From May 27 through June 6, 2016, the Moran outreach team returned to Salamá, Guatemala, for their fourth outreach medical eye camp in the region. Partnering with the local eye hospital, the teams were able to complete 181 free sight-restoring surgeries and dozens of vision screenings, transforming the lives of those patients and their families.

**A stark outlook**

Guatemala, located just south of Mexico, is one of Central America’s poorest countries. More than half of the population lives below the national poverty line, and one-quarter of the population lives in extreme poverty. Not only are many of the country’s citizens lacking access to food, clean water, education, and housing, but they are greatly lacking access to health care. An estimated 80,000 Guatemalans are blind from cataracts and thousands more are functionally blind due to lack of access to eyeglasses.

**Site:** Salamá, Guatemala.

**Local Partners:** Salamá Lions Club Eye Hospital.

**Medical Team:** 6 physicians, Drs. Roger Furlong, Kellly Smith, Snow Slade, Meng Lu, Llyod Williams, Ashlie Bernhisel; 1 RN, Julie Mondloch; 2 EMTs, Talus James, Cheyanne Mulcock; 5 Medical Technicians, Abraham Granados, Sr., Karen Bachman, Henry Barerra, Mike Mondloch, Kevin James; 2 Surgical Technicians, Jennifer Moss, Echo Davis; 1 Researcher, Samuel Thomas.

**Moran Staff, Volunteers & Donors:** Kevin James, Heidi Furlong, Nataly Granados, Dave Bachman, Emily Olsen, Michael Yei, Michael Schoenfeld.

**Sponsors:** David W. Bernolfo, Fred & Christine Fairclough, SEE International, Aleon, Abbot Medical, MST, Glaukos.

**Patient Impact:** 181 sight-restoring surgeries.

**Partner Training:** Guatemalan ophthalmologist, Dr. Orlando Gonzalez, received hands-on training from Moran physicians and received special training on the phacoemulsification machine, which is used to remove cataracts.

Salamá, located in the region of Baja Verapaz, is home to 800,000 inhabitants and only one ophthalmologist—Dr. Orlando Gonzalez. The Moran team works with Dr. Gonzalez in his small eye hospital to provide ophthalmic training to him and his staff, giving them the skills to provide quality eye care. The Moran team visits Dr. Gonzalez once per year in Guatemala to perform an outreach medical eye camp (OMEC). Together, they complete hundreds of surgeries and vision screenings to help eradicate the backlog of curable blindness in the region.
Teaching and training in the field

This mission marked Moran’s fourth consecutive outreach medical eye camp with Dr. Gonzalez at the Salamá Lions Club Eye Hospital. The Moran outreach team made long-term commitment to Dr. Gonzalez, and over the course of that commitment, the Moran team hopes to transfer the skills, training, and equipment necessary for Dr. Gonzalez and his team to improve both the quantity and quality of surgeries that they can provide to the locals.

Dr. Gonzalez’s ophthalmology residents also work with the Moran team during OMECs to enhance their operating and clinical skills. Last year, Dr. Gonzalez’s resident even traveled to the United States to complete an Ophthalmology observership in pediatric ophthalmology at the Moran Eye Center. Moran’s International Observer Program trains approximately 15 ophthalmologists per year from developing countries across the globe.

Ciriacho Colocho after receiving sight-restoring surgery.

Transforming lives

Ciriacho Colocho, 81, was deaf and blind. His days consisted of waking, sitting, and sleeping. He was unable to care for himself, so his five children had to take turns looking after him. His daughters took the day shifts, and his sons took the night shifts. Before surgery, Ciriacho was quiet and patient. Two of his children, Juan and Victoriana, brought their father on a five-hour bus ride for cataract surgery. What did they want most for their father? “To be able to feed himself again.” After his free cataract surgery from the Moran team, Ciriacho was able to see the faces of his five children for the first time in decades. He can now envision a colorful future with independence gained from sight-restoring surgery.

A second chance for sight

As the seamstress for her convent, Sister Maria is responsible for sewing all of the priests’ clothes and sisters’ habits, but cataracts made it impossible for her to see her work. She fell down often, and last year she fell and broke her wrist while traveling to Salamá for surgery with Moran. Unable to continue her journey, Sister Maria waited over a year for Moran’s doctors to return in 2016. This time, her sight was restored. Sister Maria’s cataract surgery was a success, and soon she was sewing again.