

## Angola Luanda

# A wholistic training of Portuguese-speaking ophthalmologists onsite



## The challenge of becoming an ophthalmologist in Portuguese-speaking Africa

### Background

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 65 million people worldwide suffer from a cataract or progressive lens opacification. Without surgical treatment, cataract causes, at first, blurred vision and eventually can lead to blindness. Globally, cataract is the leading cause of blindness. Cataract treatment in developing countries is insufficient and the WHO has identified this surgery as high priority. So, should we go to developing countries, identify the patients with cataracts and operate on them with foreign, temporary medical teams? The CBM Luxembourg Foundation advocates an alternative approach: it supports the local medical profession to advance and improves their training and equipment. This approach is long-term and sustainable.

### Inspiration

The CBM Luxembourg Foundation was inspired by the DESSO project carried out by CBM Switzerland in Conakry, Guinea: this project offers comprehensive training in ophthalmology - including cataract treatment - in French for French-speaking countries of West Africa. This program has been very successful and has had a great impact on ophthalmological care, far beyond Guinea.

Following the example of this ophthalmological training in French, the CBM Luxembourg Foundation plans to develop a complete training course in ophthalmology in Portuguese in Luanda, Angola. Here, too, cataract treatment is a primary, but not exclusive, goal. Once a higher number of ophthalmologists master this technique, the "blinding" of thousands of sufferers in Luanda, or in rural areas that are more difficult to access, can be avoided. And finally, this program should also become attractive for doctors from other Portuguese-speaking countries, such as Mozambique, and the Cape Verde Islands, in the future.



**Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of a poor eye health.**



**Eye health is essential to ensure good health, mental health and well-being.**



**Eye health has a positive impact on the schooling, education and learning of children.**



## Angola in figures



### Area

1,247million km<sup>2</sup>

### Population

35.6 million with more than 2.8 million having a visual impairment (7.8% according to IAPB)

### GDP per capita

6,104 USD (LU: 72,712 USD)

### Population below the poverty line

32.3% (LU: 17.5%)

### Life expectancy

61.2 years (LU: 82.3 years)

### Literacy rate

66% of the population > 15 years

### Density of doctors

0.21 per 1,000 inhabitants (LU: 3.0)

### Development Index

148th out of 189 countries



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## The Specifics

Globally, special medical training, whether online or onsite, is generally available only in English or French. However, high quality onsite training in Portuguese is currently not possible in Africa. To be trained, doctors in the process of eye specialization will have to travel to Portugal or Brazil, an expensive and therefore often insurmountable obstacle. Sustainable development projects avoid this obstacle and provide on-site comprehensive training in the local language so that "the country can help itself" as quickly and efficiently as possible.

## The concrete goals from 2021 to 2023:

### ➤ 1. Creation of a teaching laboratory "wet lab"

Young doctors must study ocular anatomy and its pitfalls during any intervention. In order to do this safely, a "wet lab" is created. A microscope with camera will be the main pillar. The gestures of a surgical intervention will be learned on the cow's eye.

CBM Luxembourg Foundation provides the financing for this laboratory.

### ➤ 2. Facilitation of on-site visits for training professors

Once the training objectives have been established, training professors will travel to Luanda to conduct the specific courses.

CBM Luxembourg Foundation will cover the travel and living expenses for these on-site trainings.

### ➤ 3. Learning specialized techniques abroad

Once the basic training has been acquired, young doctors will also be able to benefit from high-speed teaching on the various cataract surgical techniques (minimal incision, phacoemulsification). This type of teaching is offered by eye centres, such as in Africa and India, with experience of the specific challenges of developing countries.

CBM Luxembourg Foundation will offer this training to 12 Angolan doctors.

### ➤ 4. Increase in on-site interventions

Even with an increased number of ophthalmologists able to perform cataract procedures, equipment costs are the final challenge. In order for the program to be financially self-sufficient one day, and therefore to become sustainable, the acquisition of material costs for patients remains essential. This is also the only way to accelerate the program.

CBM Luxembourg Foundation provides surgical material for single-use (lenses, sewing equipment, dressings, etc.) for 2,000 cataract surgeries.

## The Local Partners

The National Ophthalmological Institute of Angola (IONA) is attached to university clinics and is our main local partner. In the medium term, the Boa Vista clinic located in the south of the country in Benguela will be another partner.

## The Budget

The CBM Luxembourg Foundation has funded this project with an amount of €50,000 in 2021 and 2022. Depending on the donations received, the amount may increase to €75,000 in 2023.