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Ghana's National Cataract Outreach Programme (NCOP)

A Partnership Between
Ghana Health Service and
Cure Blindness Project



Expanding Access to Eye Care

Cataract remains the leading cause of avoidable blindness in Ghana, accounting for more than half (54.8%) of all blindness cases. While cataract is primarily age-related, it can also result from eye injuries, diabetes, and other eye diseases. Fortunately, cataract blindness can be cured through a simple, highly cost-effective surgical procedure.

Why NCOP is essential for the treatment of cataract blindness:

- 0.74% of Ghanaians are blind
- An estimated 138,000 people are currently blind from untreated cataract
- Approximately 27,600 new cases develop each year in Ghana's population of more than 34 million people
- As a country, we need to complete 67,000 cataract surgeries per year to eliminate the backlog

Without significant increases in surgical capacity, the backlog will continue to grow as Ghana's population ages.

References: The Lancet. Cataracts (2017), Ghana Blindness and Visual Impairment Survey (2015), World Report on Vision (WHO, 2019), Ghana National Eye Care Programme Report (2024)

NCOP: What It Is

Ghana Health Service (GHS) launched the National Cataract Outreach Programme (NCOP) in September 2018 to provide cataract care in all regions of Ghana and establish a financially sustainable model. It is a partnership between Cure Blindness Project and Ghana Health Service.

The program schedules regular outreach campaigns at both GHS and non-GHS facilities, bringing high-quality cataract surgery closer to underserved communities where there is no ophthalmologist.

Participating surgeons are recruited from teaching hospitals, CHAG facilities and the private sector.

The majority of patients have health insurance pay for their care, with 40% of the reimbursed costs returned to NCOP to help fund future sight-restoring surgeries. This revolving funding model creates a financially sustainable program that expands access to care while reducing long-term reliance on external funding.

How It Works

A key component to the success of NCOP is the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) reimbursement model.

Today, a majority of NCOP partner facilities have committed to **reinvesting 40% of NHIS cataract surgery reimbursements back into NCOP**. The remaining 60% of reimbursements support the host facilities.

To be a sustainable model, more partners need to commit to reinvest 40% of their reimbursements. This reinvestment model creates a financially sustainable program.

Funds generated by the program will support:

- Equipment maintenance and upgrades
- Training and capacity building
- Transportation and outreach logistics
- Surgical consumables and operational costs

This shared-investment approach creates a **sustainable funding mechanism** that will enable NCOP to continue expanding as external funding gradually decreases and provide a scalable model.

Who It Helps

Patients: NCOP helps patients in underserved communities who historically have not had access to quality eye care. Continued investments in training, equipment, and quality improvement are helping to strengthen surgical outcomes.

"During my active years as a farmer, particles and dirt kept flying into my eyes. The pain turned into a cloudy film over my eyes, and before I knew it, my sight was gone."

Adwoa is a 70-year-old widow and mother of 10, who was blind for five years before her sight-restoring cataract surgery at Tarkwa Municipal Hospital.

Ophthalmology Residents: All NCOP events provide supervised training opportunities for ophthalmology residents to improve their surgical skills resulting in competent cataract surgeons upon graduation.

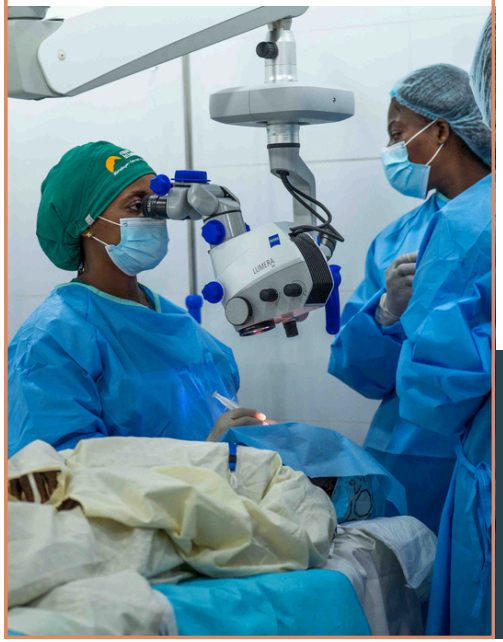
“NCOP outreaches provide valuable opportunities for our residents who struggle to practice cataract surgery at the main facility. We are so pleased that the Ghana College of Physicians and Surgeons has partnered with NCOP to make this training possible.”

Dr. Ahmed Akwasi, Residency Trainer
Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital

NCOP Programme Accomplishments

Together, since 2017, NCOP and Cure Blindness Project have been credited with:

- Completing more than **20,000 sight-restoring** cataract surgeries
- Significantly increasing **access to surgery** for underserved and rural communities
- **Training more than 300** Allied Ophthalmic Personnel
- Supplying outreaches with high-quality **medical equipment** and supplies
- Donating outreach **surgical kits** established and maintained within Ghana Health Service
- Strengthening Ghanaian ophthalmology education programs by providing students with regular access to surgical outreaches for training opportunities.
  40 residents were trained at outreaches in 2025



Why Ghana Needs NCOP

Increased Access: Since 2018, NCOP has steadily increased access to cataract care across Ghana. During that time, the CSR increased from 626 to 995 (2025), meeting the WHO target of 2000.

Improved Quality: Since 2018, the quality of the cataract surgery has improved according to Cure Blindness records. Cure Blindness supports more than 2/3rds of the cataract surgeries in the country.

National Strategy: NCOP is the key component to Ghana's national strategy to eliminate avoidable blindness while strengthening the country's eye health system.

What’s Next for NCOP

Despite steady increases in the number of cataract surgeries, a large gap still exists. NCOP can reach the 67,000 surgeries needed each year to eliminate the backlog of cataract blindness if more reinvestment dollars are available. .

NCOP’s Lasting Impact

NCOP demonstrates how government leadership, strategic partnerships, and sustainable financing can dramatically expand patient access to high-quality cataract surgery.

Together, Ghana Health Service and Cure Blindness Project are building a stronger eye health system—one that restores sight today while ensuring quality, equitable care for generations to come.

“NCOP brings sight-restoring eye care to remote and rural areas of Ghana. Without it, many would never receive this life-changing care and never regain their sight.”
-Director, Ghana Health Service

Cure Blindness PROJECT™ | Work in Ghana

Cure Blindness Project supports and strengthens eye health in Ghana through multiple initiatives. The NGO has worked in Ghana since 2008.



Cornea and Organ Donation Legislation (2026)
Cure Blindness Project played a key role in supporting the development of Ghana's first comprehensive cornea and organ donation legislation, helping lay the foundation for a national framework to restore sight through corneal transplantation.

Working alongside Ghanaian health leaders and stakeholders, Cure Blindness Project contributed technical expertise and global best practices to advance policies that enable ethical eye donation, transplantation, and improved access to care.



Cape Coast Teaching Hospital (2026)
The 25,000-square-foot Eye Care Center at Cape Coast Teaching Hospital is transforming eye care in Ghana. Equipped with state-of-the-art technology, expanded outpatient services, three operating rooms, and dedicated training facilities, the center was recently designated by the Ministry of Health as Ghana's National Center for Eye Care.



Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (2014)
The Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital (KATH) Eye Center in Kumasi is a 27,000-square-foot surgical and training facility that is strengthening eye care across Ghana. Serving a population of nearly 10 million people, the center has significantly expanded access to sight-restoring surgery while training the next generation of ophthalmologists through its residency program and partnerships with other teaching hospitals.



Trainings for Eye Care Professionals (since 2008)
Through partnerships with leading teaching hospitals, Cure Blindness Project supports ophthalmology residency training, fellowships, continuing medical education, and hands-on surgical mentorship for ophthalmologists, ophthalmic nurses, optometrists, anesthetists, and biomedical technicians.

Cure Blindness Project has provided thousands of training opportunities across all levels of eye care.



Equipment Donated (since 2008)
Cure Blindness Project has invested in Ghana's eye care infrastructure through the donation of essential ophthalmic equipment, surgical supplies, and technology to strengthen hospitals and expand access to high-quality eye care.

These investments have equipped partner facilities, including teaching hospitals and regional eye centers, with the tools needed to perform more sight-restoring surgeries, train the next generation of eye care professionals, and provide sustainable services for patients across the country.

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