

Ethiopia

Invest in Sight. Transform a Nation.

A rare opportunity to end
a global problem.



The Fred Hollows
Foundation



More than 1 billion people live with vision loss that could have been prevented or is treatable. Without urgent action, that number will rise to 1.7 billion by 2050.

For more than 30 years, The Fred Hollows Foundation has worked to end avoidable blindness and restore sight; transforming lives, economies, and communities.

We've proven that change at scale is possible.

In Vietnam, it took three decades of partnership to build a national eye health system that now meets 90% of cataract needs and has eliminated trachoma.

Our next frontier: scaling impact.

To meet this moment, The Foundation is focusing its next phase of growth on nine countries across three regions where the need is greatest, the environment is enabling, and the potential for system-wide transformation is real.

A proven model for scale

In 1992, when The Foundation first started working in Vietnam, there were only two ophthalmologists who could perform modern cataract surgery.

Only 50 cataract surgeries were performed each year, despite around 1 million people needing it.

Today, Vietnam's 97 million people have near universal access to eye health and each year around 350,000 cataract surgeries are performed by more than 1,000 surgeons.

Our model in Vietnam proves that partnership, leadership, and investment can transform entire health systems.



1992-2000

Laying the foundations

- Fred Hollows begins training local ophthalmologists (“teach the teachers first”).
- Hundreds of surgeons were trained in modern cataract surgery.
- Early system building with intraocular lenses (IOLs) and essential tools.



2000-2015

Expanding reach

- National outreach programs and clinics were established.
- Community health workers were trained to bring services closer to people.
- Major gains: 70% cataract surgery coverage and greater than 80% access to glasses.



2015-2025

Integration and sustainability

- Eye health embedded in national education and health systems.
- Sustainable funding via national insurance schemes.
- 350,000+ cataract surgeries performed annually.
- 60% of infrastructure funded by Vietnamese partners.
- Transition to full government leadership underway.
- Close to universal health coverage.
- Trachoma eliminated.

Vietnam led the way — Ethiopia is next

Ethiopia: an urgent opportunity

With 135 million people and vast rural areas, Ethiopia faces one of the world's highest burdens of avoidable blindness. Cataracts are the leading cause, and trachoma rates are the highest globally. The Foundation works in Oromia — the most populous region — and the epicentre of need.



Cataract is the leading cause of blindness in **Ethiopia** and the world, responsible for almost half of all cases.

Entirely curable with a short, low-cost surgery. Yet more than **1,000,000~ Ethiopians** are waiting for treatment.

8.8 million
people live with vision loss

Trachoma is the world's leading infectious cause of blindness. Without intervention, it leads to painful, irreversible blindness..

It thrives where poverty, poor sanitation, and lack of clean water persist. **59% of the world's cases are found in Ethiopia.**

59%
of the world's trachoma cases

Refractive error is the world's leading cause of vision impairment and affects an estimated 671 million people worldwide.

Easily fixed with glasses, **but millions in rural areas can't access a simple eye test.**

1,000,000~
people waiting for cataract surgery in Ethiopia

Diabetic retinopathy is a leading cause of blindness among working-age adults and is a growing endemic.

Health workers lack the training and tools to detect it early. **A growing cause of blindness among working-age adults as diabetes rates rise.**

\$428 million
is lost every year in productivity in Ethiopia due to poor vision

Ethiopia

Africa's second-most populous country with an estimated ~135 million people in 2025.

Development challenges include:

- Poverty and food insecurity
- Vast rural areas, inequitable access to healthcare
- Infrastructure gaps
- Burden of preventable disease skewed towards poorer, remote communities
- Political fragility

Epicentre of need: Oromia

- Largest and most populous region, home to about one-third of the country's population.
- Contains vast rural and pastoralist communities where eye disease prevalence is highest and access to care is lowest.
- More than 27 million people in Oromia live in trachoma-endemic areas.



Weak health systems are holding back progress.

Severe workforce and infrastructure shortages

Ethiopia has only **1.2** ophthalmologists per million people (WHO recommends 4 per million). Many rural hospitals lack essentials tools and medicines.

Chronic underfunding

Only US \$28 per person is spent on health each year — far below global standards — leaving eye care under-resourced and donor-dependent.

Low quality eye care services

Training gaps and limited follow-up mean eye care outcomes remain inconsistent, especially in rural areas.



But change is within reach. Now is the time to act.

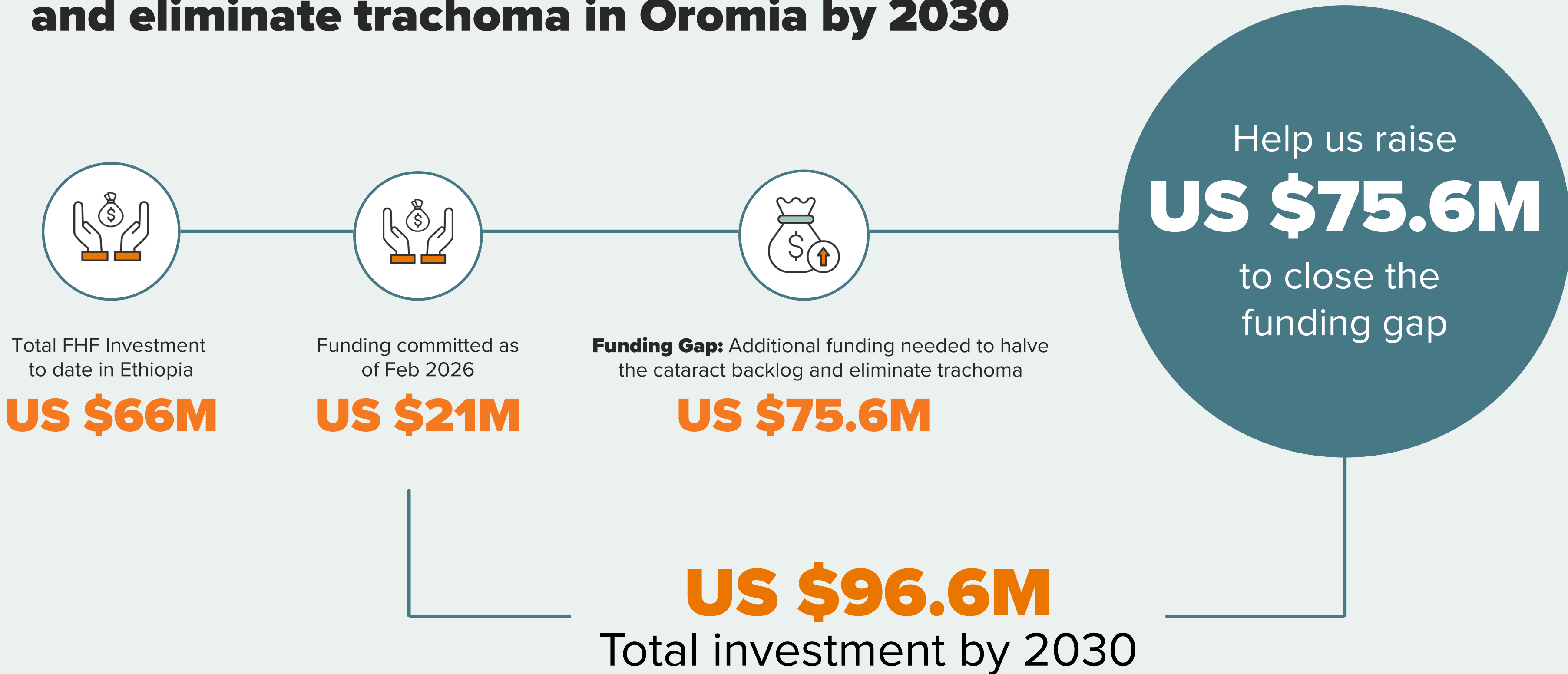
Our existing footprint and momentum

- **Our programs and partners are strong.** We have provided more than 780,000 surgeries, millions of screenings and hundreds of trained ophthalmic.
- **Leadership in disease elimination** and systems strengthening, with learnings from success in other countries.
- **Deep presence and commitments** in the Oromia region which has the highest burden in the country.

Strong Government partnership and readiness

A trusted, long-term partner of the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, The Foundation is supporting the rollout of the National Eye Health Strategic Plan (2024–2026) — aligned with WHO’s global vision goals. Ethiopia is committed to expanding eye health under its national plan — embedding Integrated People-Centred Eye Care (IPEC), Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) and Safeguarding principles, backed by training, equipment procurement and national campaigns.

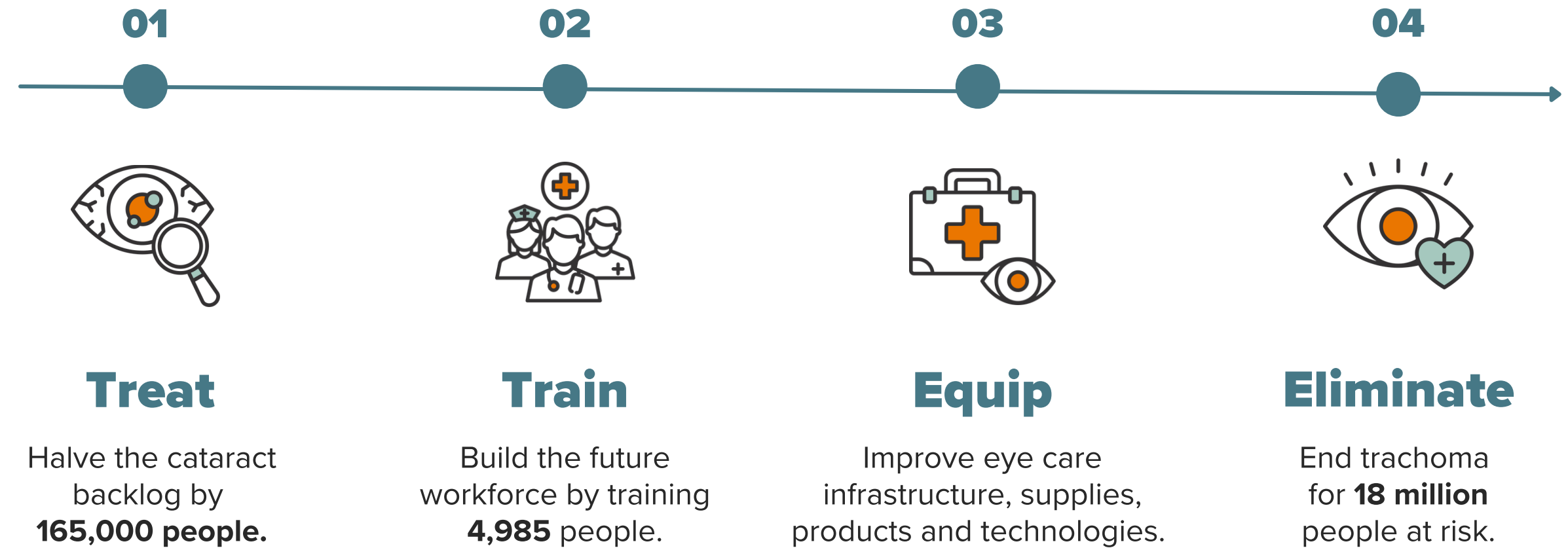
Investment needed to halve the cataract backlog and eliminate trachoma in Oromia by 2030



How do we get there?

We have a bold vision.

By 2030, we want to halve the cataract backlog and eliminate trachoma in Oromia, Ethiopia.



How we will scale and sustain this impact

Proven, cost-effective solutions delivered through coordinated outreach, hospital upgrades and workforce training.

Government ownership driving integration into schools and primary care.

Smarter delivery systems reducing costs and boosting efficiency through innovation and better use of resources.

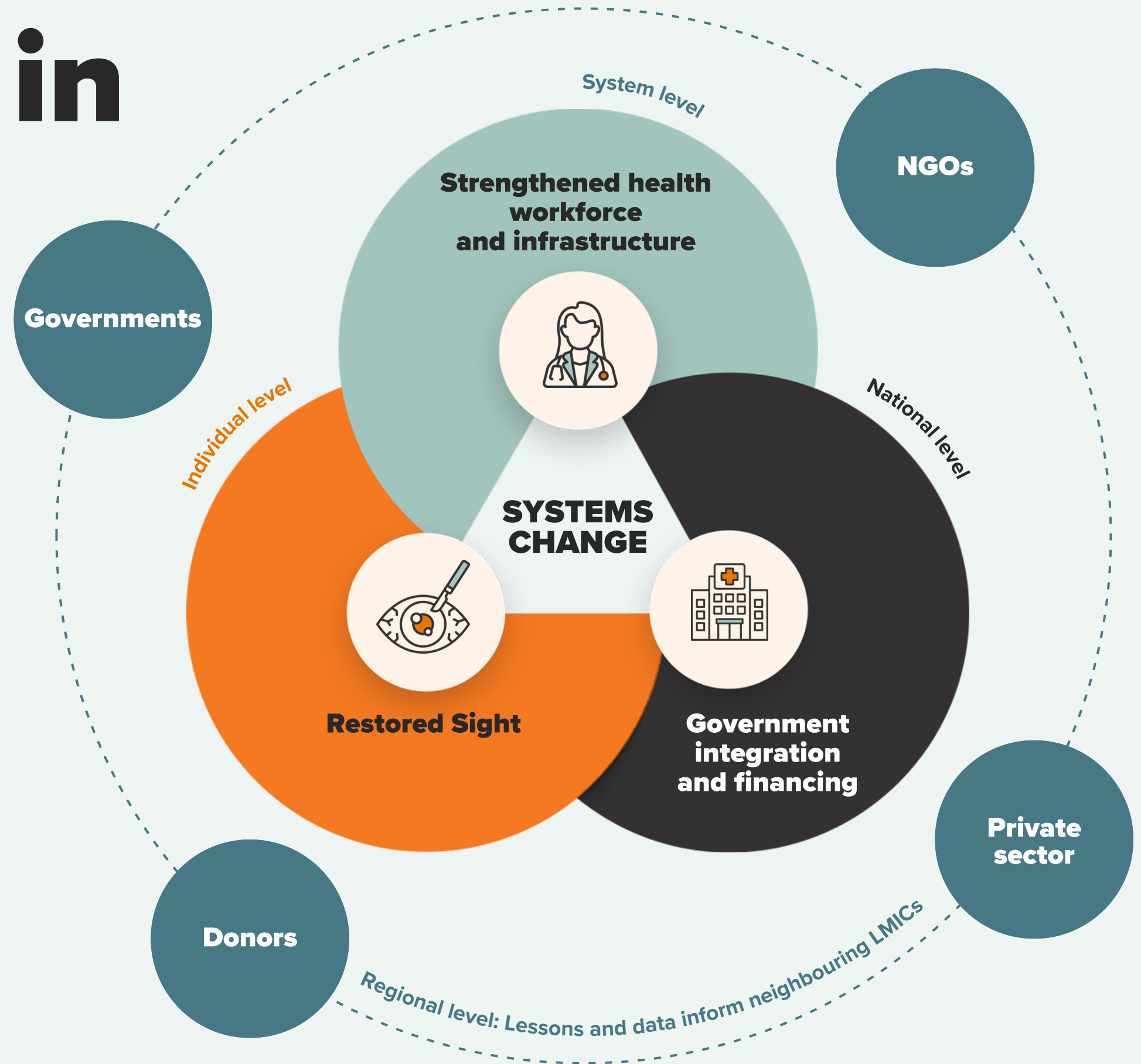


Why we invest in more than just surgeries

Ending avoidable blindness requires fixing the system that makes blindness so prevalent in the first place, not just delivering surgeries.

For a cataract operation to happen, three things must align: **the right team, in the right place, with the right equipment.** When even one link in this chain is broken, people go without care.

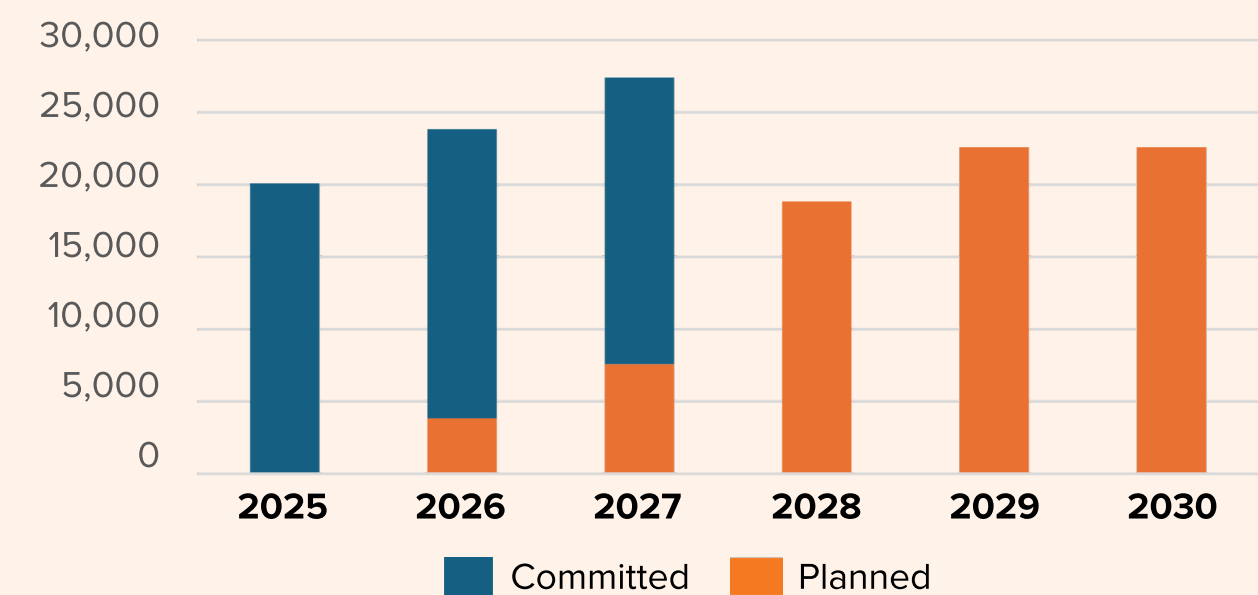
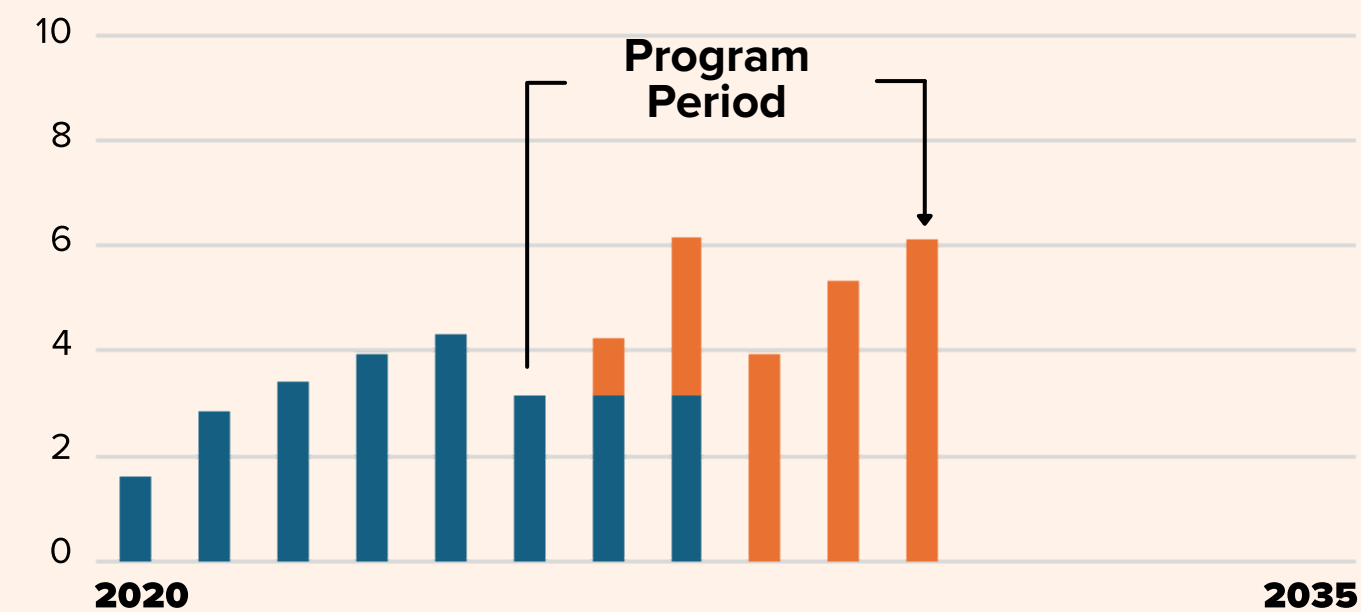
By investing in systems change and taking a sector-wide approach, we're not just restoring sight for individuals today, we're building a sustainable, self-reliant eye care system that will serve millions for generations to come.



How we'll halve the cataract backlog

US \$34.5 million investment required
between 2026 and 2030

to directly restore the sight of more than 165,000
people who may otherwise go blind



What your funding will contribute to

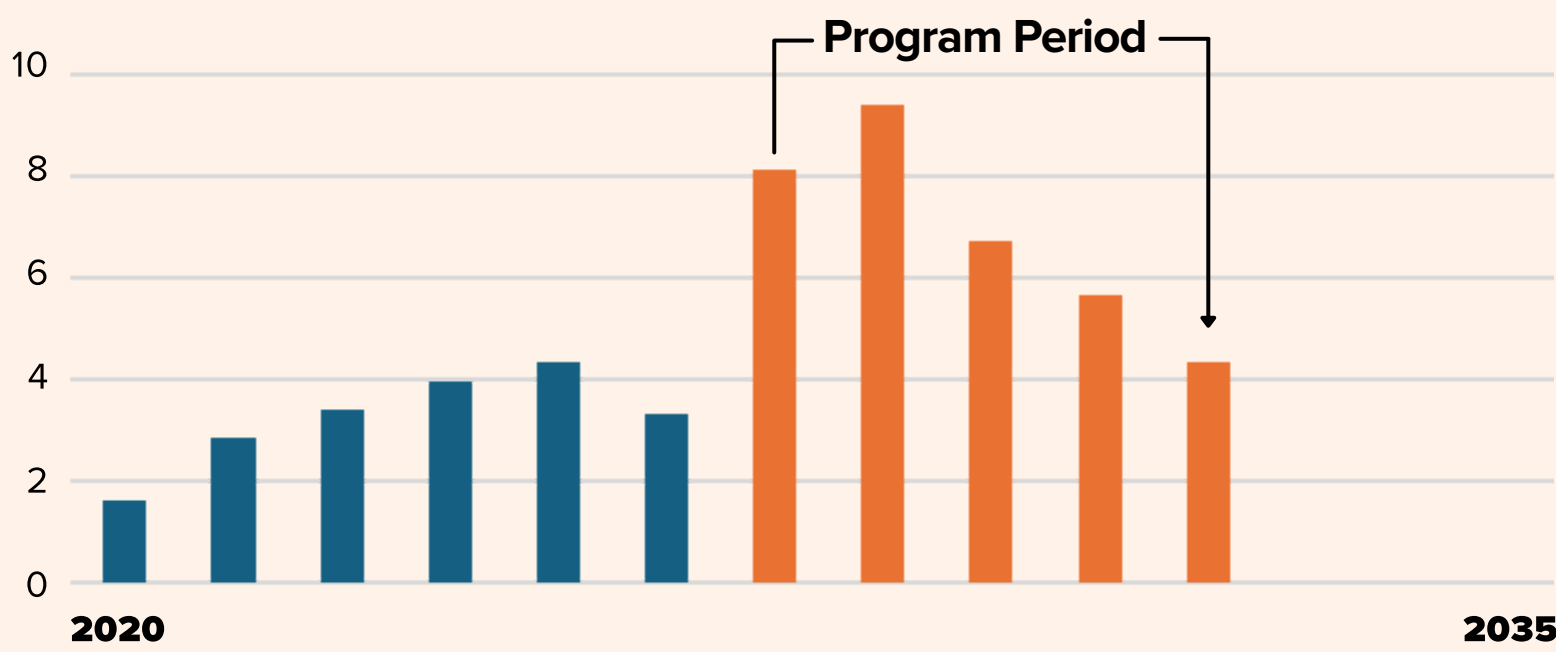
- \$21m** 165,000 cataract surgeries directly subsidised by The Foundation and >25% higher Cataract Surgical Rate overall
- \$3.2m** Screening 876,200 people for refractive error and 900,000 for cataract and other eye conditions
- \$1.4m** Programme management, M&E, reporting, technical advisory and other programme management costs

- \$0.9m** Full spectrum eyecare training for 50 ophthalmic nurses, 65 optometrists and 150 IECW, as well as basic eye health promotion and prevention training for 800 HEWs
- \$3.4m** Strengthening eye care medical supplies and distributing 100,296 glasses
- \$1.9m** Establishing 2 Primary Eye Care Units (PECUs), renovating Secondary Eye Care Units (SECU) in Oromia, establishing diagnostic tele medicine in 10 SECUs and connect with 1 TECU

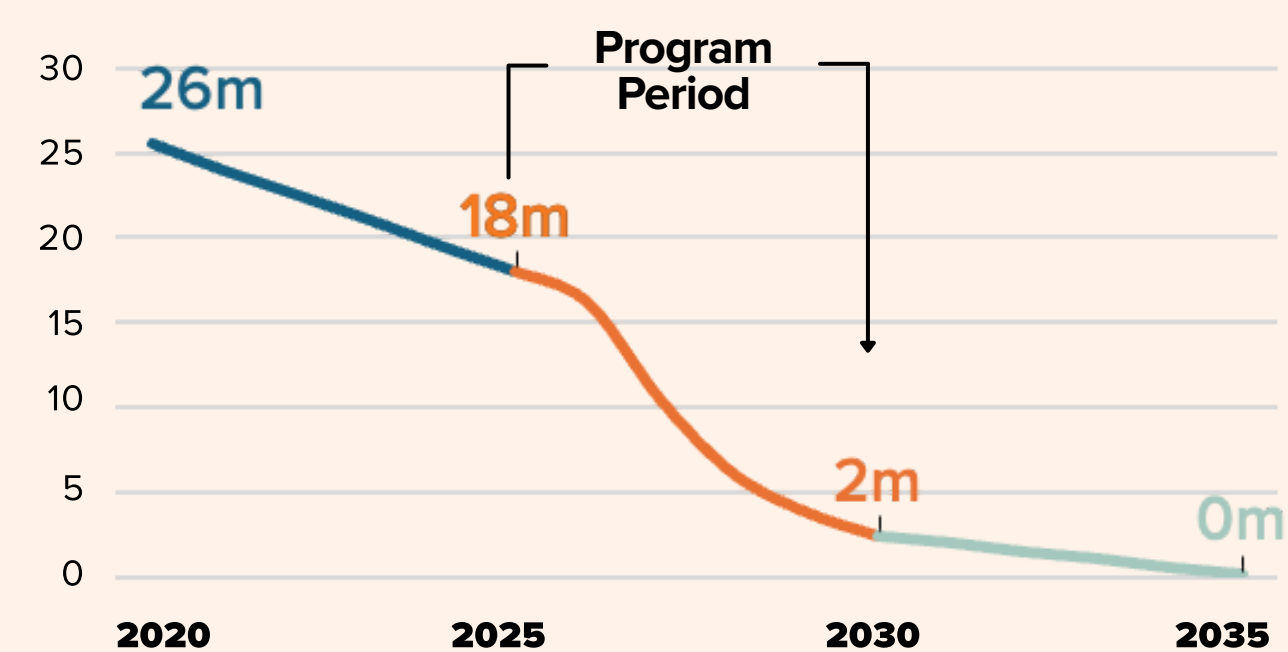
* All financial figures are estimates and subject to change based on exchange rates, market conditions and program delivery variables.
** 2025 figure includes 25,000 surgeries expected in 2025 as part of The Foundation's ongoing programs.

How we'll eliminate trachoma

US \$62 million investment required between 2026 and 2030...



...to administer antibiotics to 16 million people and perform 32,250 TT surgeries for people at risk.



What your funding will contribute to

- \$6m

Conducting 32,250 Trachomatous Trichiasis (TT) surgeries, including training of relevant personnel
- \$8m

Conducting 250 Trachoma Impact Surveys (TIS) and 106 Trachoma Surveillance Surveys (TSS)
- \$3.1m

Programme management, M&E, reporting, technical advisory and other programme management costs.
- \$33m

Embedding facial and environmental (F&E) wash across 580 districts
- \$14m

Supporting 250 mass drug administrations (MDA), distributing 16m antibiotics

* All financial figures are estimates and subject to change based on exchange rates, market conditions and program delivery variables.

Investment in sight. Investment in life.



For years, **Bashadu** from Ethiopia's Oromia region lived in near darkness.

After an illness left her unable to work, cataract took her sight and with it, her independence. Unable to afford treatment or travel, she spent her days confined to her small home, relying on her daughter and neighbours to guide her.

But now, through sight-restoring surgery made possible by The Fred Hollows Foundation, **Bashadu's world has opened once again.**

With her vision restored, she can walk to church on her own, tend to her home, and rejoin her community with confidence.

Her story is more than one woman's recovery; it is a glimpse of what's possible for hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians waiting for the same chance.

When sight is restored, independence returns, families thrive, and entire communities begin to see a brighter future.

“Being independent is important to me.”
— **Bashadu**

Older people like Bashadu, who face significant barriers in accessing eye care in Oromia province, are being reached through outreach visits led by the Oromia Regional Health Bureau with the support of the University of Jimma and The Foundation.

Investment in sight. Investment in life.



For two long years, **Semira**, a young mother from Dedo in Oromia, endured the relentless pain and itching of trachoma. She knew that, without treatment, she would one day go blind but fear of surgery and the daily struggle to feed her children kept her from seeking help.

When the Foundation-supported outreach team arrived in her village, everything changed. **For the first time, Semira had access to safe, trusted care close to home.** The simple surgery took less than 20 minutes and transformed her future.

Today, the pain that once ruled her life is gone. **Semira can work, care for her children, and look ahead** to a future she once feared she'd never see. What seemed like a small medical intervention has given her back her independence, her confidence, and her hope.

“When my husband comes back home, he will find me home as good as a bride would look.”

— **Semira**

In Semira's region of Oromia province, local people – who are mostly farming the land to make a living – face significant barriers to access eye health services.

The return on your investment

Your investment will generate substantial economic and social returns — an evidence-based conviction grounded in analysis by The Foundation and its partners, reinforced by leading academic research.

In Ethiopia, every US \$1 invested returns US \$5 in benefits.



Improved learning

Close the learning gap by up to 50% for children experiencing vision impairment



Reduced caregiving burden

Free up caregiver time for employment and other productive activities



Improved productivity

Boost productivity or income by up to 10% for those with mild and near vision impairment



Increased employment

Increase employment for those with MSVI or blindness, who are 30% less likely to secure employment vs. those with unimpaired vision



Fewer road crashes

Save lives and prevent injuries by reducing the risk of road traffic accidents by up to 50%



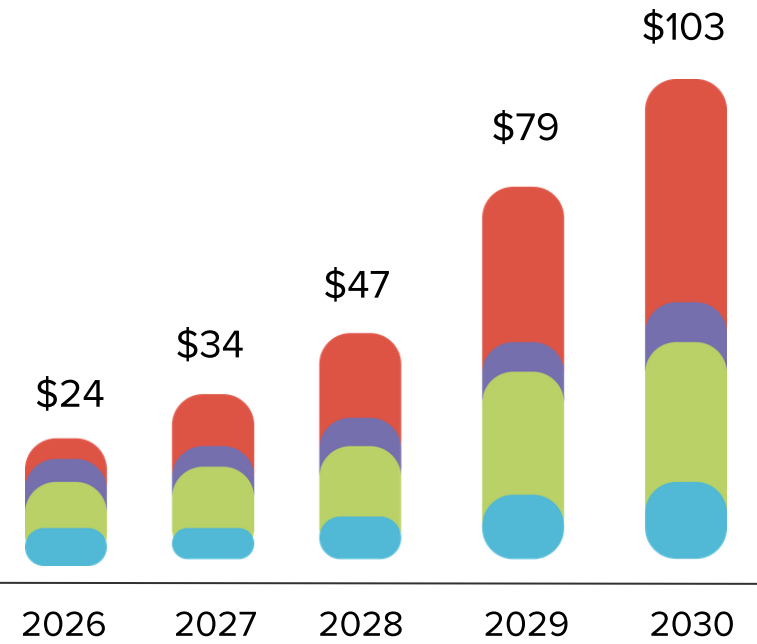
Improved mental health

Reduce depression among individuals with vision impairment and caregivers



Increased longevity

Reduced risk of mortality and comorbidities, particularly among those aged 65-74



Cumulative return on cataract investment of \$29.7m.
Numbers are in USD

662 traffic injuries averted
33 traffic deaths averted

7,245 cases of depression averted
(25% of affected individuals experience depression)

245 years of life gained
33 additional deaths averted

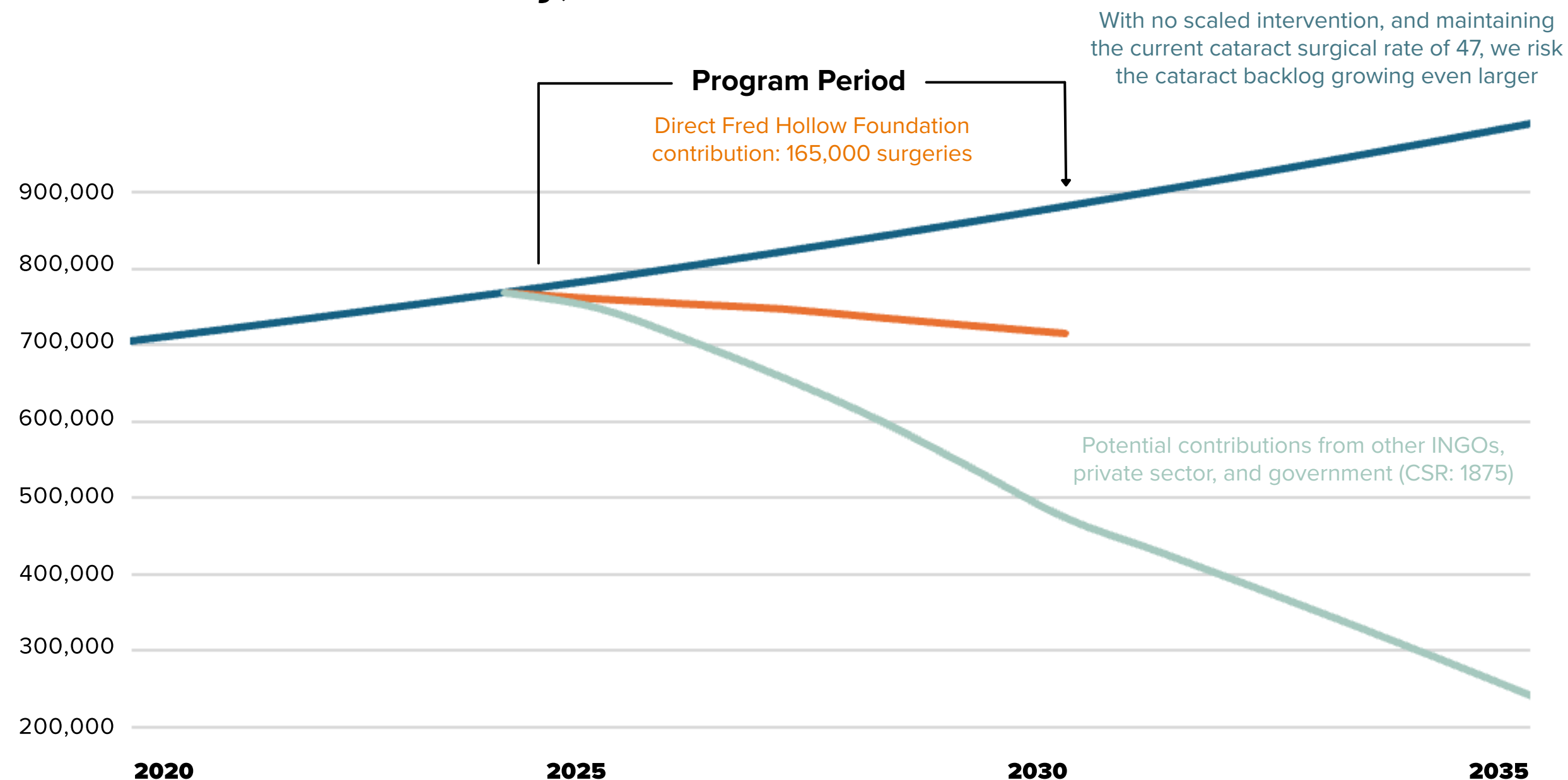
Your impact

Your impact will go even further than restoring sight to 165,000 people.

Your investment goes into training, infrastructure and leadership, which will not only create benefits in Oromia, but across all of the Ethiopian health system.

This could impact an additional 60,000 people per year.

With the support of the government, private sector and other NGOs to strengthen the whole health system, the cataract backlog will be addressed across the rest of the country, too.



Overall efforts to improve the eye health system aim to increase Cataract Surgical Rate (CSR) from 1400 to 1875 by 2030, for an additional 50-60,000 surgeries per year.

An investment in sight
is an investment
in health,
in equity,
and in the economy.

It's an investment in the lives of millions.
The time to act is now.



Thank You



**The Fred Hollows
Foundation**