



JULIE AND SUMMIT SHAH FAMILY
INVESTMENT IN VISION CENTERS
SAN MARCOS, GUATEMALA

Year One Report
September 2021

SAN MARCOS VISION CENTER YEAR ONE REPORT



PROGRAM GOAL

One of Seva's key strategies is to provide universal access to primary eye care services in developing countries by establishing locally based Vision Centers (VCs). These permanent, community-based clinics provide easily accessible eye care services and a way for patients with chronic blinding eye conditions to readily monitor their eye health status. Generally staffed by locally recruited and well-trained ophthalmic professionals, VCs can address up to 80% of a community's eye care needs on the spot.

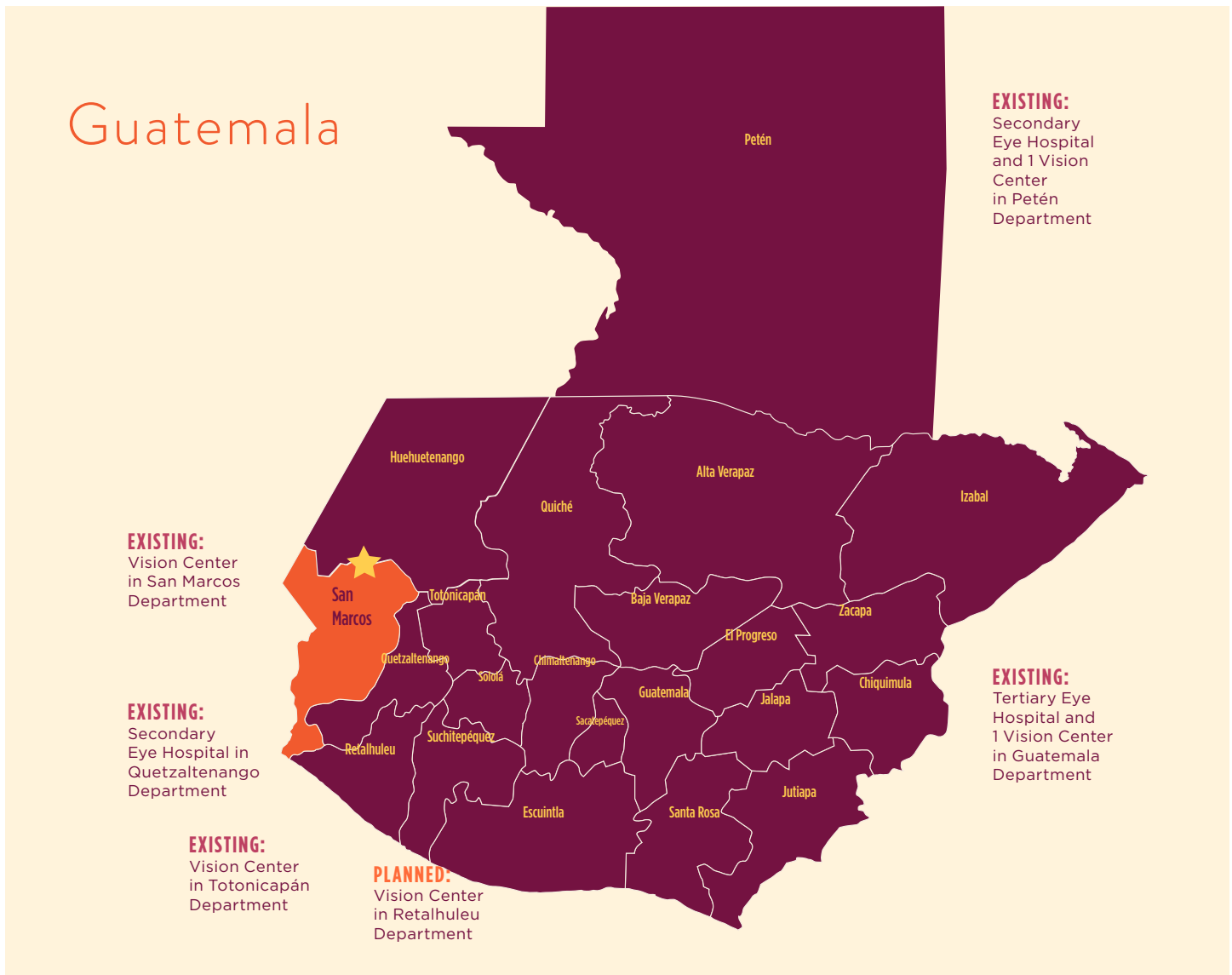
Financial support is offered in the early years to launch robust community-based services.

Additionally, VCs vastly increase women's access to eye care. By performing eye exams where they live and hiring women to conduct outreach in a culturally appropriate way, women will understand that accessible, affordable care is available to them.

Seva and partners have established more than 75 Vision Centers globally over the past five years and are set to establish another 140 centers in the next three to five years.

Through the generosity of the Shah Family, Seva and Visualiza (Visualiza Clínica Médica Oftalmológica), established a new vision center located in San Marcos, Guatemala. The vision center sits on one of the major roads that leads to the town center. This optimal location makes eye care accessible to the current population of 400,000 people (about half the population of Delaware).

SAN MARCOS VISION CENTER YEAR ONE REPORT

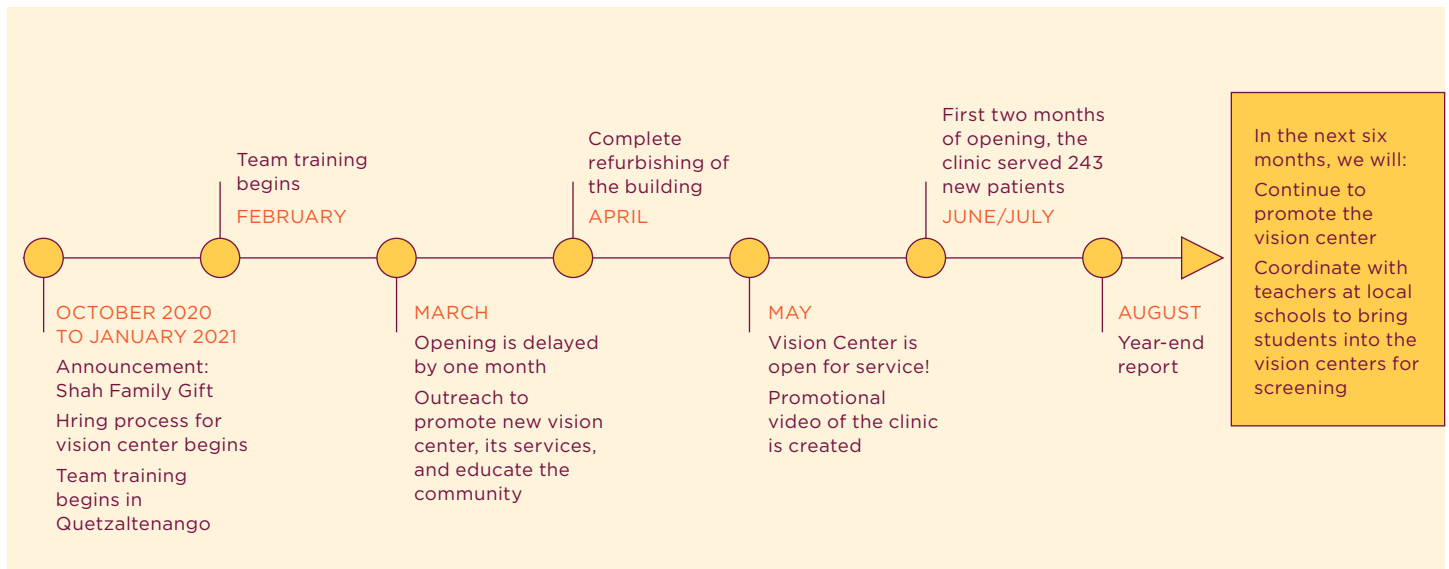


In the first year, it is estimated that the Vision Center will perform on average 2,400 exams per year, distribute 1,200 prescription glasses, and be fully sustainable within three years. New staff training was completed by the end of February. The clinic is staffed by an optometrist, an optician, counselors, and health promoters. Promotional activities throughout March were designed to inform the community about the eye care services that would soon be available to them while also educating the community about general eye health.

Note: With the complications brought on by COVID-19, the building renovations and government approval processes were delayed, which pushed the opening of the VC (Vision Center) to May.

Even with the ongoing global challenges of COVID-19, Visualiza recognizes the opportunity and the importance of prioritizing the establishment of vision centers to provide basic eye care services in communities that are in the most need.

TIMELINE



YOUR INVESTMENT AT WORK

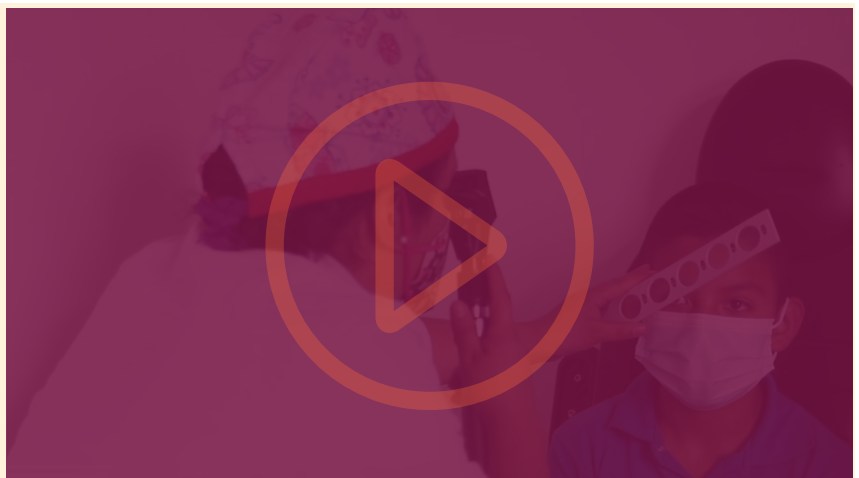
PROGRAM IMPACT AND RESULTS TO DATE:

During the first two months of operation, the center saw 243 new patients.

SAN MARCOS VISION CENTER: SERVICES MAY-JUNE 2021

NEW PATIENTS SEEN		REPEAT PATIENTS SEEN		SURGERIES COMPLETED		GLASSES PROVIDED	
FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE	MALE
140	103	24	12	3	0	29	28

A part of the promotion, Visualiza created a short video that was previously shared with you.



SAN MARCOS VISION CENTER ONE YEAR REPORT

STAFF STORY

MEET ANDREA, she currently works at the San Marcos vision center as an optical dispenser. In her words, here is the journey that led to Andrea's return to San Marcos, her hometown. Her story highlights the critical role vision centers play for community members. "I needed an eye exam because my vision started to decrease. A friend told me about the Visualiza clinic in Guatemala City, so I went for an evaluation in the social area (where free-low-cost services are offered for those in need) and while I was in the waiting room, the patient testimonials posted on the walls caught my attention. Since I worked as a social worker, I identified immediately with Visualiza's mission and decided to look for an opportunity to work with Visualiza.



After my eye exam, I visited the human resource department and followed up by sharing my resume. Three weeks later I received a call to interview for an opening at the Visualiza Vision Center in San Marcos!"

Andrea could not believe it. She was originally from San Marcos but had left when she was younger to seek out better job opportunities in Guatemala City. Now she had the chance to return home.

"Returning to my town is the best, as my work can impact the life of the community. I love that Visualiza is expanding its services to different parts of the country, especially in San Marcos.

Access to visual health was very poor before Visualiza opened in San Marcos. Since I was a child, I have always needed to wear glasses. It was very difficult to access eye care, that is why we always had to travel to Guatemala City or Quetzaltenango.

Over time, services became more accessible but were only provided by opticians and through referrals outside the department. Now some ophthalmologists visit once a week, but they do not provide surgery services, and the follow-up is not immediate.

With Visualiza Vision Center in San Marcos, we can provide treatment and follow-up to patients in optimal time. This has been positive. Patients who have a greater need of care or surgical evaluations can even go to see an ophthalmologist at the Quetzaltenango Visualiza Surgical Center, and we offer free transportation.

We have a visual health network that offers comprehensive services through telemedicine, a permanent alternative service, that also benefits the population.

I love that we offer eye care services in my hometown of San Marcos because now, people no longer need to travel all the way to the city".

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PATIENT STORY

MEET MICHAEL, a 10-year-old, who met a community health promoter working for Visualiza while he was selling food with his mother. This story highlights how access to the new San Marcos Vision Center location provided Michael with a life-changing eye screening that gave him a brand new future.



The community health promoter noticed he had an issue with his eye and encouraged Michael and his mom to visit the vision center at San Marcos, which had recently opened.

Michael visited the vision center shortly afterward. He had been diagnosed with strabismus when he was a young boy. Given the complication, the eye team referred Michael to the Visualiza center in Quetzaltenango. Going to the Quetzaltenango hospital represented a barrier for the family because they did not have money to make the trip. Visualiza offered them transportation along with other patients going to the hospital for other surgeries.

In Quetzaltenango, the doctor developed a care plan for Michael that included glasses and follow-up surgery. When the counselor presented the treatment plan and mentioned his need for glasses, his parents said that they would try to save money to buy them. They could not afford them at that time.

Fortunately, because of supporters like the Shah family, Visualiza provided the funds to cover the costs of treatment and the glasses were provided free of charge.

If Visualiza had not opened the vision center in San Marcos or set up a way to promote the vision center through door-to-door screenings in surrounding communities, Michael would not have learned about the vision center or received the treatment for his visual impairment.

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PRIORITIES LOOKING AHEAD

In the coming six months, we will:

- Continue advertising and promoting the vision center.
- Coordinate with teachers at local schools to provide screenings for children. With the recent outbreak of the Delta variant, students will be brought to the vision center for screening in smaller, safer groups.