



Vanuatu

Eye Care

Location

Vanuatu

Partner

Presbyterian Church in Vanuatu

Background

Vanuatu is the third poorest country in the Pacific. Beyond the tourist centres of Port Vila and Luganville most of the population of 246,000 live subsistence lifestyles spread over 65 islands. Most islands have few or no health posts and schools are poorly resourced. This has led to high levels of infant mortality, secondary school drop outs and unemployment. By way of example in health, there are just 30 doctors in the country and only 40 per cent of children aged 12 to 23 months are fully vaccinated.

UnitingWorld is partnering with the Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu (PCV) in community development projects and vital services across the country. Most of the work is being

done through the ecumenical Church Partnership Program. There is also a program focussed specifically on eye care in remote island villages.

The Project

Prior to the establishment of this program basic primary eye care was not available outside Port Vila. This meant that large numbers of people were severely visually handicapped and in want of a pair of glasses. Many others had debilitating or blinding eye conditions that went undiagnosed and untreated. Diabetes, which was in epidemic proportions, was untreated so many people had diabetic retinopathy.

Begun in 2000, each year three groups of Australian surgeons and nurses travel to Vanuatu to conduct a series of clinics on a number of remote islands. The teams perform basic eye surgery, provide glasses, screen patients for diabetes and high blood pressure and treat patients with general medical needs. Many of the medical issues they see are serious and life threatening. The teams also train local nurses in the basic skills of refraction and diagnosis.

Achievements

The eye care clinics now see more





than 4000 patients a year, more people than ever before. Approximately 2000 pairs of glasses are dispensed, and a wide range of other treatments are provided, including the setting of broken bones. To empower and educate the broader community the clinic team holds seminars for trainee teachers in Vila and conducted eye care awareness sessions in village schools. The number of local full time eye care staff has increased as well.

The Future

Three permanent eye care clinics have now been established with trained staff in Port Vila, Santo and Tanna. The aim is to empower local people to independently run the clinics while continuing some support through the provision of equipment and funding for training.



Get Involved

We invite you to get involved with the project by supporting the work financially, praying for the success of the project and receiving regular updates.

Contact UnitingWorld

Address: PO Box A2266
Sydney South NSW 1235
Phone: +61 2 8267 4265



Yes, I'd like to help provide eye care for rural villages in Vanuatu.

I would like to make a one off gift of:

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Should the funds raised exceed the amount required to meet the needs of the Vanuatu Eye Care project UnitingWorld will use the excess funds to help people involved in similar projects.

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