

# The All Eyes Foundation

BY HAIDAR AL-HAKIM



**A**t its core, All Eyes Foundation (AEF) wishes to help bring vision back to Iraq, and it intends to do this through ophthalmic subspecialty training, mentoring and infrastructure development. Based in Najaf, just over 100 miles south of Baghdad, the AEF's driving agenda is sensitive to two issues faced by the past, present and future healthcare professionals of Iraq: the lack of both training and screening. At a glance...

## TRAINING

- Only Ibn al-Haytham Hospital, Baghdad, provides specialty training in ophthalmology for the population of Iraq.
- The average ratio of ophthalmologist per million population is 12:1m across the country – in Najaf it's 20 per million and in Baghdad it's 31 per million.
- Official subspecialty training is not provided due to private practice constraints and lack of trainers' expertise, including corneal disease, vitreoretinal disease and oculoplastic. Ocular oncology is also non-existent in Iraq, and patients must be treated in Jordan.
- There's no paediatric subspecialty training in Iraq.
- And while the return rate is strong, all ophthalmic trainees leave Iraq to acquire fellowship training.

## SCREENING

- There is no continuous screening of visual impairment in schools in Najaf or other regions of Iraq.
- The population of Najaf is almost over three million people and set to grow by 3–4% per year over the next decade, leading to a greater visual disability of its population in the coming years.

To combat both of these issues, AEF Founder and Ophthalmologist, Haidar Al-Hakim hopes to provide specialty training in paediatric ophthalmology for the local population and enabling the AEF to screen children for visual impairment and blindness, before passing them onto trained paediatric ophthalmologists. But to achieve this mission, the AEF requires support.

## Donations

There is no non-governmental organization (NGO) or Iraqi government funds for this training and screening, and equipment is outdated in the government hospitals – with no plan to fund the equipment and staff required for this endeavour.

AEF can help with introducing training programmes for a wide range of subspecialties, as well as funding glaucoma medication, which is not currently supported by the Iraqi government, similarly to intraocular lenses (IOLs) for cataract surgery which are also left unfunded.

Seeking support, the AEF is calling out for donations of equipment, specialists offering their time, and financial donations to help with all of the above.

## AEF's commitments

The AEF wishes to help facilitate connections and collaborations between Iraqi ophthalmologists and international ophthalmologists, while developing postgraduate and fellowship programmes for the different ophthalmology subspecialties, like oculoplastics, paediatric ophthalmology, corneal and vitreoretinal.

Equal to this is AEF's desire to help fund operations for patients who can't afford their basic needs, along with screening for visual impairment in school children.

## Get involved

For more information about the work of this outstanding charitable organisation, visit the AEF website <https://alleyesfoundation.org> or contact Haidar Al-Hakim directly on LinkedIn or via email.

## AUTHOR

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