

A Vision for Indonesia

Colonel John Crompton



Colonel John Crompton has been the Consultant Ophthalmologist to the Surgeon General ADF from 1994 to 2011 and Chairman of the Ophthalmology Consultative Group to the Director General Defence Health Service. His military service began with Adelaide University Regiment in 1965 and after graduating 2Lt R A Infantry in 1970, transferred to the RAAMC with successive postings to 3 Field Ambulance, 27 RSAR, 3 General Hospital, 6 Field Ambulance, SO2(Med) to 3 Military District and Consultant Ophthalmologist to 4 Military District. He is a Clinical Associate Professor and Head of the Eye Department and Head of the Neuro-Ophthalmology Service at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. His lack of overseas postings has been compensated by teaching and operating commitments (mostly Aid) in 18 overseas countries. He is a Past-President of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists.

Correspondence: jjcrompton@internode.on.net

The John Fawcett Foundation (JFF) / Yayasan Kemanusiaan Indonesia (YKI) is a tax-deductible Non-Government Organisation principally funded by Australian donors. It provides free eye care including spectacles and cataract surgery to the poor of Bali, Lombok and other islands of the Indonesian Archipelago – Australia's closest neighbours, where the incidence of cataract blindness is one of the highest in the world.

As is usual in most countries, eye care is "user pays" and, due to their poverty, poor people in Indonesia cannot afford the bus ticket to the nearest hospital where eye surgery may be available – let alone pay for the operation.

At the request of local councils and village leaders, the JFF has for the past 20 years been sending teams out to the villages and rural areas to vision screen and provide free glasses and eye care. Those who are cataract blind are immediately offered surgery in a mobile eye theatre. The theatres are on board purpose-built buses and are equipped for modern small incision cataract



surgery and intraocular lens implantation. Thirty two thousand patients have received these sight-restoring operations gratis.

The Indonesian military (TNI) are actively engaged in "Aid to the Civilian Powers" projects and have joined forces with the JFF providing logistic support such as free Hercules aircraft transport of the buses and personnel, and assisting with logistics.

For the last four years I have been assisting JFF by training the screening teams and up skilling the young civilian Indonesian ophthalmologists who are employed by JFF to do the surgery. Last December, 2010, I was privileged to teach three full-time Indonesian Airforce ophthalmologists: Lt Col Elisa Manueke from Solo, Lt Col Yuniati Wisma from Yogyakarta and Lt Col

Djonny Djuarsa from Bandung at the West Lombok Hospital. This coaching has enabled them to cope with the surgical load resulting from subsequent screenings in joint exercises. Recently a joint activity in Bengkulu, Sumatra, was attended by military representatives of countries of the South East Asian Pacific area. Representatives of the RAAF and the United States Surgeon Command (USARPAC) also attended.

Planning is in place for a joint activity involving the RAAF, JFF and Indonesian Air Force with the promise of great benefit to the blind poor in impoverished communities.

In keeping with best practice, we are currently completing and preparing for publication, an audit of the last 500 cataract operations in order to improve future visual outcomes.

