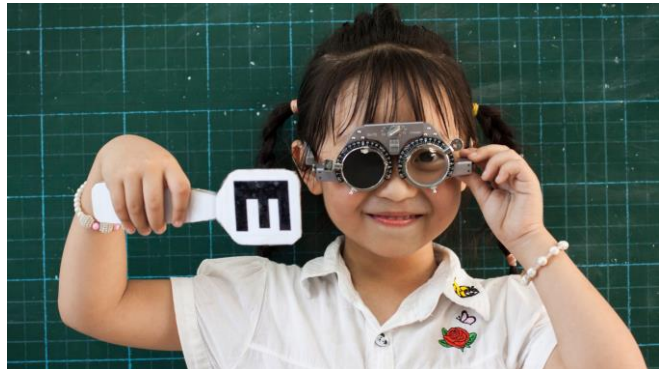


# CASE STUDY: SCALING EYE CARE ACCESS IN VIETNAM THROUGH ALINA VISION



## INTRODUCTION

Alina Vision is a social enterprise founded in 2018 by The Fred Hollows Foundation and Rohto Pharmaceutical to address the critical need for accessible and affordable eye care in Vietnam, where avoidable blindness is a pressing issue. Inspired by Fred Hollows' commitment to Vietnam, the initiative aims to create high-quality, affordable eye care services for people across all income levels. The enterprise operates two eye hospitals in underserved markets and employs more than 80 staff members.

Vietnam holds special significance in the history of The Fred Hollows Foundation. Just months before his passing in 1993, Fred Hollows established a pioneering training program in Vietnam to train a new generation of local cataract surgeons, a program that has since produced over 300 skilled eye surgeons. Alina Vision continues this legacy by embedding financial sustainability, quality, and equity in its operations, while working to expand its reach.

In January 2024, a key milestone was reached when The Fred Hollows Foundation, Rohto Pharmaceutical, and TVM Capital Healthcare (a growth capital investor) announced a major equity investment in Alina Vision. This investment not only provides financial resources but also access to operational, clinical, and management expertise, accelerating Alina Vision's plans to expand its eye care services across Vietnam.

## THE PROBLEM

The Fred Hollows Foundation identified a significant gap in Vietnam's eye care system: the lack of accessible, high-quality, and affordable services, particularly for low-income populations. Cataract, the leading cause of blindness among Vietnamese people over 50, especially women, was not being adequately addressed by existing healthcare infrastructure<sup>1</sup>. To tackle this, the Foundation sought a solution that was both programmatic and financially sustainable, partnering with Rohto Pharmaceutical to establish Alina Vision as a scalable model for affordable eye care.

## WHAT WE ACHIEVED

Alina Vision operates on an innovative cross-subsidy model inspired by the Aravind Eye Care System in India. This approach allows the enterprise to deliver the same high standard of care to all patients, with higher-income patients opting for more premium packages, which helps subsidise treatment for lower-income patients. This ensures eye care services are accessible to people from all economic backgrounds.

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<sup>1</sup> The Fred Hollows Foundation. (n.d.). *Vietnam*. Retrieved October 28, 2024, from <https://www.hollows.org/where-we-work/vietnam/>

To further extend its reach, Alina Vision also organises regular eye camps and outreach events in underserved communities across Vietnam, ensuring that even the most vulnerable populations have access to essential eye care services.

The recent equity investment from TVM Capital Healthcare will accelerate Alina Vision's growth, enabling it to scale its operations and continue providing quality, equitable eye care to Vietnam's underserved communities. This collaboration has unlocked operational and clinical resources, helping Alina Vision strengthen its model while expanding its capacity for cataract surgeries and other services.

## IMPACT

In 2023, Alina Vision performed over 2,800 cataract surgeries, significantly contributing to addressing cataract-induced blindness in Vietnam. Cataracts remain the most prevalent cause of blindness in the country, disproportionately affecting women aged 50 and above. With demand for cataract surgeries expected to rise sharply in the coming years<sup>2</sup>, Alina Vision's model is positioned to alleviate this burden on the healthcare system.

With the added support of TVM Capital Healthcare, Alina Vision plans to grow into a network of eye hospitals, dramatically increasing capacity to meet the anticipated demand. This expansion will ensure that quality eye care remains within reach for thousands more people, providing a sustainable solution to combat avoidable blindness in Vietnam.



## LESSONS LEARNED

- **Innovative funding models can deliver impact** – The social enterprise model used by Alina Vision ensures that high-quality eye care is accessible to all, regardless of income, by leveraging fee-paying patients to subsidise services for lower-income patients.
- **Strategic partnerships drive scalability** – Collaborating with Rohto Pharmaceutical and TVM Capital Healthcare has enhanced Alina Vision's operational, clinical, and management capacity, allowing for faster growth and improved service quality.
- **Collaboration is key to success** – Working with social enterprises, non-profits, and impact investors has proven essential in addressing critical healthcare gaps and ensuring the sustainability of Alina Vision's operations.
- **Effective models can be replicated** – The success of Alina Vision in Vietnam showcases how adaptable business models, like the one inspired by Aravind in India, can be customized to address local healthcare needs in different countries.

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<sup>2</sup> International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness. (n.d.). *Magnitude and Projections: Projected Change in Vision Loss 2020 to 2050* (2024), from [www.iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas/magnitude-and-projections/projected-change/](http://www.iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas/magnitude-and-projections/projected-change/)

## THE FUTURE OF ALINA VISION

Alina Vision continues Fred Hollows' legacy by delivering accessible, affordable, and high-quality eye care to underserved populations in Vietnam. Through its innovative cross-subsidy model and strong partnerships, the enterprise has already made a significant impact on cataract blindness and is poised to expand its reach across the country. As demand for cataract surgeries grows, Alina Vision is well-positioned to provide a sustainable and scalable solution to the growing burden of avoidable blindness in Vietnam.