

**Free Cataract Surgeries Funded by Alaka Foundation (\$800k) & Ananda Foundation (\$500k), both from Malaysia, through Assist Resettlement and Renaissance (Assist RR, UK & SL)**

In 2022, Assist RR funded 2199 free cataract surgeries using funds raised by Assist RR (UK) and Team Solihull (from the Solihull School Community) in the UK. Inspired by Assist RR’s successful implementation of this free cataract project, a philanthropist (from the Alaka Foundation, Malaysia) came forward to extend the provision of these free cataract surgeries across Sri Lanka through Assist RR (Sri Lanka) from January 2023. To kick start the continuation of the project the Alaka Foundation provided an initial USD 50k, at the beginning of 2023, to Assist RR (SL) to fund free surgeries. With this funds, Assist RR funded 2045 free surgeries in 10 districts in Sri Lanka.

Due to the success in upscaling the implementation of this project, the Alaka Foundation provided a further \$100k to fund this free cataract surgeries project. These Alaka Foundation funds, allowed Assist RR to fund another 5054 surgeries, covering 18 districts in Sri Lanka.

Buoyed by this success, which has changed the lives of so many for the good, the Alaka Foundation introduced another philanthropist (from the Ananda Foundation, Malaysia), who also come forward to fund further surgeries in Sri Lanka through Assist RR (SL). This philanthropy, implemented by Assist RR, is offering an unprecedented country-wide solution to prevent or reverse avoidable blindness for Sri Lanka’s poorest people – whoever and wherever they be.

Since January 2023, Alaka Foundation donated USD 800k and Ananda Foundation contributed another USD 500k. Using these USD 1.3 million (LKR 40.5 Crores) financial supports, received from both Foundations, Assist RR have funded 53,125 free surgeries Island wide since January 2023 till November 2024 (a hospital wise breakdown is attached). At the Eye unit of Jaffna Teaching Hospital (TH) alone, 19,852 free cataract surgeries were conducted in 2023 and 2024 costing LKR 19.25 Crores. These surgeries were funded through what has proved to be a hugely successful private -public partnership model; private philanthropy reducing vast post-covid waiting lists, responding to needs at a local level in government hospitals all over Sri Lanka using government salaried staff in 37 district hospitals. Assist RR implemented this project in collaboration with the relevant hospital Eye Units.

Importantly, the waiting time in the Northern Province was brought down to zero in November 2024. When Assist RR got involved in 2022, the waiting times in the Northern province were almost 4-5 years. The task of bringing the waiting times to zero was made possible by the generous funding of Alaka and Anada foundations through Assist RR, dedication, determination and leadership of Dr M Malaravan (eye surgeon, Jaffna TH), and uninterrupted supplies of IOLs and consumables by Assist RR to Jaffna TH Eye Unit over the past two years. Assist RR also transported patients from other districts to Jaffna and provided meals to the patients. Eye units of Jaffna TH and Vavuniya DGH organised 3 mass surgery camps (4369 surgeries) in collaboration with Assist RR, who provided all logistical support.

A summary is given below:

<b>Free Cataract Surgeries Funded by Alaka &amp; Ananda Foundations from Malaysia through Assist RR (UK &amp; SL) Island Wide in 2023 &amp; 2024</b>				
<b>Hospitals</b>	<b>No. of Patients Benefitted</b>	<b>No. of IOLs Given</b>	<b>Total Spent in LKR</b>	<b>Total Spent in USD</b>
<b>Total</b>	53,125	36,660	405,178,022.72	1,373,484.82
<b>Cost Per Surgery</b>			7,626.88	25.85

Note: IOL – Intra Ocular Lens

In addition, vitreoretinal surgeries (VR) were also funded in the Jaffna Teaching Hospital (TH) at a cost of Rs 70,000 per surgery. Total funding for VR surgeries was USD 23.5k. Biometric equipment were also donated to Jaffna TH, Chilaw DGH, and Ratnapura TH costing USD 29.3k, as these hospitals were lacking ophthalmic investigative equipment such as A-Scan, Rebound Tonometer, Keratometer, and more. The

only alternative would have meant the patients treated were forced to go to private clinics for investigations and surgeries they could never have afforded.

Post pandemic, there are poor people across the country, who are waiting for cataract surgeries, some of whom are in real danger of becoming irreversibly blind if their cataracts are not removed in time. Among those awaiting surgeries are, for example, farmers, fishermen, labourers and childminders. Losing or deteriorating sight would mean they won't be able to provide for their families or contribute to the country's economy. They are destined to become a burden, not a help. They will also lose their dignity and independence.

There are many patients treated, who had been waiting for up to 5 years and there are many who were blind in both eyes. They are all benefitting and have regained their eye sights as a result of the benevolence of the Alaka and Anada Foundations. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Alaka and Ananda Foundations for providing these life changing surgeries free of charge. We also would like to thank and appreciate the selfless services of all the Eye Surgeon Consultants, who worked with us with dedication and determination to reduce the waiting lists using funds from Alaka and Ananda.

Many tens of thousands of people are still waiting for their chance to get this surgery done at government hospitals. However due to the collapse of Sri Lanka's economy, these hospitals are lacking vital investigative equipment, lenses and sundry eye surgery consumables. We are therefore seeking funds to continue this project and save the sight of Sri Lanka's poorest people.

We have the systems, infrastructure, and blueprints in place, to expand the success of this model to many more hospitals who serve those in need all over Sri Lanka at a very cost-effective manner. Average cost per surgery in 2023 was just USD 25.85 only.

