







TRIP REPORT OCTOBER 2025



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Introduction

BACKGROUND

The Sumba Eye Program (SEP), initiated in 2007, is a collaborative, volunteer-led initiative committed to reducing avoidable blindness and visual impairment in the Indonesian island of Sumba, one of the most underserved regions in Southeast Asia. The program is coordinated by Foresight Australia in partnership with local hospitals, regional health authorities, and academic institutions, including Hasanuddin University (UNHAS) and PERDAMI.

Over the years, SEP has delivered vital ophthalmic and optometric care to the people of Sumba, including cataract surgeries, community screenings, glasses distribution, and capacity-building for local health professionals. The island continues to face a severe shortage of eye care services, with a high prevalence of preventable blindness and limited access to trained personnel or equipment. In response, Foresight has moved from ad hoc service delivery toward developing sustainable, locally managed eye care infrastructure.

In 2024 and 2025, efforts shifted to RSUD Waikabubak Hospital in West Sumba, where all equipment has now been delivered and installed, local nurses have been trained, and infrastructure is in place for the clinic to become fully operational.

The October 2025 visit marked a critical transition point: the final planning steps toward launching the RSUD Waikabubak Eye Clinic as a permanent service. A key milestone now pending is the formalisation of the MOU between PERDAMI NTT and UNHAS, after which a full-time ophthalmologist will be deployed to begin clinical work.

The objectives of the October 2025 trip were to continue building these efforts through:

- Stakeholder engagement and strategic planning with regional hospitals (Waikabubak, Anakalang, Caritas)
- On-site setup and readiness of the new eye clinic at RSUD Waikabubak Hospital
- Discussions on budget commitments and formal MOUs
- Further training of local staff
- Discussions with academic partners (UNHAS and Udayana University) to support workforce development
- Planning future service delivery and outreach schedules, including schoolbased screening and surgical camps

Geographical context

Once known as the "Sandalwood Island", Sumba is one of the three main islands forming the Nusa Tenggara Timur Province in Southeast Indonesia. The island covers an area of approximately 11,153 km² and has a population of around 1,000,000 people. Despite its size and cultural richness, Sumba remains one of the poorest and least developed regions in Indonesia, with a predominantly agricultural economy that is constrained by poor soil quality, frequent droughts, and limited access to infrastructure.

Sumba is classified as a remote island cluster, which creates significant challenges for the delivery of essential health services. Access to healthcare is often difficult, particularly for rural communities, and the shortage of trained health professionals further exacerbates the problem. In the area of eye health, there are no permanent ophthalmology services available across the Central and West Sumba districts, leaving the population dependent on periodic visits from specialist teams for services such as vision screening, eye examinations, and cataract surgeries.

The Sumba Eye Program (SEP) has concentrated its efforts primarily in Central, West, and Southwest Sumba, where the majority of the population resides and where the need for accessible, ongoing eye care is greatest. The program's work in these regions continues to play a crucial role in reducing avoidable blindness and building local capacity for sustainable, community-based eye care services.



Strategic Engagement

During the October 2025 visit, a key meeting was held with Dr. Ando Saragih, Director of RSUD Waikabubak Hospital, and Dr. Wahyu, Head of Hospital Services, to review the progress of the eye clinic setup and to discuss the next phase of operational readiness. This meeting represented an important step in formalising the collaboration between Foresight, RSUD Waikabubak, UNHAS, and PERDAMI NTT, and ensuring the sustainability of eye care delivery in West Sumba.

The discussions highlighted the significant progress made since the May 2025 trip. The hospital has completed all necessary renovations and allocated appropriate space for the new Eye Clinic, including designated areas for clinical examination, refraction, and the



optical workshop. Equipment provided by Foresight has been installed and remains ready for use. The team also inspected the new operating theatres, which are in the final stages of completion and expected to open within the coming months. Once operational, these theatres will allow cataract and other ophthalmic surgeries to be performed on-site, marking the first time such services will be available permanently in West Sumba.

A central point of discussion was the deployment of a full-time ophthalmologist. Dr. Ando reaffirmed the hospital's commitment to covering the salary for this position, as well as for nursing and support staff. The arrival of the ophthalmologist is now contingent on the formal signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between PERDAMI NTT and UNHAS, after which the university will assign a qualified doctor to begin service at the clinic. Both parties agreed this step is crucial to ensuring continuity of care and building a sustainable, locally managed service.



The meeting also focused on training and ongoing capacity building. Foresight and the hospital leadership agreed to continue training additional nurses in basic refraction, screening, and clinical support, following the successful upskilling of the first group of four nurses earlier in the year. The goal is to build a self-sufficient team capable of running the daily clinic under the supervision of the ophthalmologist and maintaining regular outreach to nearby communities.

Strategic Engagement



Finally, Dr. Ando expressed his strong support for the partnership, noting the positive impact Foresight's involvement has had on the hospital's capacity to provide quality eye care. He emphasised the hospital's intention to integrate the eye clinic into its long-term health service strategy. It was mutually agreed that Foresight would continue to

provide technical guidance, equipment maintenance, and short-term specialist visits, particularly during the early phase of clinic operations. This meeting reinforced a shared vision between all parties: to transform the RSUD Waikabubak Eye Clinic into a centre of excellence for community-based eye care in West Sumba and a model for replication across other districts of the island.

A significant milestone during this visit was the inspection of the clinic and surgical facilities by the Vice Bupati and the Minister of Health Services for West Sumba. They toured the screening room, the new operating theatres, and the completed eye clinic, expressing strong support for the partnership and its contribution to improving access to specialist eye care in the region.



The meeting also addressed the deployment of a full-time ophthalmologist, which will proceed once the MOU between PERDAMI NTT and UNHAS is finalised. RSUD Waikabubak has committed to funding the salary for the ophthalmologist, as well as the nursing and technical staff. Foresight will continue to provide technical support, training, and ongoing equipment maintenance during the clinic's early operational phase.

Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to training and capacity building, agreeing to train additional nurses to support the growing clinical workload. The long-term goal is to create a self-sufficient local team capable of delivering continuous, high-quality eye care under the supervision of the ophthalmologist.

The visit and discussions underscored a strong, shared vision to make the RSUD Waikabubak Eye Clinic a model of sustainable and community-based eye care for West Sumba, setting a foundation for future expansion across other districts of the island.

Training and Capacity Building

An important component of the October 2025 visit was the continuation of training and practical mentoring for the local nursing and medical staff at RSUD Waikabubak Hospital. Building on the progress from earlier in the year, the focus during this trip was to consolidate the nurses' clinical skills and prepare them to operate independently once the new eye clinic becomes fully functional.

Two who had previously nurses completed their formal training Hasanuddin University (UNHAS) Makassar earlier in the year worked fulltime alongside the surgical team in the operating theatre throughout the week. This provided them with valuable, handson experience in assisting during cataract ophthalmic other procedures, strengthening their confidence technical competence.



Meanwhile, two additional nurses joined the Australian team in the vision screening room, where they assisted in patient registration, visual acuity testing, and preliminary refraction. They demonstrated strong progress, gaining more practical experience and applying the knowledge acquired from their earlier training sessions. The team noted significant improvement in their clinical technique and understanding of workflow efficiency.



All four nurses are now considered capable of operating on a permanent basis under the supervision of the ophthalmologist once the clinic officially opens.

It was also encouraging to note the participation of several General Practitioners (GPs) from the hospital who attended the sessions out of interest in eye health and to learn more about the Sumba Eye Program. Their involvement reflected growing local engagement and awareness about the importance of ophthalmic services. Many of them volunteered to assist with vision screening and patient care during the visit, demonstrating enthusiasm and a collaborative spirit that will be valuable for the program's long-term sustainability.

Project plan

Establish a permanent, community-based eye care service in West Sumba through the full operational launch of the RSUD Waikabubak Eye Clinic, complemented by training of local staff, sustainable partnerships with UNHAS and PERDAMI, and ongoing support from Foresight.

1 Infrastructure Development

- The RSUD Waikabubak Eye Clinic to be fully set up, with rooms allocated for refraction, examination, and an optical workshop.
- Once operational, the clinic will be equipped to conduct routine vision assessments, refractions, and surgical procedures on-site — marking the first permanent ophthalmic facility in West Sumba.
- RSUD Waikabubak Hospital will be responsible for ongoing equipment maintenance and calibration, while Foresight will continue to provide technical guidance and operational support during the clinic's early phase.

2 Human Resource Strengthening

- The hospital has committed to employing a full-time ophthalmologist.
- The ophthalmologist will oversee the day-to-day operations of the eye clinic, supported by four trained nurses and general practitioners interested in ophthalmology.
- Foresight will maintain collaboration with UNHAS to facilitate ongoing supervision and professional support for the new ophthalmologist.
- Engagement will continue with other Universities across Indonesia to identify young graduates and residents willing to work at the RSUD Waikabubak.

3 Training and Capacity Building

- The four trained nurses from RSUD Waikabubak, who previously completed formal instruction at UNHAS, continue to show strong progress through hands-on training with the visiting team.
- More nurses from the RSUD will be selected to train in eye health.
- Ongoing clinical supervision and refresher training will continue during upcoming visits in 2026 to further strengthen local expertise and ensure sustainability.
- As part of strengthening community-level primary eye care, Foresight and RSUD Waikabubak will collaborate to provide training for Puskesmas (community health centre) staff across West Sumba.

4 Service Delivery and Outreach

- Foresight will provide short-term specialist visits as part of ongoing collaboration, assisting in surgeries, training, and system monitoring.
- Outreach activities will be integrated into the hospital's public health strategy to ensure remote communities continue to receive care, supported by the local nursing team.

5 School Vision Screening Pilot

- Planning continues for the school-based vision screening program, led by Foresight in partnership with RSUD Waikabubak and the local health office.
- The program aims to train teachers and community health workers to perform basic vision checks in schools and refer students for follow-up at the eye clinic.

Future Directions

One of the most exciting outcomes of this October 2025 visit was the expansion of clinical capability at the RSUD Waikabubak Eye Clinic and Caritas Hospital. Through close collaboration with Dr. Saphira and the Caritas ophthalmology team, the program has now begun to extend its scope beyond cataract management to include glaucoma and paediatric eye care — services that have not previously been available in Sumba.

The management of glaucoma was identified as a key future priority. Currently, the supply of medications for glaucoma treatment remains a challenge. Once the permanent clinic becomes fully operational, sourcing drugs through the RSUD Waikabubak Hospital Pharmacy may provide a more sustainable and cost-effective solution. In parallel, the introduction of Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (SLT) as part of the ophthalmologists' training will be a significant advancement in local glaucoma care, reducing dependency on long-term medication and preventing irreversible vision loss.

In addition, training the hospital's eye care nurses to use more advanced diagnostic tools, such as a visual field analyser, will be a future step toward comprehensive glaucoma management. While this capability is not yet in place, establishing a pathway for such development will position the clinic as a model for preventive eye health in the region.

From a broader perspective, Foresight's training focus now spans two complementary levels:

- Community-based outreach and training, in collaboration with the Sumba Foundation, to equip field teams and Puskesmas staff with basic eye health knowledge and referral skills; and
- Hospital-based capacity building, focused on enhancing clinical competency among nurses, GPs, and ophthalmologists in managing both routine and emergency eye care.

Developing structured training for hospital GPs in emergency eye care — including management of foreign body removal, keratitis, and uveitis — will strengthen the referral system and reduce preventable corneal damage and scarring resulting from inadequate acute care.

Ultimately, the goal is to create an integrated care model, where community-based screening and referral networks work in close partnership with the RSUD Waikabubak Eye Clinic to manage both chronic and acute eye conditions. This approach will not only sustain the clinic as a viable referral centre but also enable future expansion into broader areas such as diabetic retinopathy screening, paediatric vision care, and glaucoma prevention — representing the next frontier for comprehensive, locally led eye care in Sumba.

Next Steps

The October 2025 visit marked a major milestone in transitioning from infrastructure and planning to the operational readiness phase of the RSUD Waikabubak Eye Clinic. The following recommendations outline the key actions required to ensure the clinic's successful launch, sustained service delivery, and long-term integration into the district's healthcare system.

1 Launch of the RSUD Waikabubak Eye Clinic

- Finalise the MOU between PERDAMI NTT and UNHAS to enable the deployment of a full-time ophthalmologist to RSUD Waikabubak.
- Support the hospital in officially launching the eye clinic once the new operating theatres are functional.
- Ensure all clinic staff, including the trained nurses and administrative personnel, are formally assigned and prepared to begin regular service delivery.

2 Continued Training and Mentorship

- Continue clinical supervision and mentoring for the four RSUD Waikabubak nurses during future visits, ensuring they achieve full clinical independence.
- Develop a refresher training plan in collaboration with UNHAS for 2026 to expand the skill base to include more nurses and junior doctors.
- Maintain mentorship support for Dr. Saphira at Caritas Hospital and encourage collaboration among ophthalmologists working across the island.

3 Strengthening Community-Based Eye Health

- Implement the Puskesmas training initiative to empower community health centre staff with basic eye screening and referral skills.
- Provide Puskesmas with standardised tools (e.g., vision charts, referral templates) to ensure consistency in screening and data collection.
- Establish a structured referral pathway linking Puskesmas facilities to the RSUD Waikabubak Eye Clinic for early case identification and follow-up care.

4 School Vision Screening Program

- Finalise the design and logistics of the school-based screening pilot, in partnership with the local Health and Education Offices.
- Train teachers and school health officers to conduct basic visual acuity testing.
- Launch the pilot in early 2026, followed by data collection and community education for parents.

Next Steps

5 Strengthening Partnerships and Governance

- Work with RSUD Waikabubak to ensure transparent operational processes, including reporting systems for patient numbers, surgeries, and outreach activities.
- Hold quarterly coordination meetings between Foresight, UNHAS, and PERDAMI to monitor progress, review training outcomes, and adjust plans as needed.
- Explore potential collaboration with Udayana University for future exchange programs and joint clinical rotations.

6 Fundraising and Resource Mobilisation

- Continue seeking funding support through grants and donations in Australia and Indonesia to sustain training, equipment maintenance, and outreach programs.
- Leverage Foresight's upcoming fundraising events to raise awareness of the clinic's operational phase and long-term needs.
- Strengthen partnerships with OneSight and other optical providers to ensure a continuous supply of spectacles and workshop materials.

These next steps will ensure that by 2026, the RSUD Waikabubak Eye Clinic will operate as a fully functional, self-sustaining centre for ophthalmic care in West Sumba, supported by trained local professionals, regional partnerships, and a growing network of community-based eye health providers.





ANNEX 1



One person goes blind every minute in Indonesia. 80 percent of blindness can be cured. Most cases of blindness in Indonesia were caused by cataracts. The incidence of cataracts in Indonesia reached 240,000 annually, while the number of cataract operations performed in the nation numbered only 100,000

Eye Health in Indonesia and Sumba

Indonesia has the second-highest prevalence of blindness among countries in the world. The surveys found that 1.8% of people aged 50 years and older were blind, while 4.2% had moderate or severe visual impairment.

Awareness and Education: Public awareness is crucial. so as the importance of regular eye examinations, eye health maintenance, and prevention of eye diseases. Educational campaigns and initiatives aimed at promoting eye health awareness can play a significant role in preventing avoidable vision loss.

Prevalence of Eye Diseases: In Indonesia, common eye conditions include refractive errors (such as nearsightedness, farsightedness, and astigmatism), cataracts, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy, and age-related macular degeneration.

Current Population in Sumba is about 500,000 excluding East Sumba. If considering the statistics of the prevalence of blindness in Indonesia, 9,000 are blind (1.8%) in Sumba and about 21,000 have moderate or severe visual impairment.

Loss of productivity due to eye health issues is a significant concern. When individuals experience vision impairment or eye-related conditions, it can have a detrimental impact on their ability to perform daily tasks, education, and work-related activities. Eye health problems can also have psychological and emotional effects, including stress, anxiety, decreased self-esteem, and social withdrawal.

