



Strengthening Eye Health within the Pacific

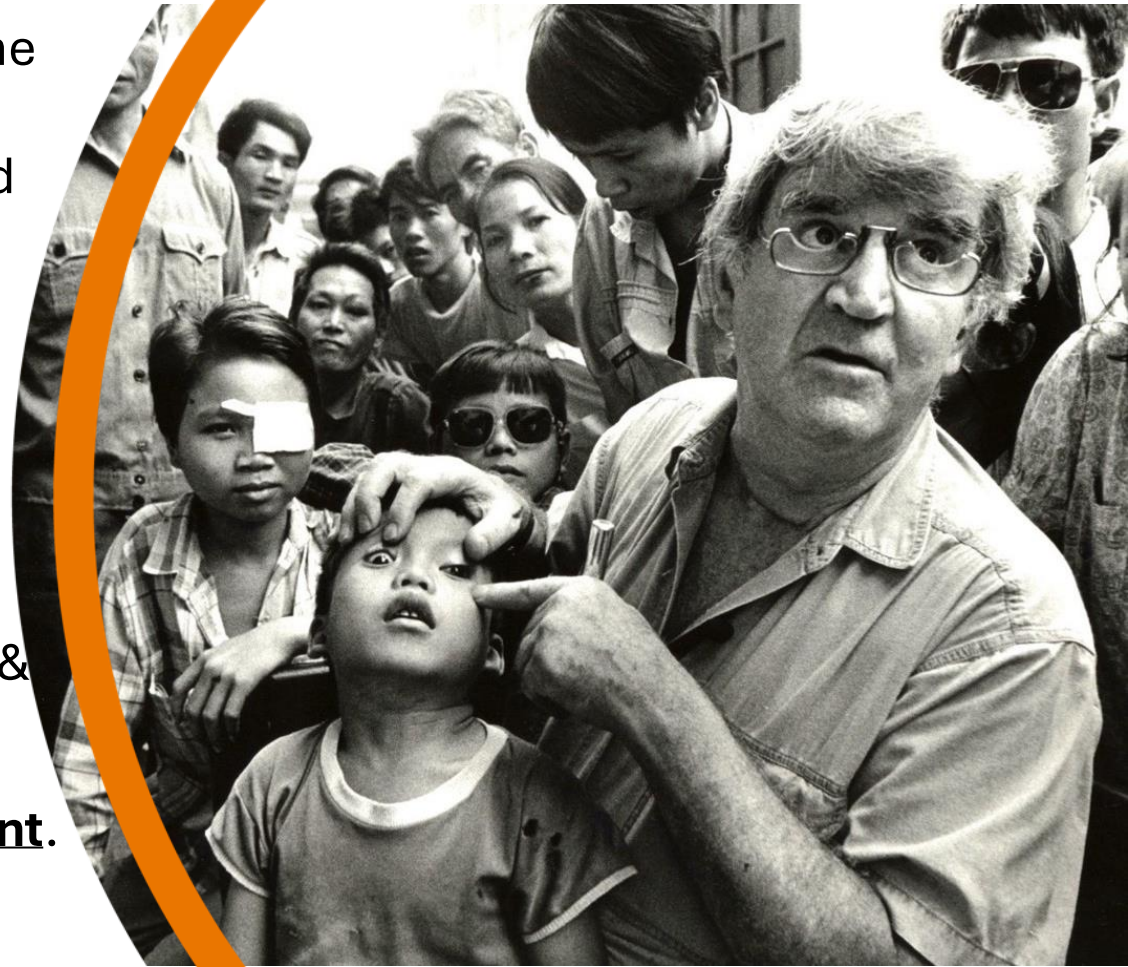
Glenn Fatupaito
Pacific Partnerships Lead



The Fred Hollows
Foundation NZ

About us...

- ∞ **The Fred Hollows Foundation NZ** carries on the work of the late Professor Fred Hollows;
 - Fred was an internationally acclaimed eye surgeon and social justice activist;
 - championed the right for all to be able to access high quality and affordable eye care.
- ∞ We are a registered charity within New Zealand (NZ)
 - strong partnership with the NZ Govt with generous support from the NZ public and other donors.
 - work across the Pacific alongside MOH's, Universities & key stakeholders;
- ∞ Our focus: **workforce training** and **workforce development**.
- ∞ Our goal – “**Pacific people are benefitting from their own sustainable and resilient quality eye health systems.**”





About us...

∞ **Best-practice approach**

- focused on **local training** of the regional eye care workforce (*workforce development*), and by
- **supporting governments to develop resilient eye health systems** to reduce avoidable blindness and vision impairment.
- **encouraging research** in eye care to provide Pacific governments with the latest evidence to guide eye health plans and policies for the long term.

Strengthening Eye Health Systems



Where we
currently
work



About where we work...

- ∞ Most at-risk from climate change and natural disasters;
- ∞ Unacceptably high rates of blindness and vision impairment in the Pacific – approx. 90% being preventable or treatable!
- ∞ Some of the highest rates of NCDs in the world - diabetes;
 - 6 of 10 countries with the highest rates of diabetes are in the Pacific.
 - **Diabetic retinopathy** being a major cause of avoidable vision loss & estimated that in some PIC's up to 69% of people with diabetes have a form of retinopathy, (double the global rate!).



About where we work...

- ∞ The *other* major causes of avoidable blindness and vision impairment in our Region are **cataracts** and **refractive error**;
- ∞ Estimated prevalence of cataract in the population 50+ years and is 10.66%,
- ∞ Estimated prevalence of refractive error is 6.97%.



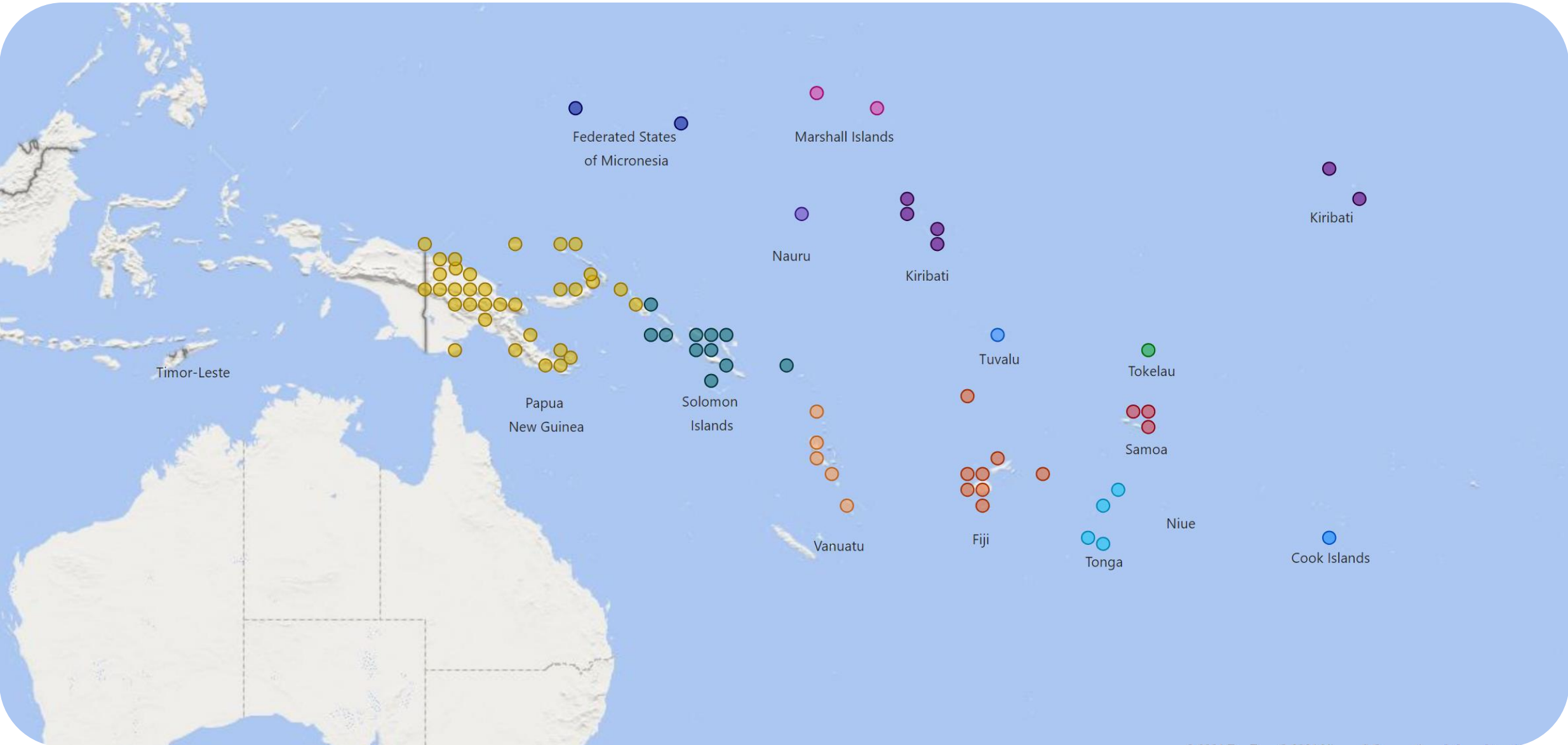
What have we achieved together?



What have we achieved?

- ∞ In Suva, alongside our partners, we established the **Pacific Eye Institute** (PEI) in 2006.
 - PEI partners with the Fiji National University (FNU) to provide quality ophthalmic training for regional health workers (Drs & nurses) at CWM Hospital in Suva.
 - deliver postgraduate eye courses including PGDO, MMED & PGDip EC (nursing)
 - also deliver sub-specialty training in advanced refraction, vitreoretinopathy, oculoplastic, glaucoma, and paediatric ophthalmology

Eye Care Workforce as of 2024



Eye Care Workforce in 2000



What have we achieved?

- ∞ In 2024, we supported Pacific partners to deliver over 68,078 eye consultations and 5,125 surgeries, (3,403 were for cataract);
- ∞ Supported 128 outreaches to remote Pacific communities
- ∞ Supported the building of research capacity through conducting **Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (RAAB)** surveys in Vanuatu & Samoa with plans for additional countries.



Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness Study (RAAB)

- Population based survey on blindness & visual impairment
- Survey teams travel to various locations to examine eyes and collect data on cataract, refractive error, and diabetic retinopathy.
- Generates reliable estimates on prevalence and causes of visual impairment



Key findings

Estimated burden of vision impairment

The age and sex adjusted prevalence of blindness was **1.7%**. The prevalence of severe vision impairment was **1.7%**.

92% of blindness was avoidable. This means that 9 out of 10 people who are blind in Vanuatu don't need to be.

Untreated cataract was identified as the leading cause of blindness (**82.4%**), Severe Vision Impairment (SVI, **91%**), and Moderate Vision Impairment (MVI, **66%**) in Vanuatu.

Uncorrected refractive error was the leading cause of Early Vision Impairment (EVI) responsible for **76.9%** of cases. It was the second leading cause of MVI (**27.2%**), highlighting the need for strengthened refractive services in Vanuatu.

Cataract surgical coverage (CSC)

79.2% of people blinded by cataracts have been operated on, and this is close to the **80%** threshold often discussed in relation to Universal Health Coverage goals.

The CSC for individuals with a vision impairment threshold of <6/18 was **38.9%**. This indicates that less than half of those who could benefit from cataract surgery at this level of vision impairment are receiving it.

Key messages

To address the findings of this survey, it is recommended that relevant stakeholders:



Improve Cataract Surgery Outcomes and Increase Cataract Surgical Coverage



Expand Refractive Error Services



Continue to Enhance Diabetes Management and DR Screening



Continue to Invest in Public Awareness and Education



Strengthen Health Systems



Integrate Eye Health into Primary Care



Continue to Invest in Policy and Advocacy Initiatives



Why are we here?



The Fred Hollows
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How can we partner?

- ∞ How can Fred Hollows Foundation NZ support the USAPI and Northern Pacific?
- ∞ What is the prevalence of eye disease in your Region?
- ∞ What is your approach to eye health?
- ∞ What would YOU like to achieve in eye care / eye-health?





Thank You



30 YEARS OF RESTORING
SIGHT



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**Future
Fred**

Our Strategy



Our 2023–2032 Strategy
Advancing the Pacific's vision of universal access
to quality eye care.

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