



# Assessing the Impact of a Subsidised Cataract Surgery Caravan on Visual Acuity in Elderly Patients in Kayanza Province, Burundi: A Short Report

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## Abstract

Cataract-induced blindness remains a substantial public health burden in sub-Saharan Africa, disproportionately affecting elderly populations with limited access to surgical care. In Burundi, ophthalmic services are particularly constrained outside major urban areas. This short report aimed to assess the impact of a temporary, subsidised cataract surgery caravan on restoring visual acuity in elderly patients within the underserved Kayanza Province of Burundi. A retrospective analysis of clinical records was conducted for all patients aged 60 years and above who underwent surgery during the caravan's visit. Pre-operative and post-operative visual acuity was measured using a Snellen chart. Demographic and outcome data were analysed descriptively. Among 127 elderly patients, 89% (n=113) achieved a post-operative visual acuity of 6/18 or better at discharge. The proportion of patients classified as blind (visual acuity worse than 3/60) due to cataract fell from 76% pre-operatively to 4% post-operatively. The subsidised surgical caravan was effective in restoring functional vision and substantially reducing the immediate burden of cataract-related blindness in this elderly, rural population. To ensure sustainability, such outreach caravans should be integrated into national eye health plans, with parallel strengthening of local follow-up care systems. Further research into long-term outcomes and cost-effectiveness is warranted. Cataract surgery, visual acuity, elderly health, outreach programme, Burundi, blindness prevention This report provides empirical evidence from a rural Burundian context on the immediate effectiveness of a targeted, subsidised outreach model for cataract surgery, informing regional public health strategies for managing avoidable blindness.

**Keywords:** *Cataract surgery, Visual acuity, Sub-Saharan Africa, Community-based intervention, Elderly health, Kayanza Province, Burundi*

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