



Cure Cataracts in Mali

Quarterly Report

April-June 2025

Executive Summary

As part of its commitment to fighting preventable blindness, Embrace Relief Foundation launched an ambitious program in February 2025 to provide **free cataract screening and surgery in Mali**. The goal is twofold: to **provide 3,600 free eye exams** and **perform 1,200 surgeries** by December 2025, targeting the most vulnerable populations (the elderly, women, and low-income households).

During the first quarter of implementation (April to June 2025), **the program exceeded its operational targets** with:



1,233 patients
screened



103% of the target



448 cases
of cataracts diagnosed



112% of the target



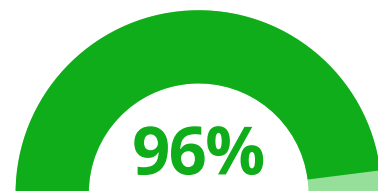
423 surgeries
performed



106% of the target



98%
satisfaction rate

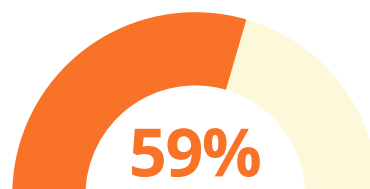


**Patients regaining
improved sight**

The **interventions took place in nine locations** spread across remote rural areas and urban centers, demonstrating a strong mobile deployment capacity. At the same time, socioeconomic surveys revealed that **67% of patients have unstable incomes** and **59% were unaware that cataracts could be operated on**, highlighting the need for an integrated approach combining care, accessibility, and awareness.



67% patients
have unstable incomes



Patients were **unaware**
cataracts could be operated on



Finally, powerful testimonials from patients—such as Dedem, a constructor who has regained his independence, and two young sisters with congenital cataracts who became independent—illustrate the profound impact of the program on the lives of beneficiaries and their families.

Program Context

As part of its commitment to eye health in Mali, Embrace Relief Foundation launched an ambitious program of free cataract screening and surgery in February 2025.

The program is part of the organization's commitment to providing concrete and sustainable solutions to the challenges of preventable blindness, particularly in rural and underserved areas where access to eye care remains extremely limited. In Mali, the burden of blindness is among the highest in Africa, with **cataracts alone accounting for nearly 48% of cases**—an alarming rate that reflects both deep medical and systemic inequalities. The majority of those affected live in rural areas, where poverty, lack of health infrastructure, and an acute shortage of ophthalmologists are major barriers to access to care. While the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a cataract surgery rate (CSR) of **3,000 to 5,000 procedures** per million inhabitants per year in low- and middle-income countries, **Mali remains well below this threshold, with a rate of less than 1,000**. In addition, cataract surgery coverage (CSC) is **less than 50%, meaning that more than half of people with operable cataracts receive no treatment**.



The main objective of this program is twofold:



3,600

people to be provided **free eye consultations** in order to detect cataracts and other visual impairments at an early stage.



1,200

free cataract surgeries to be performed by December 2025, targeting the most vulnerable populations, including the elderly, women, and people living in poverty.

This program aims to restore sight and independence to hundreds of people whose quality of life is severely affected by cataract-related blindness—a condition that can be cured with prompt and accessible treatment.








In addition to the direct health impact, the program also aims to raise awareness in communities about the importance of early screening, build trust in local medical care, and promote solidarity through equitable access to eye health services.

To achieve its annual target, the organization plans to offer approximately 400 free eye consultations and 140 free cataract surgeries each month, starting in April 2025.

This gradual, monthly approach aims to ensure regular and equitable coverage of eye health needs across the targeted areas.

This report highlights the activities carried out during the **first three months of the program's implementation** (April, May, and June 2025), detailing the results achieved and the concrete impact of these interventions on the lives of the beneficiaries. It aims to illustrate not only the effectiveness of the actions undertaken, but also their contribution to improving the visual health, quality of life, and autonomy of the populations served.

Progress Against Quarterly Indicators

Indicator	Target	Achieved	Performance
 Number of screening sessions organized	12	15	125%
 Number of patients screened	1,200	1,233	103%
 Number of cataract cases diagnosed	400	448	112%
 Number of surgery campaigns conducted	21	22	105%
 Number of patients who underwent surgery	400	423	106%
 Number of patients who received post- op care	400	423	106%
 percentage of patients whose visual acuity improved	400	423	90%



Key Achievements

- All activity targets (screenings, diagnoses, surgeries, and post-op care) were **met or exceeded**, reflecting strong field performance.
- Screening sessions **surpassed the target by 25%**, demonstrating strong outreach.
- **48 more cataract cases were diagnosed than expected**, showing high demand and effective detection.
- **Both surgeries and follow-ups outperformed targets**, indicating an efficient care system.
- **81% of patients reported visual acuity** (sharpness of vision) of 6/18 or better following surgery, **meeting the WHO standard for unimpaired vision**.
- Possible reasons: **pre-existing eye conditions, delayed surgeries, poor post-op adherence, or lack of follow-up for corrective lenses**.
- A **quality improvement plan is recommended** to address surgical outcomes and patient management.

The program's first quarter was a strong operational success, but greater focus is now needed on visual outcomes to ensure lasting impact for patients.



Activities Carried Out

As part of the rollout of the eye health program, Embrace Relief Foundation conducted several screening, cataract surgery, and post-operative care campaigns in various locations in Mali during the first three months of the program. These interventions were carried out in remote rural areas such as N'Gouraba and Tamina, as well as in urban centers such as Kolokani and Kita.

In addition to these field activities, surgical operations were also performed at the Yelen Clinic, a partner facility located in the Kalaban Koro health district.

These campaigns reached a wide range of beneficiaries, particularly the elderly and women, thereby meeting urgent visual health needs. Thanks to this decentralized and inclusive approach, the program strengthened equitable access to specialized eye care and contributed significantly to improving the quality of life of patients who underwent surgery.

1. CSCOM in Banguinéda (rural, 45 km from the CSRef)

Patients consulted: **261**

Men: **138**

Women: **123**

Cataract
cases
identified:
32

Patients operated: **27**

Men: **19**

Women: **8**

2. CSCOM in Tioribougou (Kolokani district, semi-rural)

Patients consulted: **158**

Men: **92**

Women: **66**

Cataract
cases
identified:
93

Patients operated: **93**

Men: **57**

Women: **36**

3. Yelen Clinic in ATTbougou (Kalaban Koro, partner facility)

Cases: **39**

Patients operated: **37**

Men: **22**

Women: **15**

4. CSCOM in N'Gouraba (rural, 70 km from CSRef)

Patients consulted: **114**

Men: **66**

Women: **48**

Cataract
cases
identified:
37

Patients operated: **28**

Men: **14**

Women: **14**

* (Surgeries performed at the CSCOM in Mounsou due to inaccessible roads)

5. Tamina CSCOM (semi-rural, 60 km from the CSRef)

Patients consulted: **101**

Men: **65**

Women: **36**

Cataract
cases
identified:
18

Patients operated: **18**

Men: **12**

Women: **6**

6. Mountougoula CSCOM (semi-rural, 20 km from CSRef)

Patients consulted: **103**

Men: **41**

Women: **62**

Cataract
cases
identified:
15

Patients operated: **13**

Men: **7**

Women: **6**

7. CSRef in Kolokani (urban, 134 km from Bamako)

Patients consulted: **193**

Men: **106**

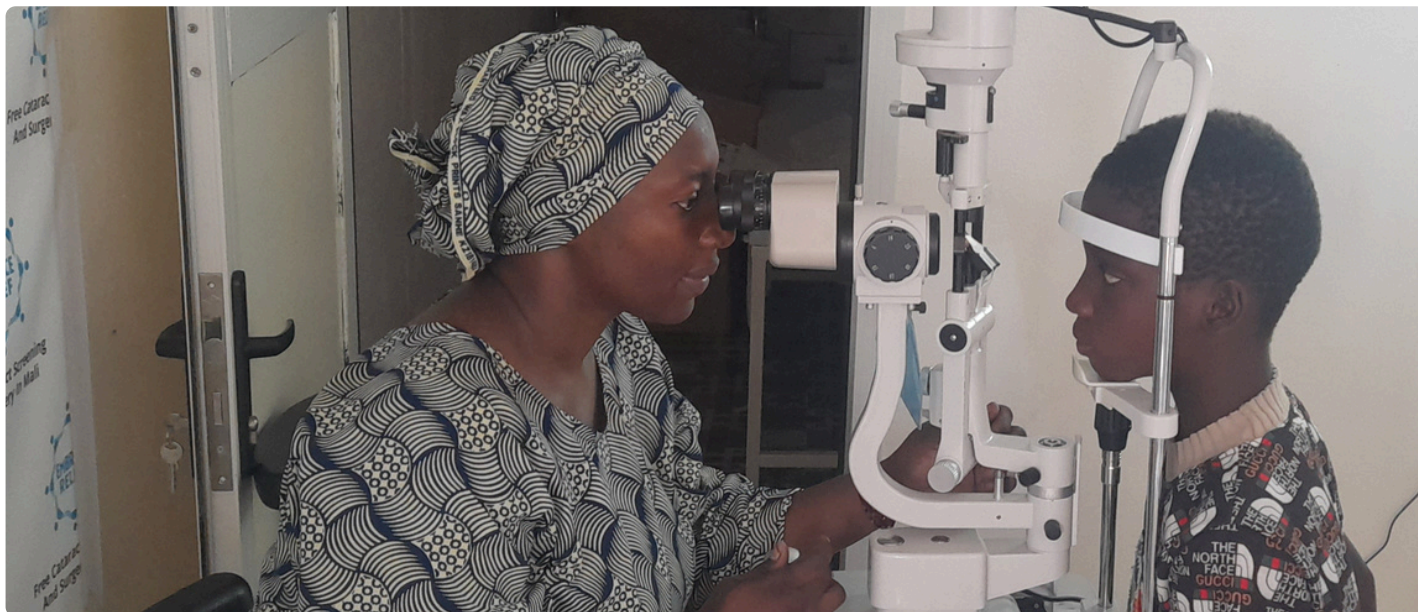
Women: **87**

Cataract
cases
identified:
46

Patients operated: **46**

Men: **27**

Women: **19**



8. CSCOM in Sanankoroba (urban, 20 km from the CSRef)

Patients consulted: **105**

Men: **46**

Women: **59**

Cataract cases identified: **18**

Patients operated: **18**

Men: **11**

Women: **7**

9. CSRef in Kita (urban, 170 km from Bamako)

Patients consulted: **198**

Men: **110**

Women: **88**

Cataract cases identified: **150**

Patients operated: **143**

Men: **71**

Women: **72**

These results demonstrate the scale and growing effectiveness of the program implementation. Thanks to targeted campaigns and a mobile intervention strategy, Embrace Relief Foundation has been able to reach remote communities, provide high-quality screening, and offer free surgery to hundreds of people. Testimonials gathered in the field report profound changes in the lives of beneficiaries: many have regained their sight after several years of visual impairment, restoring their independence, dignity, and ability to contribute fully to family and community life.

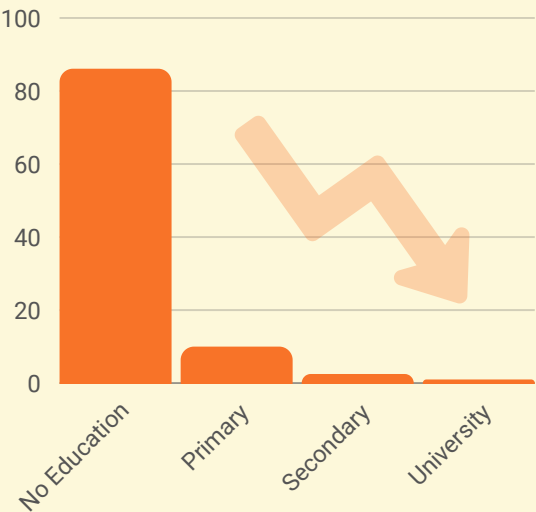
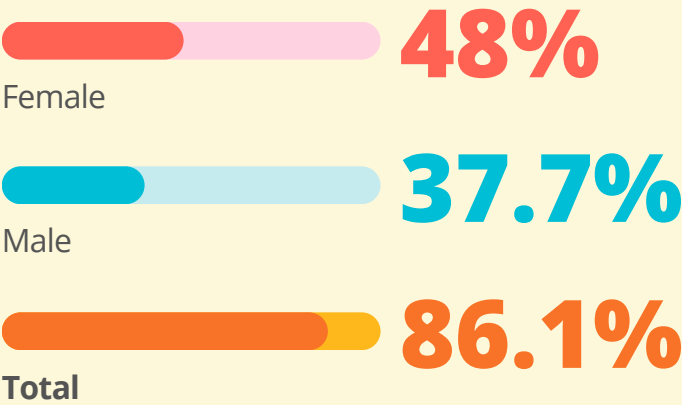
Patient Survey Results

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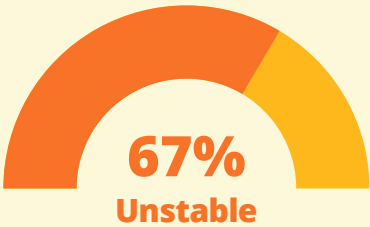
Pre-surgical Survey

During the first three months, a questionnaire was administered to **244 cataract patients** prior to their surgery.

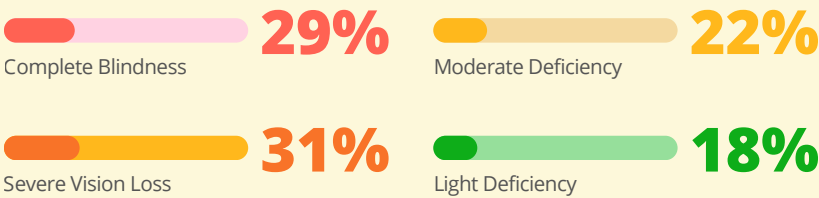
No Education



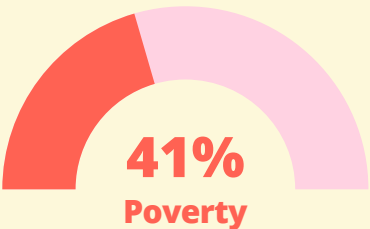
Patients' Income



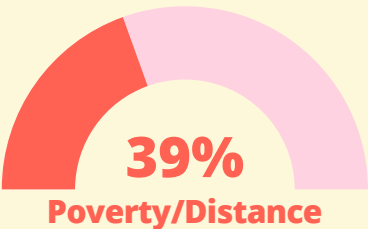
Patients' Vision Before Surgery



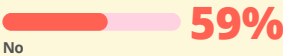
Barriers To Seeing A Doctor



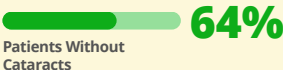
Barriers To Surgery



Did You Know Cataracts Could Be Operated On?



Cataract Diagnosed

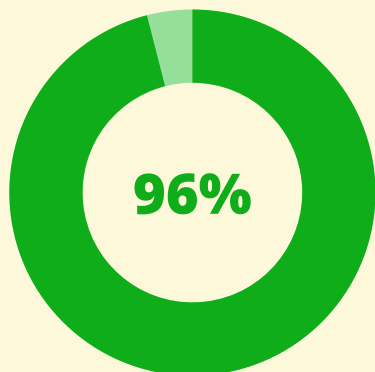


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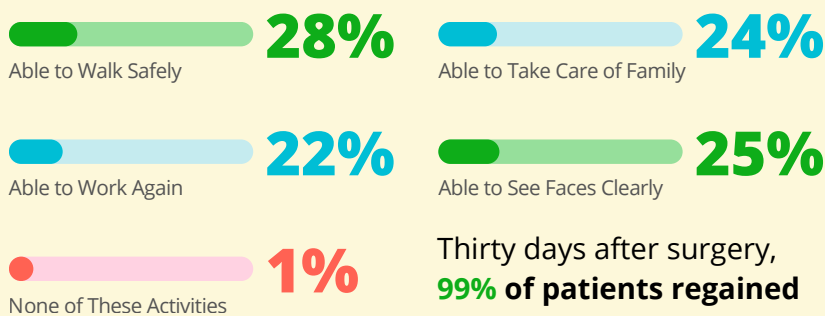
Post-surgery Survey

Thirty days after surgery, we were able to conduct **follow-up interviews with 168 patients** who had undergone surgery.

Improving Patients' Vision

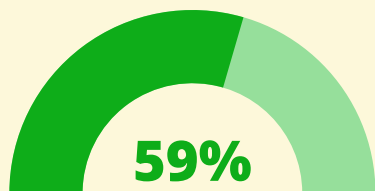


Patients' Performance After Surgery



Thirty days after surgery, **99% of patients regained functional capacity**

Patients' Satisfaction After Surgery



Very Satisfied

39% Satisfied 1% Neutral 1% Not Satisfied



Success Stories

From Darkness to Hope: Dedem's Journey

For over a year, **Dedem Yattara, a 62-year-old construction worker** from the remote village of Sadjouroubougou in Mali, **lived in a world clouded by darkness**. Cataracts slowly stole his sight, leaving him unable to work, cultivate his fields, or even prepare his own tea without spilling it.

As his vision faded, so did his livelihood. Unable to afford the cost of cataract surgery — available only 51 kilometers away in the nearest city — Dedem slipped deeper into poverty. His family watched helplessly as he became increasingly dependent, robbed of his dignity and the simple joys of daily life.

Everything changed when Embrace Relief, together with its generous donors and partners, brought a free cataract surgery program to his district. Dedem underwent surgery at no cost, regaining his sight and reclaiming his life.

Thirty days after his operation, the Embrace Relief team visited Dedem at home to see how he was doing. They found a man very happy and hopeful again.

With a broad smile, Dedem proudly showed the team the chicken coop he had built with his own hands—something unimaginable just months before. His chickens and roosters coming out of the coop were a living testament to his newfound independence. Nearby, a small field of peanut plants, which he had sown since the surgery, were pushing through the soil, promising food and income once again.

Dedem's wife shared her joy too:

"Before the operation, my husband couldn't even pour himself tea—he would spill it all. Now he does everything by himself. We are so happy and grateful."



"I thank God, and I thank all of you deeply. **This operation was a great act of generosity.** I received it completely free, without paying a single franc."

-Dedem Yattara

Two sisters, one life transformed by free cataract surgery

In a rural village in Mali, two young sisters were born with an uncertain future. **Just 40 days after their birth, they both developed congenital cataracts.** For their mother, it was the beginning of a long journey of suffering, worry, and sacrifice.

*"If I had to recount all the difficulties, we would be here all day. **We tried everything, every possible medication, but to no avail.** I never imagined that one day they would become so independent."*

Deprived of clear vision from an early age, **the girls were confined to the courtyard of their home, unable to move around freely or play like other children.** Their visual impairment not only limited their personal development, but also weighed heavily on the family's finances.

"Everything we earned was spent on treatments that had no effect. Our small savings were running out, and our income-generating activities suffered as a result."

Their future seemed bleak. Their mother emotionally recounts the sleepless nights spent worrying whether her daughters would ever be able to marry, work, or even live independently.

Then a neighbor, who had heard about the Embrace Relief Foundation's **free cataract surgery campaign**, told them about it. Without hesitation, the family traveled several miles to Sanankoroba, where everything would change.

After the surgery, a dramatic transformation took place.

"Today, they can tell colors apart, they walk on their own, they even run. Sometimes I have to remind them not to run too fast! They get dressed by themselves and go wherever they want."

Their daily dependence on their mother, sister, and father has diminished. For the first time, the family has been able to glimpse a future where the girls will be independent, fulfilled, and able to chart their own course.



Before



After

"This project has changed their lives. I hope it continues and reaches even more families, here in Mali and elsewhere. **An initiative like this, which provides free care, deserves to last forever.** [...] May God bless the initiators of this project and strengthen them. May He help them extend this kindness beyond what they had imagined."

Conclusion

The results of the first quarter demonstrate that the free cataract surgery program implemented by Embrace Relief Foundation is not only operationally effective, but also profoundly transformative on a human and social level. With coverage exceeding initial targets and an exceptional satisfaction rate, the initiative is responding in a concrete way to the urgent needs of a highly vulnerable population, while reducing inequalities in access to care.

However, the program needs to strengthen its strategy for improving post-surgical visual outcomes (currently at 80.95% against a target of 90%) and intensify community education campaigns, given the high level of ignorance about the operability of cataracts.

In summary, the program is a model response to the eye health challenges in Mali and deserves to be strengthened, supported by donors, and expanded to other underserved areas of the country to maximize its impact.





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