



Cure Cataracts in Mali

Annual Report

January - December 2025

Executive Summary

In 2025, Embrace Relief Foundation **marked a historic milestone** by establishing its **official country office in Mali** and launching large-scale humanitarian and health interventions targeting the country's most vulnerable populations.

As part of its commitment to eliminating preventable blindness, Embrace Relief Foundation launched an ambitious **Free Cataract Screening and Surgery Program** in February 2025. The program aimed to provide **3,600 free eye examinations** and perform **1,200 free cataract surgeries** by December 2025, prioritizing elderly people, women, and low-income households.

From April to December 2025, the program delivered exceptional results, exceeding or nearly meeting all operational targets:

 **4,219 patients**
screened

 **1,172 cases**
of cataracts diagnosed

 **1,150 surgeries**
performed successfully

 **117.2%** of the target

 **97.7%** of the target

 **95.8%** of the target

 **36 screening sessions**
conducted
(100% of target)



Patients regaining
improved sight

Interventions were implemented across **20 different locations**, covering both remote rural areas and urban centers, demonstrating the effectiveness of the Foundation's mobile clinic outreach model.

Socio-economic assessments revealed deep vulnerability among beneficiaries:



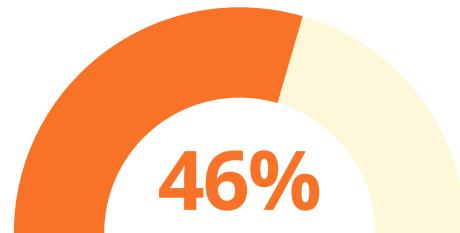
91% patients
lacked health insurance



73% patients
have **unstable incomes**



76% patients
had no formal **education**



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

These findings underline the **urgent need** for an integrated approach **combining free medical care, mobile outreach, and community awareness**.



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 program's implementation in 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	36	36	100%
 Number of patients screened	3,600	4,219	117.7%
 Number of cataract cases diagnosed	1,200	1,172	97.7%
 Number of surgery campaigns conducted	63	53	84.1%
 Number of patients who underwent surgery	1,200	1,150	95.8%
 Number of patients who received post- op care	1,200	1,150	100%
 percentage of patients whose visual acuity improved	90	96.3	107.4%



Key Achievements

- **Strong Program Outreach:** A total of 36 screening sessions were organized, 100% of the initial target (36), demonstrating exceptional team engagement and community mobilization.
- **High Screening Performance:** 4 219 patients were screened, representing 117.2% of the annual target, which reflects excellent demand generation and operational efficiency.
- **Significant Case Detection:** 1 172 cataract cases were diagnosed, 97.7% of the annual target, confirming a high prevalence of untreated cataract and the effectiveness of community screening.
- **Full Implementation of Surgery Campaigns:** 53 surgical campaigns were successfully conducted, 84.1% of the target, confirming the high performance and skills of the surgical team.
- **Surgical Success:** 1,150 patients underwent successful cataract surgery, achieving 95.8% of the target.
- **Post-operative Follow-up Ensured:** 1,150 patients received post-operative care, 100% of the target, ensuring continuity and quality of patient recovery.
- **High Clinical Impact:** 96.3% of operated patients reported improved vision, surpassing the 90% target and confirming the high quality of surgical outcomes.



Activities Carried Out

As part of the implementation of its Eye Health Program, Embrace Relief Foundation conducted a series of eye screening, cataract surgery, and post-operative care campaigns throughout the year across multiple regions of Mali. These interventions were implemented through a decentralized mobile-clinic approach, targeting both remote rural communities and urban health facilities, with the objective of improving equitable access to specialized eye care services.

A. Outreach Strategy and Implementation Approach

The program combined:

- Community-based screening campaigns in CSCOMs and CSRefs
- Cataract surgeries conducted on-site or at referral facilities
- Post-operative follow-up and care
- Strategic partnerships with local health authorities and private facilities, notably the Yelen Clinic in the Kalaban Koro Health District

Activities were implemented during two main operational phases:

- Early-year campaigns in districts including Banguinéda, Tioribougou, N'Gouraba, Tamina, Mountougoula, Kolokani, Sanankoroba, and Kita
- Large-scale campaigns in the regions of Ségou and Bamako, including Barouéli, Macina, Niono, Sirakoro, and the Korofina health district

B. Summary of Activities and Results by Location

CSCOM of Banguinéda (rural, 45 km from CSRef)

Patients consulted: **261**

Men: **138**

Women: **123**

Cataract cases identified: **32**

Patients operated: **27**

Men: **19**

Women: **8**

CSCOM of Tioribougou (Kolokani District, semi-rural)

Patients consulted: **158**

Men: **92**

Women: **66**

Cataract cases identified: **93**

Patients operated: **93**

Men: **57**

Women: **36**

Yelen Clinic – ATTbougou (Kalaban Koro, partner facility)

Patients operated: 37

Men: 22

Women: 15

Cataract cases identified: 39

CSCOM of N'Gouraba (rural, 70 km from CSRef)

Patients consulted: 114

Men: 66

Women: 66

Cataract cases identified: 37

Patients operated: 28

Men: 14

Women: 14

(Surgeries performed at Mounsou CSCOM due to inaccessible roads)

CSCOM of Tamina (semi-rural, 60 km from CSRef)

Patients consulted: 101

Men: 65

Women: 36

Cataract cases identified: 18

Patients operated: 18

Men: 12

Women: 6

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

Patients consulted: 103

Men: 41

Women: 62

Cataract cases identified: 15

Patients operated: 13

Men: 7

Women: 6

CSRef of Kolokani (urban, 134 km from Bamako)

Patients consulted: 193

Men: 106

Women: 87

Cataract cases identified: 46

Patients operated: 46

Men: 27

Women: 19

CSCOM of Sanankoroba (urban, 20 km from CSRef)

Patients consulted: **105**

Men: **46**

Women: **46**

Cataract cases identified: **18**

Patients operated: **18**

Men: **11**

Women: **7**

CSRef of Kita (urban, 170 km from Bamako)

Patients consulted: **198**

Men: **110**

Women: **88**

Cataract cases identified: **150**

Patients operated: **143**

Men: **71**

Women: **72**

Referral Health Center of Barouéli (Ségou Region, 175 km from Bamako)

Patients consulted: **435**

Men: **198**

Women: **237**

Cataract cases identified: **140**

Patients operated: **140**

Men: **62**

Women: **78**

Referral Health Center of Macina (Ségou Region, 372 km from Bamako)

Patients consulted: **344**

Men: **142**

Women: **202**

Cataract cases identified: **140**

Patients operated: **108**

Men: **52**

Women: **56**

Referral Health Center of Niono (Ségou Region, 282 km from Bamako)

Patients consulted: **697**

Men: **346**

Women: **351**

Cataract cases identified: **140**

Patients operated: **130**

Men: **60**

Women: **70**

Seven (7) CSCOMs in Korofina Health District (Commune I, Bamako)

Patients consulted: **871**

Men: **399**

Women: **532**

Patients operated: **228**

Cataract cases identified: **228**

CSCOM of Sirakoro (semi-rural, 20 km from CSRef)

Patients consulted: **639**

Men: **264**

Women: **375**

Patients operated: **77**

Cataract cases identified: **76**

C. Summary of Activities and Results by Location

These results demonstrate the scale, reach, and growing effectiveness of Embrace Relief Foundation's Eye Health Program. Through targeted outreach campaigns and a mobile intervention strategy, the Foundation successfully reached underserved rural communities and densely populated urban areas, providing high-quality screening and free sight-restoring cataract surgery to thousands of beneficiaries. Field testimonials consistently highlight the transformational impact of the program: many patients regained their sight after years of visual impairment, restoring their independence, dignity, and ability to actively participate in family and community life. The program has therefore made a substantial contribution to reducing avoidable blindness and improving quality of life across multiple regions of Mali.



Patient Survey Results

1

Pre-surgical Survey

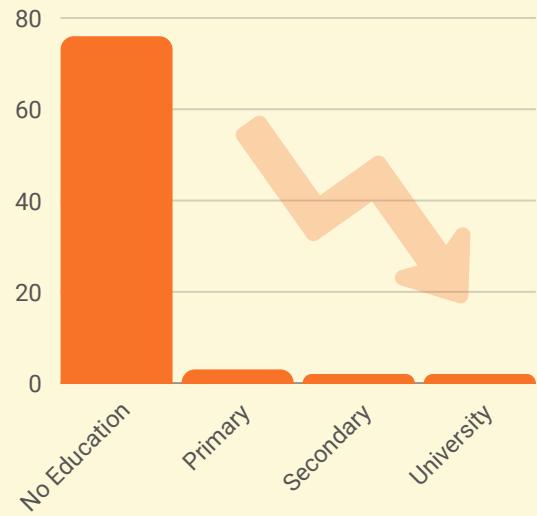
From July to October 2025, a questionnaire was administered to 381 cataract patients prior to their surgery.

No Education

Female **43.9%**

Male **32.6%**

Total **76.5%**



The majority of beneficiaries had little or no formal education, with **76.5% reporting no schooling**, particularly among women. Only a small proportion reached secondary or university level, highlighting that the program successfully reached underserved and low-literacy populations who are often excluded from access to specialized health services.

Patients' Income

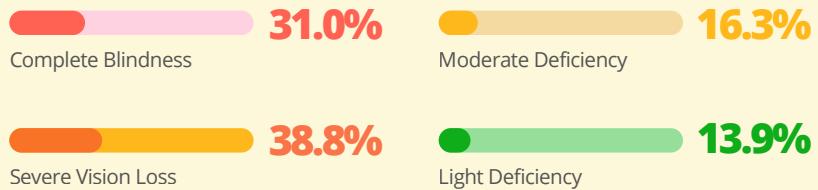


Patient Insured Status



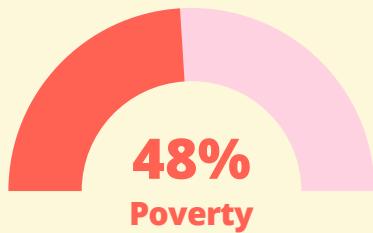
The majority of beneficiaries (**73%**) **reported having unstable incomes**, reflecting the high level of economic vulnerability among patients served. Health insurance coverage among patients was extremely limited, with **61% reporting no insurance** and **30% unaware of any insurance options**, leaving only **9% covered**. This underscores the importance of donor-supported cataract surgery in protecting livelihoods and preventing further economic hardship, particularly for households already living with financial insecurity.

Patients' Vision Before Surgery

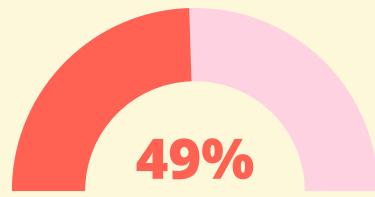


Before receiving care, nearly **70% of patients were living with severe vision loss or complete blindness**, severely limiting their independence and ability to work. In addition, **55.7%** of them reported having endured blindness for over a year prior to benefiting from **Embrace Relief's intervention**. This highlights that the program successfully reached those most in need, where cataract surgery delivers the greatest life-changing impact.

Barriers To Seeing A Doctor



Barriers To Surgery

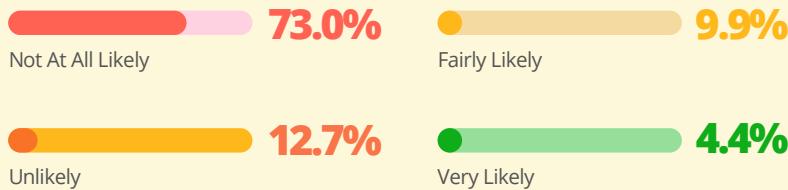


Patients reported that **financial hardship (48%)** and **limited awareness (24%)** were the primary factors delaying care, while other reasons were less frequent.

Prior to the intervention, **financial constraints** were the leading obstacle to surgery (**49%**), followed by **long distance to services (32%)** and **limited awareness (14%)**. These findings confirm that cost and access, not willingness, were the main factors delaying treatment, and demonstrate how donor-supported free surgery and mobile outreach directly remove these barriers and enable timely, life-changing care.



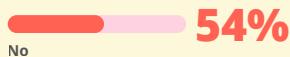
Access to Care Without The Mobile Clinic



Patients served by the program live across a wide geographic area, with **30% residing more than 25 km from the nearest eye care facility** and over **40% living beyond 15 km**. This demonstrates that Embrace Relief Foundation's approach successfully reaches both nearby and remote populations, ensuring equitable access to cataract care regardless of location.

Without the mobile clinic, **73% of patients reported they would not have accessed care at all**, and only **14.3%** indicated they would have been likely or very likely to receive treatment. This demonstrates that **the mobile clinic model is essential, not optional**, in enabling access to cataract surgery for the majority of patients served.

Did You Know Cataracts Could Be Operated On?



Cataract Prevalence Among Patients



Screening results show that **22% of patients examined were diagnosed with cataracts**, confirming a substantial unmet need for surgical eye care within the communities served. This underscores the importance of donor support in early detection and timely intervention to prevent avoidable blindness.

Nearly **one in two patients were unaware that cataracts are treatable**, reinforcing the importance of donor-funded awareness and outreach activities.

Before receiving surgery, cataracts severely limited patients' daily lives: **42% were unable to work**, care for themselves, or were fully dependent on others, while another **21% struggled to move safely**. This highlights the profound social and economic burden of untreated cataracts and the urgent need for donor-supported surgical care.

Patients primarily learned about Embrace Relief Foundation through community-based and trusted channels, with **local radio (34%)**, **community health workers (29%)**, and family or friends (**27%**) playing a key role. This demonstrates the effectiveness of grassroots communication and community trust in reaching vulnerable populations with life-changing services.

2

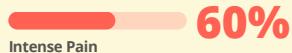
Post-surgery Survey

In 2025, thirty days after surgery, we were able to conduct follow-up interviews with 410 patients who had undergone surgery.

Did You Have Any Issues With The Surgery?



Type of Issues Before 30 Days After Surgery



The vast majority of patients reported a safe and smooth surgical experience, with **88% experiencing no issues** during or after surgery. This reflects the high standards of clinical care, patient safety, and professionalism upheld by Embrace Relief Foundation's medical teams.

Among the small proportion of patients reporting post-operative issues, the majority experienced temporary and manageable symptoms, primarily **intense pain (60%)** or minor discomfort (23%). More serious complications, such as persistent tearing (14%) and hemorrhage (3%), were rare, underscoring the overall safety of the surgery and the importance of timely follow-up and post-operative care.

Improving Patients' Vision

A donut chart showing 96% of patients experienced improved vision. The chart is mostly green with a small grey segment at the top.

96%

Patients' Satisfaction After Surgery

A gauge chart showing 97.8% of patients are very satisfied. The gauge is mostly green with a small red segment at the bottom.

97.8%

Very Satisfied

97.8% Satisfied 1.2% Neutral 1% Not Satisfied

Overall, in 2025, **96% of patients experienced improved vision after surgery**, underscoring the life-changing impact of donor-funded cataract care. This remarkable success rate confirms the high quality of the surgical procedures and the competence of the medical teams involved.

Beyond restoring sight, cataract surgery significantly improved patients' emotional well-being. **83% of patients reported a very strong improvement in mood**, highlighting the profound psychosocial impact of regaining vision and independence through donor-supported care.

Notably, **60.5% rated their experience with Embrace team as excellent** and **36.8% as good**, resulting in **97.3% positive feedback**. These findings underscore the high quality of care delivered and validate the effectiveness and patient-centered design of Embrace Relief Foundation's mobile clinic model.

Success Stories

A Second Chance At Sight: The Story Of Mr. Sékouba Doucouré

At 68 years old, **Mr. Sékouba Doucouré**, an Islamic scholar from **Gouana**, a small village 35 kilometers from the nearest eye-care center, had slowly lost hope. A dense cataract had completely clouded his right eye, and poverty made surgery impossible. For over a year, he lived in darkness, dependent on others for even the simplest daily tasks.

"The cataract had completely taken over my right eye," he recalls. "But thanks to the good work and determination of the *Embrace Relief Foundation* team, it was all removed."

When he first heard about **Embrace Relief's mobile cataract program**, it felt like a distant dream. A local cameraman who had worked on one of the Foundation's campaigns told him about the initiative and gave him their contact. Mr. Doucouré decided to call.

"You welcomed me with respect and kindness," he says. *"Your comforting words gave me confidence."*

Soon after, he was screened, operated on free of charge, and cared for by the team.

"Embrace Relief provided all the treatment for free; I didn't pay anything for my care," he explains. *"Since the operation, I thank God, everything is going very well. May God bless your work and make your projects prosper."*

His life transformed almost overnight.

"Before the surgery, it was my grandson who used to drive me everywhere on his motorcycle," he says with a smile. *"Now I can ride by myself, go wherever I want, and come back without any problem. Even at the grin, where I play cards with my friends, I see perfectly. Everyone is happy with the results."*

With his sight restored, Mr. Doucouré regained not only his vision but also his independence, dignity, and joy.

"Without Embrace Relief Foundation, it would have been very difficult to regain my sight. You are doing incredible work. I've seen so many people entering and leaving your clinic with smiles, it's amazing. Without your help, none of this would be possible."

Today, Mr. Doucouré is one of thousands of Malians whose lives have been changed by the Embrace Relief Cataract Program. He continues to pray for the team that gave him back his light:



“

"I pray for the whole Embrace Relief Foundation team, its leaders, and founders. May Allah always support them [...] If anyone suffers from cataracts, I will tell them, go to Embrace Relief Foundation. They will take care of you, just like they did for me."

- Mr. Sékouba Doucouré

From Darkness to Light: Massarna's Journey to Sight

For **three long years**, **Massarna Diarra**, a 43-year-old clothes vendor and mother lived in a world slowly fading into darkness.

It began with an itch, constant and harmless at first. Then faces became blurry, outlines hazy, until finally, a thick fog seemed to settle between her and the world.

"Even from three meters away, I could no longer see people's faces," she recalls.

Still, Massarna kept fighting. Each morning, she packed her bag of clothes and walked miles along the roadside to sell, determined to provide for her family. But blindness makes the world dangerous. One day, on her way to the market, she was hit by a car. The crash left her **right leg and left arm fractured**, both healing badly through traditional treatment she could barely afford.

A year later, tragedy struck again, **another accident**, this time breaking her left leg. The bones never set properly. Her body weakened, her sight failing, she was forced to stop selling and stay home.

"I stayed at home doing nothing for nine months," she says quietly. *"My business had stopped completely."*

Her visits to the **IOTA eye hospital** brought only despair.

"The doctors told me they could operate, but it was too expensive," she explains. *"I kept the prescriptions at home for over a year. Once, I had only 10,000 FCFA, they sent me away."*

At IOTA, surgery cost **80,000 FCFA per eye**, a dream beyond reach for someone struggling just to eat.

Then, one morning, while listening to her radio, she heard about the **Embrace Relief Foundation's mobile cataract campaign** in Sirakoro.

"The next morning, I went there," she says.

When doctors confirmed her cataracts could be operated on, she felt a mix of fear and hope. But the kindness of the Embrace Relief team gave her courage.

"They operated on both eyes in record time," she recalls. *"The next day, when the nurse removed the bandages, I saw the world again. Before, I saw nothing now I even count the stars in the sky sometimes."*

Her joy spills into every word.

"I didn't pay anything. Embrace Relief took care of everything, screening, surgery, medicine, all free. In Mali, eye care is so expensive. Finding people who do it for free... it's a miracle."

Since her surgery, **Massarna's life has changed completely**.

"Now, I can walk alone and sell my clothes again. I fill my big bag, go out to the streets and along the main roads," she smiles. "Before, I couldn't even recognize my daughter. Now I can see her, even from far away."

Her independence restored, her livelihood revived, her confidence renewed, Massarna is once again the woman she used to be: strong, resilient, and full of hope.



"Without Embrace Relief Foundation, I would still be blind today, completely dependent on others," she says. "You gave me back my sight, my dignity, and my life. May God bless your work and give you success in everything you do."

-Massarna Diarra

Partnership & Community Engagement

Strong partnerships and community engagement were central to the success of Embrace Relief Foundation's programs in Mali in 2025. By working closely with local authorities, health facilities, community leaders, media outlets, and health workers, the Foundation ensured acceptance, transparency, effectiveness, and sustainability of its interventions.

1. Local Authorities

Embrace Relief Foundation collaborated closely with regional, district, and local administrative authorities throughout program implementation. Local authorities were engaged from the planning phase to facilitate authorizations, ensure compliance with national regulations, and support community mobilization. Their involvement strengthened institutional trust, improved coordination, and enabled smooth implementation of activities across both rural and urban settings.

2. Health Facilities

Partnerships with CSCOMs, CSRefs, and private health facilities were critical to delivering high-quality eye care services. Local health structures served as screening points, referral centers, and surgery sites, ensuring continuity of care and alignment with the national health system. Notably, collaboration with partner facilities such as Yelen Clinic enhanced surgical capacity and post-operative follow-up, while strengthening local health system ownership.

3. Community Leaders

Traditional leaders, religious leaders, and community representatives played a vital role in promoting program acceptance and participation. Through their trusted positions, community leaders helped raise awareness about cataracts, dispel misconceptions, and encourage early screening. Their engagement was particularly important in reaching women, elderly individuals, and socially marginalized groups who might otherwise hesitate to seek care.

4. Media and Community Outreach

Local media, particularly community radio stations, were key partners in disseminating information about screening campaigns and free surgery opportunities. Radio announcements, combined with community outreach activities, proved highly effective in reaching vulnerable populations. Survey data confirmed that many patients learned about the program through radio broadcasts, community health workers, and word-of-mouth, demonstrating the power of localized and trusted communication channels.

5. Health Workers

Frontline health workers were instrumental in mobilizing communities, registering patients, supporting logistics, and facilitating patient flow during screening and surgery campaigns. Their commitment and proximity to communities ensured culturally sensitive engagement, effective crowd management, and respectful patient care. By working alongside Embrace Relief Foundation's medical teams, volunteers and health workers contributed significantly to the quality and reach of the interventions.

These collaborative efforts enabled Embrace Relief Foundation to reach thousands of vulnerable individuals, deliver complex medical interventions efficiently, and build lasting trust within communities. Partnerships remain a cornerstone of the Foundation's strategy to scale impact, strengthen local systems, and deliver sustainable humanitarian and health services in Mali.



2026 Perspective – Program Priorities

In 2026, Embrace Relief Foundation will consolidate and expand its humanitarian and health interventions in Mali through the following priority programs:

- Delivering **150 cataract surgeries per month** (reaching **1,800 patients** by December 2026)
- Constructing a **medical health center** in a rural, underserved village.
- Providing **free medical consultations** and essential medicines to **2,000** internally displaced persons during the malaria season.

Conclusion

The year 2025 marked a decisive and transformative milestone for the Embrace Relief Foundation in Mali. From the establishment of a legally compliant country office and operational systems, to the successful implementation of large-scale health and humanitarian programs, the Foundation demonstrated its capacity to deliver credible, high-impact, and accountable interventions in challenging contexts.

Through the Free Cataract Screening and Surgery Program, Embrace Relief Foundation restored sight to over a thousand individuals, many of whom had been living with severe visual impairment or blindness for years. The program not only exceeded key performance targets but also delivered outcomes aligned with **World Health Organization quality standards**, translating donor support into restored independence, livelihoods, and dignity.

Looking ahead to 2026, Embrace Relief Foundation is positioned to build on this momentum, expanding cataract services, strengthening clinical quality, extending food and medical assistance to displaced populations, and investing in long-term health infrastructure for underserved communities. With continued donor partnership, the Foundation is ready to move from successful establishment to sustained impact, ensuring that preventable blindness is reduced, essential health services reach those most in need, and humanitarian assistance is delivered with dignity and accountability.



Connect With Us!

18 Passaic Ave., Suite 1

Fairfield, New Jersey, 07004

(201) 528 - 3181

embracerelief.org

[@embracerelief](https://www.twitter.com/embracerelief)

