



## Muhammed Akbar

Zawanikhel, Nowshera District, Pakistan

**Photo** | Muhammad Akbar (centre) with his grandchildren. Eighteen year old Asghar Ali (back row, left) helped his grandfather with his daily chores when he was unable to see. Photo courtesy of Muhammad Akbar.

Muhammad Akbar is a retired machine operator for a ghee mill and lives in the Zawanikhel village of Nowshera District, Pakistan. He had suffered deteriorating sight due to bilateral cataracts for years and became completely blind in the last 6 months.

As Muhammad's sight became gradually worse, he became more dependent on his 18 year old grandson, Asghar Ali, to help him with daily chores, assisting him to walk wherever he needed to go and to narrate events for him. Muhammad felt like he was being a burden on Asghar and sad and helpless for needing his constant help.

Simple pleasures in Muhammad's life were affected by blindness. "I could not participate in many social activities, I could not greet anyone who came to visit the Hujra (male guest area in a Pathan household), I could not shake hands with them and welcome them as I could not see them; it was so depressing" Muhammad eventually stopped attending his relatives' Hujras and kept to himself at home.

Muhammad also missed the sight of his jambolan tree, which he planted a few years ago, which brought him much joy "I longed to see my jambolan tree bearing fruits, and when it did, I was blind".

Dr Gul Shad, District Ophthalmologist, operated on Muhammad's eyes at The District Head Quarter Hospital in Nowshera, North West Frontier Province. The Fred Hollows Foundation trained Dr Gul Shad in cataract surgery and upgraded the eye unit in The DHQ Hospital in Nowshera so that it contained state of the art surgical equipment. Training of staff and upgrading the unit has resulted in a higher number of cataract surgeries being performed.

After surgery, Muhammad expressed "the operation to me was a blessing from God, it has given me my life back". Asghar Ali is also pleased about his grandfather's renewed sight. "I felt sad as he always lived his life with dignity and respect but then had to seek people's help for everyday tasks. I am happy to see my grandfather leading his normal life again"