND

Globally, at least 1 billion have a vision impairment that could have been prevented or has yet to be addressed. These 1 billion people include those with moderate or severe distance vision impairment or blindness due to unaddressed refractive error (123.7 million), cataract (65.2 million), glaucoma (6.9 million), corneal opacities (4.2 million), diabetic retinopathy (3 million), and trachoma (2 million), as well as near vision impairment caused by unaddressed presbyopia (826 million).*

Without access to eye care, this can be a life sentence of misery for impoverished people in the developing world. Unable to work, those who cannot see become dependent on their relatives, which reduces their opportunities. Isolated from community activities, they lose not only their independence, but their basic human dignity. Loss of sight for one individual can trigger an economic crisis for the entire family.

As Seva Foundation enters its fifth decade, it is poised to help lead the way in eliminating preventable blindness worldwide with its proven Global Sight Initiative (GSI) platform. What is needed is the financial support to implement these solutions.

Launched by Seva in 2006, GSI provides a package of investment, training programs, and capacity-building services to entrepreneurial, social enterprises based in developing countries whose populations have among the highest levels of avoidable blindness and moderate to severe visual impairment (MSVI). GSI network members share promising clinical and non-clinical practices that improve the quality, volume, and efficiency of the eye care they deliver.

GSI incorporates best practices and lessons learned since Seva's founding and continues to evolve based on evidence and learning. **Collectively, the GSI network delivers eye care services to an estimated 10 million people each year.**

* According to World Report on Vision by WHO, October 2019.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

With the Scaling Sight project, Seva proposes to eliminate preventable blindness in Guatemala within 10 years and in so doing create the blueprint to scale the evidence-based GSI model throughout Latin America.

Primary Eye Care Vision Centers (PECVCs) are the "front line" in the GSI model. While small, with just two to three rooms and two to five trained paraprofessionals recruited from the local community, the PECVC provides a wide range of primary eye care services. Through paraprofessionals and telemedicine, 80% of eye care needs can be treated in the PECVC. Each PECVC is linked to an eye hospital, where more complex treatments by ophthalmologists are available.

Scaling Sight will build out the GSI model already in place in Guatemala in Guatemala City and the rural Petén region into a national eye care system. The project will establish five new eye hospitals across the country, each with a network of five to six PECVCs.



\$1 MILLION INVESTMENT

With this level of funding, we could plant the initial seeds of a new local eye care system in Guatemala by establishing three PECVCs in three different departments of the Sur Occidente area:

- 500,000 people receive access to basic primary eye care through telemedicine.
- Three PECVCs established.
- Essential prerequisites for launch of local eye care system completed, i.e., feasibility and Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (RAAB) studies.

\$5 MILLION INVESTMENT

With \$5 million funding, we could establish the first local node in the national eye care system—a local eye care system serving the Sur Occidente area:

- 3.9 million people receive access to primary eye care and more highly specialized in-hospital care as needed.
- One hospital and five PECVCs established.
- Essential prerequisites for launch of local eye care system completed, i.e., feasibility and Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (RAAB) studies.
- Documentation of local system build-out completed for scaling playbook.

\$10 MILLION INVESTMENT

This level of funding would allow us to create the first regional node in the national eye care system—an eye care system serving both the northern and southern parts of the Occidente region.

- 6.2 million people receive access to primary eye care and more highly specialized in-hospital care as needed.
- Two hospitals and 12 PECVCs established.
- Essential prerequisites for launch of regional eye care system completed, i.e., feasibility and Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (RAAB) studies.
- Upgrade to Visualiza's Center of Excellence completed.
- Documentation of regional system build-out completed for scaling playbook.

SUSTAINABILITY

Long-term sustainability is embedded in Seva's model. Philanthropic support is required to create the infrastructure for an eye care system—including hospitals, vision centers, a digital monitoring and evaluation platform, and a supply chain for low-cost eyeglasses and other supplies—that serves all levels of society in a given region. After about two years, each regional eye care system, operating as a nonprofit social enterprise, achieves sufficient market penetration to break even. Fees from higher-income patients produce a margin that covers the operating costs of the hospitals and vision centers and subsidizes no-cost care for the neediest patients going forward.

PROJECT TEAM

Our team is built on three decades of collaboration.

SEVA FOUNDATION provides administrative support, training, and financial investments that equip local organizations to create and operate eye care systems based on Seva's Global Sight Initiative model.

VISUALIZA CLINICA MÉDICA OFTALMOLÓGICA (Visualiza), which has partnered with Seva for more than 13 years, currently delivers high-volume eye care in Guatemala City and the rural Petén region. Visualiza performs 33% of all cataract surgeries nationwide.

ARAVIND EYE CARE SYSTEM, with 13 hospitals and more than 75 vision centers, reaches 4.4 million people yearly. Aravind has deep on-the-ground experience in building its own local eye care systems and has acted as technical advisor to other countries replicating Seva's GSI model.

SCALABILITY

Guatemala's primary healthcare system structure is the same or similar to those in neighboring countries. Challenges are also similar. While expanding our current presence in Guatemala to a national eye care system, Seva will also create the platform to subsequently extend throughout Latin America. Near the end of the five-year Scaling Sight project we will lay the groundwork to expand to Mexico and Paraguay.

INNOVATION

A key component of the Scaling Sight project is the integration of a digital infrastructure that will provide capacity, with real-time data, for robust monitoring and evaluation. Project partner Dharma Platform is a cutting-edge leader in impact-first data collection and management.



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