



# Ophthalmic | Program Fact Sheet



Assan & Alusan, Liberia  
Cataract Removal



Desire, Benin  
Conjunctivitis



Alexis, Nadège,  
Ricardo,  
Benin, Cataract Removal

*Lives transformed  
through hope  
and healing...*



Surgery Ward



Cataract Operation



Patch Removal



Post-Operative Exam



Training

## Blindness and Visual Impairment in Developing Nations

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 is curable and could be avoided by prevention and early treatment. Blind persons in developing countries are often ostracized, considered outcasts in their communities. Even worse, most blind children do not survive past the age of five.

### Cataract

Outside developed countries, cataracts remain the leading cause of avoidable visual impairment. 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 aging 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)

- Between 40-50 million people are blind worldwide.
- About 80% of all visual impairment could be avoidable globally.
- 60% of the world's blind live in sub-Saharan Africa, China, and India.
- 50% of the world's blind suffer from cataracts.

## Transformational Healthcare through Eye Care Programs

Mercy Ships aims to prevent the effects of blindness by providing specialized medical treatment. Mercy Ships uses hospital ships supported by shore-based activities to deliver free specialized healthcare 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, suture-less technique. 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 (crossed eyes), and eyelid deformities, and to replace painful or disfiguring blind eyes with prostheses.

### Training & Capacity Building

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

### Accomplishments

Since 1978, Mercy Ships has provided over 45,000 eye operations and performed more than 289,000 eye consultations.