

Under Qatar Creating Vision and Women in conflict Zones initiatives, Qatar Fund for Development and Orbis Launched the Ground-Breaking Training Programme onboard the Flying Eye Hospital in cooperation with Qatar Charity

A first-of-its-kind medical training programme has been launched today by a group of national and international partners in Doha. Under the leadership of the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and Qatar Charity, Orbis will be hosting a week-long professional development programme for women in eye care from vulnerable communities. This will fall under a new QFFD initiative called 'Women in Conflict Zones' and the "Qatar Creating Vision" initiative.

Ophthalmologists and nurses from Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Palestine, Somalia, Syria, Sudan and Yemen, have been invited to take part in the simulation training, endorsed by the Qatari Ministry of Public Health. This will be delivered by Orbis's clinical volunteers and staff onboard their Flying Eye Hospital, a fully accredited ophthalmic teaching facility on board an MD-10 aircraft.

The participants will hone their skills using cutting-edge surgical and/or nursing simulation devices, including virtual reality, artificial eyes, and life-like manikins. This ensures that each step they would normally take when treating a patient can be safely practiced as many times as needed, growing confidence.

Additional partners assisting the programme include Qatar Airways, Qatar Executive and Hamad International Airport, who are providing on-the-ground support. In addition, as part of its ongoing partnership with the charity, OMEGA is the title sponsor of the Orbis Flying Eye Hospital visits to the Middle East this year. This will be Orbis's first international training programme with the Flying Eye Hospital since the start of the pandemic.

HE Mr. Khalifa bin Jassim Al Kuwari Director General of QFFD stated, "Qatar Fund for Development is enormously proud of the work that Qatar Creating Vision has produced since its inception in 2016 with Orbis implementation. Women in Conflict Zones will be hosting a week-long professional development training program, for women in ophthalmology and nursing. This initiative aims to empower girls and women, allowing them to be agents of change within their communities, by building their capacities, through providing with high-quality training sessions and workshops".

Qatar Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: "Qatar Airways has actively supported Orbis since 2012. Over the past years, Orbis has done incredible work to help many of those who had never had access to eye care before. This year's opportunity for training will provide a great benefit to the participating ophthalmologists and nurses. Following the Orbis Flying Eye Hospital visit to the State of Qatar many people who have never had access to eye care before around the world will be able to benefit from their expertise and their professionalism."

For his part, the Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Charity, Mr. Yousef bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, said: "Qatar Charity's cooperation with Orbis in the past 7 years enabled more than one million people to have access to quality eye care services. Building on this impact, we forge ahead with the training that will be provided in Qatar. Qatar Charity will be providing long-term support to all those involved. Once the participants have returned, we will continue working to understand their needs in terms of equipment and facilities, to support them in their drive to help more people in their communities".

Dr Robert Walters, Chairman, Orbis in the Middle East, said: "This project is a true testament to teamwork. Partnerships play a huge role in addressing the vast scale of vision loss worldwide, which currently stands at 1.1 billion, 90% of which is avoidable. We must work on ways to tackle barriers, rather than be deterred. This programme will help to provide training to women from conflict areas who may not normally have access to these opportunities. I'd like to thank our partners that have ensured it could take place and recognise the hard work of the participants and the important impact they have on their communities."

Orbis has been transforming lives through the prevention and treatment of avoidable blindness for four decades. It is also the 10th anniversary of the Flying Eye Hospital's first visit Doha to raise awareness of the vast scale of avoidable blindness. With a close network of partners, Orbis mentors, train and inspires local eye care teams – from community workers to doctors and nurses – so that they can save and restore vision in their communities.