



FOCUSING ON THE IXCÁN

EYE CARE AND EYE HEALTH EDUCATION FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE IXCÁN REGION OF GUATEMALA

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WHO ARE YOU HELPING?

by Scott Pike

Your donations help in many ways. The way we most relate to is allowing someone to see better, like getting much needed glasses or a sight restoring cataract surgery. A good example of that happened with Manuel Castro, a farmer from Ixcán, Guatemala.

Manuel's farm is a 25 minute walk through the forest from his home. Much of the walk is on a jungle path, worn from travel and rutted from erosion during the rainy season, when mud takes over. He started noticing that he was falling frequently on the uneven path. He wasn't seeing well, especially in the early morning and late evening hours when there was little sunlight.

Finally, Manuel visited our eye health promoter, Felipe, and learned that cataracts were obscuring his vision. He signed up for a trip to the eye clinic where Enfoque Ixcán takes people for eye surgeries. His right eye was operated on in November of 2018.

Manuel is only 56 years old and physically strong. He has 10 children, a lot of mouths to feed, although several of his children are grown and raising their own families. Just the same, his work on his farm is critical to supply corn, beans and rice for the family table. Farming is all Manuel knows how to do. His education didn't go past the 3rd grade, so he cannot read or write.

Following the surgery, he said, "It was like I was younger again. Walking to my farm was easy. I had to stop working altogether the last couple of months before the surgery, now I don't fall."

When I was in Manuel's village last February, he had another eye problem our eye health promoters learned from. He had developed an infection in his left eye. He had been given an antibiotic ointment for treatment. He came to see me about a week later. His left eye was very red, watery and he had a lot of pain in the eye. His eye pressure was at least double what it should normally be. Had he developed glaucoma?

We were sorry Manuel had to go through this episode of pain, but our eye health promoters had a valuable learning experience about treatment of infections and how each person must be monitored and re-evaluated. Keeping good records and looking back at a patient's history is important in evaluating and improving the treatment progress.

Manuel is planning to have his left cataract removed this August. He's excited to know he'll have good vision in both eyes. I'm sure you can relate to that desire. Your donation will allow that to happen.

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Manuel, a happy man

Enfoque Ixcán

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SABASTIAN



I'm sorry to begin this story with such distressing photos, but this was reality for Sebastian for 2 years. He received a blow to his left eye. He said, "It made a white spot on my eye, which gradually got bigger and I went blind in that eye." Blind and horribly disfigured.



Badly scarred cornea

Sebastian lives in the small village of Nuevo Sinai, located in southwestern Ixcán, about 2 hours from the nearest medical doctor and 6 hours from the nearest eye doctor. He is a 45 year old farmer. He and his wife have 6 children, 3 boys and 3 girls. His family depends on his success growing corn, beans, rice and cardamom, some for their personal consumption and some to sell or trade at the market.

When I first saw Sebastian I was deeply saddened. If he had access to eye care immediately it may have saved his eye. Going blind is heartbreaking, but living with the disfigured result of this injury would change one's entire demeanor and how one relates to his family and community. Why did it take 2 years to be noticed by someone who could make a difference in his health care?

The answer is that Ixcán, Guatemala, is remote and underserved in health care. Sebastian didn't have time to search out a doctor. He had a family to provide for. He didn't know what a doctor could do for him. He didn't know how his injury would resolve until it was too late. And then, he figured he would just have to live with what was dealt him.

Our eye health promoters, Felipe and Carlos, found Sebastian last winter and told him how Enfoque Ixcán could help. We couldn't restore the sight in his left eye, but we could make him more comfortable, physically and emotionally. This past spring we took Sebastian to Guatemala City for eye surgery. He had his eye surgically removed and he was fitted with a prosthetic eye.

He commented, "I'm very happy with the result. Now, I don't have to hide my eye to keep from scaring people." He is still getting used to his new eye and it may take a couple of adjustments before the doctors arrive at the best fit, but Sebastian can now enjoy improved quality in his social life. His dignity is restored.



Handsome Sebastian with his prosthetic eye.

This is the work of Enfoque Ixcán. Your support helps make stories like Sebastian's have a happy ending. Through eyeglasses, cataract surgeries, glaucoma treatment, eye health education and many other eye care therapies, your donations improve life for a people without other access to eye care.



Sebastian and son; feeling better with dignity

Sebastian thanks you!

Who are you helping? ... Cont'd from page 1

Your donations also further the learning, skills and experiences of our eye health promoters. This adds to their value in treating patients.

Donations not only solve current and pressing problems, but they help create a system of eye care that grows, develops and becomes self-sustaining, insuring better care in the future.

MAKING IT MONTHLY

Each year supporters of charitable organizations are bombarded with requests for funding. Did you know that most of these organizations receive the majority of their funding during the last few weeks of the year? This is true for Enfoque Ixcán as well. We're always on pins and needles, at the end of the year, waiting to see if our annual revenue goal will be met.

Once the giving has ceased for any given year, then the budgeting work begins for "EI", to determine how much funding can be allocated for eyeglasses, surgeries, equipment, local eye health care employee salaries, and supplies for each month of the year. It's a challenge, since it's nearly impossible to predict and plan for that emergency situation that pops up unexpectedly requiring more funds than allocated in any given month. It's critically important to assure "EI" has the financial resources to continue with our mission for another year.

Making it Monthly (sustained) giving, relieves some of the planning stress as it allows "EI" to have a steady, reliable revenue stream.

Making a Monthly sustained gift benefits you, the donor. It allows you to set up a monthly, automatic withdrawal making it easier on your budget than a large one-time gift at the end of the year. This way you can set it up and "forget" it, knowing you are supporting your favorite charity all year long. Additionally, it can mean a "greener" way to support "EI" since you don't need to remember to write checks along with securing stamps and envelopes. It can even present a win-win for both you and "EI". For example, if you currently give a yearly one-time gift of \$50; simply making an automatic monthly gift of \$5, increases your giving for the year by 20%. It makes it easy for you to be more generous and of course benefits "EI" as well.



The beauty of charitable giving is that you give and receive at the same time. Only with long-term, committed supporters like you, can Enfoque Ixcán charity be successful!

So, please consider a *Making it Monthly*, sustaining gift to help assure the "EI" mission can continue well into the future. Simply go to the our website, click on "*I'll Help*", then follow the "*Monthly*" donation instructions.

Additional ways to give:

Don't need gifts on your **birthday or anniversary** or other gift receiving occasions? Consider requesting a donation to "EI" in your honor. It's easy, here's the link where you can independently create a Facebook Fundraiser: <https://www.facebook.com/fund/Enfoqueixcan/> Simply follow the easy directions and you're all set to fundraise for "EI".



When you plan a gift, by designating "EI" in your **will/estate plans**, you create a lasting legacy.



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Additional ways to give ... Cont'd from page 3

Many employers offer **matching gifts** that may double or even triple the employees' charitable giving. Check with your employer to determine if you can increase your gift through a matching gift program.

Love shopping on-line? You can support "EI" through your everyday shopping by designating "EI" as your charity of choice on AmazonSmile. **AmazonSmile donates 0.5%** of  the price of your eligible **smile.amazon.com** purchases to "EI" the charity of your choice.



Remember, "EI" has earned the **GuideStar platinum** seal of transparency; its highest level. At their site you can review a wide variety of metrics demonstrating progress and results. To review the "EI" metrics at GuideStar, simply go to: <https://www.guidestar.org/search> and enter Enfoque Ixcán.

Your unrestricted gift provides resources to areas of greatest need: training and salaries for the eye health promoters, educational materials for the general public, exam equipment, surgeries, glasses and office space rent. Or you may choose to donate a restricted gift that is noted for a specific purpose. Whatever way(s) you choose to donate to Enfoque Ixcán, the organization and those it serves are eternally grateful for your support!

Muchas Gracias!