



MEDIA RELEASE

Orbis's Flying Eye Hospital Lands in Vietnam

Training program to focus on improving eye care services for children

Can Tho, Vietnam (May 8, 2017) - Orbis's new, third-generation [Flying Eye Hospital](#)—the world's only accredited ophthalmic training hospital aboard an MD-10 aircraft—has landed in Can Tho, Vietnam. Orbis will deliver a two-week ophthalmic training program alongside two local hospitals, Can Tho Eye Hospital (CTEH) and Can Tho Children's Hospital (CTCH), from May 7 – 19, 2017.

Flying Eye Hospital programs provide continuing medical education tailored for local ophthalmologists, nurses, anesthesiologists, biomedical engineers and technicians through lectures, case discussions, observation, hands-on training, workshops and symposiums. The program in Can Tho aims to enhance the knowledge and practices of the two local hospitals in the effective prevention and treatment of pediatric and adult eye diseases at local and regional levels.

This program will focus on training in six subspecialties of ophthalmology including glaucoma, retina, retinopathy of prematurity (ROP), oculoplastics, pediatric cataract and strabismus. Orbis will also train the staff at the eye clinic at CTCH to screen for common eye problems seen in children in the region, including premature babies at risk of ROP—a disease that can lead to permanent blindness and is on the rise in middle-income countries like Vietnam¹. Children with more complex eye problems will be transferred to CTEH for further treatment and follow-up care if required.

By leveraging the high-profile Flying Eye Hospital, the Can Tho program also helps raise awareness of the prevention and early detection of childhood blindness among the general public in the Mekong Delta region, where Can Tho is located. The Mekong Delta has a large population of around 17.5 million people in southern Vietnam², but its rural areas are among some of the most under-resourced communities in the country. Natural disasters often affect the livelihood of local people, and pediatric eye care services are almost non-existent. It is estimated that 300,000 children in the Mekong Delta region have eye diseases³ which could otherwise prevent permanent vision loss.

Treating children for eye diseases is very different from treating adults. Children's eyes are not just smaller, but they require special, trained surgical techniques, including nursing and anesthesia. Although significant progress has been made to address avoidable blindness (low vision or blindness that could be otherwise prevented or cured by known, cost-effective means) in adults in recent years, there is a shortage of trained pediatric ophthalmologists to meet the needs of the 3 million visually impaired children in the country⁴. Anesthesia requirements and the need for better pediatric follow-up care remain challenging in the country, especially in the Mekong Delta region.

¹ WHO: *Prevention of Blindness and Visual Impairment: Priority eye diseases – childhood blindness*, from <http://www.who.int/blindness/causes/priority/en/index3.html>

² General Statistics Office, *Statistical Handbook of Vietnam*, Hanoi: Statistical Publishing House, 2014

³ Health Policy and Strategy Institute, *Situation Analysis and Paediatric Eye Care in Vietnam*, 2014

⁴ *The Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (RAAB) study*, 2007



“We are delighted to be back in Vietnam, working with the government and our partners to continue to help build capacity to prevent and manage childhood blindness,” said Dr. Jonathan Lord, Orbis Global Medical Director. “We have set up six pediatric eye centers in Hanoi, Hue, Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh City, and recently in Can Tho and Binh Dinh. Our long-term goal is to develop Can Tho into a pediatric eye care hub for patients in the Mekong Delta, and progress is already underway.”

- In 2010, Orbis assisted Can Tho Eye Hospital in developing pediatric ophthalmology services, where ophthalmic staff were trained to diagnose children’s eye problems and refer them to Ho Chi Minh City for treatment.
- In 2016, Orbis and other eye care NGO’s in Vietnam launched a three-year project, “Sight for Children and People Aged over 50 in Mekong Delta”, funded by Standard Chartered Bank’s “Seeing is Believing” global community investment program. Through this project, Orbis supports CTEH to establish a fully-equipped, child-friendly Child Eye Care Center that provides comprehensive, quality eye care services for children in the Mekong Delta region.
- Since 2006, Orbis has successfully conducted seven Flying Eye Hospital programs in different regions of Vietnam, including Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh City, Hue and Hanoi. Equipped with the latest technology on the Flying Eye Hospital, lectures and surgeries conducted on board can now be broadcast live to remote participants around the world through [Cybersight](#), our telemedicine platform.

“Orbis began working with Vietnam’s ophthalmic communities through hospital-based projects in 1996, and later a permanent office was established in Hanoi in 2003,” said Huong Tran, Country Director of Orbis in Vietnam.

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About Orbis

Orbis is a leading global non-governmental organization that has been a pioneer in the prevention and treatment of blindness for over 30 years. Orbis transforms lives by delivering the skills, resources and knowledge needed to deliver accessible quality eye care. Working in collaboration with local partners including hospitals, universities, government agencies and ministries of health, Orbis provides hands-on ophthalmology training, strengthens healthcare infrastructure and advocates for making eye health a priority. Orbis operates the world’s only [Flying Eye Hospital](#), a fully accredited ophthalmic teaching hospital on board an MD-10 aircraft. To learn more, please visit [orbis.org](#).

Media Contacts

Silvana Vivas
Communications Manager, Orbis
silvana.vivas@orbis.org



Louise Harris
Communications Consultant, Orbis
louise@ironpetal.com