



**The Fred Hollows
Foundation NZ**

20 years of restoring sight

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2013



**“Now we can
walk alone”**

**Your support is transforming
lives in the Solomon Islands**

Photo: Michael Bradley

0800 227 229 | www.hollows.org.nz



Photo: Michael Bradley

How your support is really making a difference



As simple as a pair of specs

Thanks to you, this young girl from Timor-Leste now has the glasses she needs to see clearly again. Restoring sight can be as simple as providing a vision test and a pair of spectacles.

With your support, The Fred Hollows Foundation trains eye health technicians to test people's vision and determine the strength of the lenses they require. They are then given a pair of our low cost spectacles to take home with them. It's as easy as that.

Because of you, 12,874 pairs of spectacles were distributed to people with low vision in 2012.



Reaching people in remote locations

With your support, Vika was able to access cataract surgery despite living on an island with no resident eye doctor.

The Foundation sends surgical teams to remote areas of the Pacific to provide cataract operations to those who need it most. Our doctors and nurses pack up their gear, travel long distances in boats or planes, and spend weeks at a time restoring sight to as many people as they can. Often they are based in places where surgery would not otherwise be available.

Many people believe their blindness is inevitable. Thanks to you, we can show them otherwise.

Because of you, 11,458 people were screened and 1,902 sight-restoring surgeries were performed during surgical outreaches in 2012.



You are part of the long-term solution

Your support means that Fiji will benefit from Losana's specialist training in community eye care. Losana is the first graduate from the Master of Community Eye Care program and will now lead the development of local solutions to eye health issues.

In order to bring about lasting change, The Fred Hollows Foundation trains local eye health specialists to restore sight in their own communities.

Fred knew that training local people was the only way to make his dream a reality; a world where no one is needlessly blind. You are a part of this dream.

Because of you, 27 eye health specialists were trained in 2012.

A message from Andrew Bell, our Executive Director



Fred Hollows wanted every person, no matter who they are or where they live, to have access to high quality eye

care. He was driven by a real sense of urgency, and even on his death bed remained committed to making his dream a reality. This sense of urgency drives Fred's Foundation to this day, and we couldn't be more determined to end avoidable blindness in the Pacific.

Of course, what it really comes down to is the difference you make in people's lives. Your support allows us to train local surgeons and restore sight to people living in some of the remotest corners of the Pacific – people like Angella and Aloisia (pictured on the cover) who would otherwise remain needlessly blind for years.

Fred was a man of action and a Kiwi hero. By supporting Fred's Foundation you are following in his footsteps and bringing about lasting change. Because of you, every person – everywhere – will one day have access to the eye care services they deserve.

Thank you.

Andrew Bell
Executive Director

Your results from the field



Reaching Bougainville

We recently added the Autonomous Region of Bougainville to our list of surgical outreach locations. Bougainville has just one eye clinic and no locally based eye doctor. The Foundation's first outreach was held in 2012, with 141 sight-restoring surgeries performed. The team visited for a second time in February this year, restoring sight to a further 85 people.



New leader for eye care

Solomon Islander, Dr Claude Posala, graduated with his Master of Medicine (Ophthalmology) at the end of 2012. He has now returned home to take over from Dr Mundi Qalo, another Foundation-trained eye doctor who has been the Chief Ophthalmologist in the Solomon Islands for the last three years. Dr Qalo is now based at the Pacific Eye Institute where he will lead our critical surgical outreach program, and use his skills to help increase the number of people with their sight restored across the Pacific. (See story on page 4).



Eye health workers graduate

The class of 2012 has graduated from the Pacific Eye Institute in Fiji (a training centre established by The Foundation in 2006) and Divine Word University in Papua New Guinea. They have now headed home to provide eye care services in their own communities. The Pacific Eye Institute graduation ceremony saw eye health qualifications awarded to 19 graduates from seven countries; Fiji, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, and Palau. A further eight eye nurses graduated in Papua New Guinea.

Global highlights

A reason to celebrate

The Fred Hollows Foundation has been ranked in the top fifty best non-government organisations in the world in an annual list published by The Global Journal. The Swiss-based publication made the assessment based on a number of criteria including innovation, impact and sustainability.

In its assessment of The Fred Hollows Foundation, The Global Journal highlighted the organisation's role in reducing the price of cataract surgery to as little as \$25 in some countries, as well as its commitment to training local medical and support staff.

Thank you for making this work possible.

The Fred Hollows Foundation NZ – CC23722 – is a registered charitable entity in terms of the Charities Act 2005.

Donations to The Fred Hollows Foundation NZ are used to support our programs in the Pacific. The information contained in this publication is accurate at the time of printing. For more information contact info@hollows.org.nz

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Changing the face of optometry

The Fred Hollows Foundation NZ thanks Specsavers for their corporate partnership which raises awareness and funds for our Pacific programs.



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All photos: Michael Bradley

Restoring sight in the remote Solomon Islands

Linnie and her granddaughter travelled four hours on the back of a truck to reach the eye clinic in Honiara.

Fred believed in training local people to restore sight in their own communities. With your support, Fred's Foundation has done just that in the Solomon Islands.

Foundation-trained eye doctor Dr Mundi Qalo has been the only ophthalmologist in the Solomon Islands' National Eye Care Program for the last three years, serving a population of over half a million people. One of the world's poorest nations, the Solomon Islands is an incredibly challenging place to work, with 90 per cent of the population living in isolated communities spread over 992 islands.

After finishing his training at the end of 2009, Dr Qalo returned home to take up the position of Chief



Dr Qalo travels door to door to find patients in need of eye care. He is pictured here with 7-year-old Hilda and her mother.

Ophthalmologist. Since then he has performed 2,200 sight-restoring surgeries, trained 12 local eye health workers and conducted 33 surgical outreaches into remote areas.

Based at the National Referral Hospital in Honiara, Dr Qalo has access to an operating theatre two days a week, allowing him to perform around 40 sight-restoring surgeries. Around 80 per cent of his patients have cataracts, but he also handles around three emergency cases a week – mostly trauma caused by knife wounds, broomsticks, and fishing accidents.

Every year, Dr Qalo trains four local eye health workers who are then posted to rural areas where they screen patients and refer them to Honiara for surgery. Dr Qalo also regularly travels to remote areas and sets up temporary operating theatres in rural health clinics or schools. With three nurses to support him, he performs an average of 80 surgeries in three days, with each operation taking five to ten minutes.

In 2012, determined to reach more people in need, Dr Qalo started going house to house to find patients who are simply too blind to leave their homes or make the long journey in search of treatment. This resulted in a 32 per cent increase in cataract surgeries.

Dr Qalo's eyes light up when he talks about the impact of his work. "You give them surgery today, it's like a miracle, tomorrow they gain vision. They hug you, they cry, they laugh! That is the satisfying bit of it."

Your impact in the Solomon Islands



Our team of Solomon Island doctors (from left to right): Dr John Szetu (Director of the Pacific Eye Institute in Suva), Dr Nola Pikacha, Dr Mundi Qalo and Dr Claude Posala.

Thanks to you, the Solomon Island's eye care program is now run and delivered entirely by local eye health workers trained by Fred's Foundation.

- This year, Dr Qalo will be based at the Pacific Eye Institute in Suva where he will lead our critical surgical outreach program, and use his surgical skills to increase the number of people who have their sight restored across the Pacific.
- Dr Claude Posala, a highly skilled surgeon who finished his training at the end of 2012, has returned home to take over as Chief Ophthalmologist.
- Dr Nola Pikacha, currently in her final year of training, will join Dr Posala in 2014.

Delivering eye care in rural communities



The population of the Solomon Islands is spread over 992 islands and patients often travel by boat to reach the eye care services they so desperately need.

Dustin Alubaea is a Foundation-trained eye nurse based in the remote Choiseul province.

There are 56 nurses for a population of 25,000 people and Dustin is the only trained eye nurse. He has a small clinic where he screens patients for cataracts and helps prepare surgical lists for the outreach team from Honiara.

As part of his training, Dustin learnt the importance of collecting data about eye health and advocating to the Ministry of Health for increased funding for eye care services.

He is currently advocating for a new eye clinic, some vital equipment, and a second eye nurse.

Your support transforms lives – thank you



Aloisia

When we met Aloisia (pictured on the far left) she was on the final leg of her journey back to sight. Cataract blind for two years, she had left her village three months earlier to reach the nearest health centre, where she waited patiently until a visiting eye nurse came to look at her eyes. She then travelled to Honiara on a small boat to see our surgical team. She was delighted to have her sight back: "Now we can walk alone!"



Hilda

Despite having cataracts removed from both of her eyes, 7-year-old Hilda still couldn't see very well. Dr Qalo drove deep into the bush to find Hilda's house and have another look at her eyes. He spoke to her mother who agreed to bring her back to the clinic. After some simple tests it turned out all she needed was a pair of spectacles. These tests cannot be carried out until a month after surgery once the eyes have healed and adjusted to the implanted intraocular lens. Thankfully in this case the solution was simple!



Slyrex

19-year-old Slyrex arrived in Honiara by boat with a pierced cornea from a spear diving accident. He was rushed into the operating theatre for emergency surgery and thankfully his sight was saved. Trauma to the eye can cause cataracts to form in as little as 12 hours, and during the operation a white film could be seen forming over his pupil – the early signs of cataract. Dr Qalo told him that once his eye had healed he would need to come back to the clinic for cataract surgery.



Top left: Professor Fred Hollows anaesthetises the eye of a patient being prepared for cataract surgery in Hanoi (Vietnam) in 1992. Photo: Michael Amendolia
Top right: Fred Hollows with General Giap in Vietnam.

Memories of Fred

In April 1992, Fred Hollows visited Vietnam to investigate setting up a third intraocular lens factory. While he was there, he made a promise to train Vietnamese eye doctors in modern cataract surgery techniques using those intraocular lenses.

During The Foundation's 20th anniversary celebrations, Professor Nguyen Trong Nhan, Chair of the Vietnamese National Ophthalmology Association and former Minister for Health, spoke about the late surgeon's urgency to get things done, even while he was battling the cancer that would eventually claim his life.

"Everyone could sense the enthusiasm and straightforwardness of Professor Fred Hollows. Some nights, Professor felt wearied, and was afraid that he might pass away any time."

"He called other members in his team to have some last words to them, making them promise to continue their efforts in helping Vietnamese ophthalmology even when he was not there."

Professor Nhan spoke about Fred's special relationship with the great Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap, a man Fred very much admired and was thrilled to meet on that first visit to Vietnam.

"At the meeting, Professor Hollows did not say a word about his illness, but he mentioned that this would be his first and last visit to Vietnam. General Giap understood the implication, yet he asserted, 'I do believe Professor that you will be back in Vietnam again.'"

True to General Giap's prediction, in July that same year, Fred discharged himself from hospital in Sydney and returned to Vietnam to help fulfil his promise to train Vietnamese eye surgeons in modern cataract surgery techniques.

"This time, I saw that he had tracheal intubation, his voice was lower, yet he still kept his enthusiasm in every activity," Professor Nhan said. "When meeting General Giap for the second time, the General said 'Professor, you have come back to Vietnam as expected!'"

Professor Nhan said that over the past 20 years, as promised, Fred's work has continued through his Foundation with the support of the New Zealand and Australian people. But he ended his address by honouring the man who used the final months of his own life to help people in a foreign land.

"On the occasion of celebrating 20 years of The Fred Hollows Foundation working in Vietnam, we always remember Professor Fred Hollows, the true friend of Vietnamese people."

Over the past 20 years, and with your help, The Fred Hollows Foundation has made a major contribution to eye health in Vietnam. The Foundation's training of 322 Vietnamese ophthalmologists - training that Fred himself began - has helped lift the number of modern cataract surgeries performed per year from 1,000 to 200,000.



Share your memories of Fred

Please feel free to contact us if you have something you would like to share with us and other supporters. You can email us at info@hollows.org.nz, mail us at The Fred Hollows Foundation, Private Bag 99909, Newmarket, Auckland 1149, or call us on 0800 227 229.



Photo: James Ensing-Trussell

The Fred Hollows Foundation welcomes new research fellow

Dr Biu Sikivou, diabetes ophthalmologist and Associate Director of the Pacific Eye Institute, treats a patient with diabetic retinopathy in Suva, Fiji.

Last year, The Fred Hollows Foundation NZ and The University of Auckland joined forces to ramp up the quantity and quality of research into avoidable blindness in the Pacific.

As well as funding two research scholarships to support Master of Public Health students within the School of Population Health (Global Health), The Foundation is also supporting a Fred Hollows Clinical Research Fellow in Ophthalmology.

The first Fellow has been appointed and started at the Department of

Ophthalmology on the 4th of February this year. Dr Erika Damato, who hails from the UK, is an ophthalmologist with a particular interest in diabetes and inflammatory eye disease. She will work in collaboration with The Foundation to develop and manage new research projects.

“We are absolutely delighted with the appointment of Dr Damato and look forward to working with her,” says Andrew Bell, Executive Director of The Foundation. “Dr Damato’s interest in diabetes is of particular relevance to

our work in Fiji where there is a rapidly growing demand for diabetes eye care services.”

The Foundation’s priority is ensuring the best outcomes for people in the Pacific affected by avoidable blindness, and through targeted research we hope to gain a deeper understanding of the barriers and challenges local staff face delivering eye care programs in the region.

To read about the research undertaken by the 2012 scholarship recipients visit www.hollows.org.nz



Top left: Angella travelled on a small boat to Honiara to see our surgical outreach team. She said “I would rather have lost a limb than gone blind.”

Top right: Angella was absolutely delighted to have her sight back!
Photos: Michael Bradley

Kiwis would rather lose a limb than their eyesight

A recent survey of more than 1,100 Kiwis from around the country found that 80 per cent would rather have a shorter life than lose their vision. The survey also revealed that the majority would rather lose an arm or a leg than their sight.

Eyesight is valued just as much in developing countries, but unfortunately this is where 90 per cent of avoidable blindness occurs.

The Fred Hollows Foundation works to end avoidable blindness in more than 29 developing countries around the world. Our eye doctors also advise all Kiwis to get their eyes checked regularly, and to wear sunglasses to protect their eyes from the sun’s damaging rays.

More information on the survey is available from www.bit.ly/kiwiesurvey

Restore sight through payroll giving

Payroll giving is a simple and efficient way for employees to donate to The Fred Hollows Foundation NZ.

- Your nominated donation is deducted from your pre-tax salary on each pay day and the benefit to you is immediate; if you make a \$15 payroll donation only \$10 will come out of your pay, as you get a third back in tax straight away. The Fred Hollows Foundation will get the full \$15!
- You can donate as much or as little as you like
- You can change the amount of your donation or opt out any time
- If your workplace uses iPayroll, you can now easily donate to The Fred Hollows Foundation

With your on-going support through payroll giving you can help even more people in desperate need of sight-restoring surgery.

To find out more, email info@hollows.org.nz



Photo: Michael Bradley

Tilika was overjoyed to see his young granddaughters after his sight-restoring surgery: "It made me smile to see their beautiful faces."

Thank you

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