

# FOUNDER'S VISION



**Gullapalli N Rao**

*Founder-Chair, L V Prasad Eye Institute*

## GENESIS

Reconciling Excellence with Equity was the underlying thought as plans to return to India and do something back home began to unfold, triggered by the inequity in our society and its extreme manifestation in health care. There was no big idea, just a small dream – to build an academic centre of the highest standards inspired by the American institutions I had come to admire, and to not deny care to anyone who sought it, by providing at least half of our services free of cost.

Providing 50 percent services free was just an aspiration without any understanding of economics, based only on the general impression that at least half the people in our country go to bed hungry every day. I later found these percentages were valid based on the data published by McKinsey Global Institute and more recently in “The Economist”.

My inspiration came from various sources, starting with parental care and discipline. Growing up in a small rural village with few amenities, the transition to a large city, and then moving to the United States for medical training, was transformational. The rural experience was invaluable in inculcating empathy in me for the needs of the Indian population, while the US exposure honed my ability to respond to those needs. This background, recognizing the burden of the problem, coupled with the education and exposure, helped crystallize the vision for the Institution.

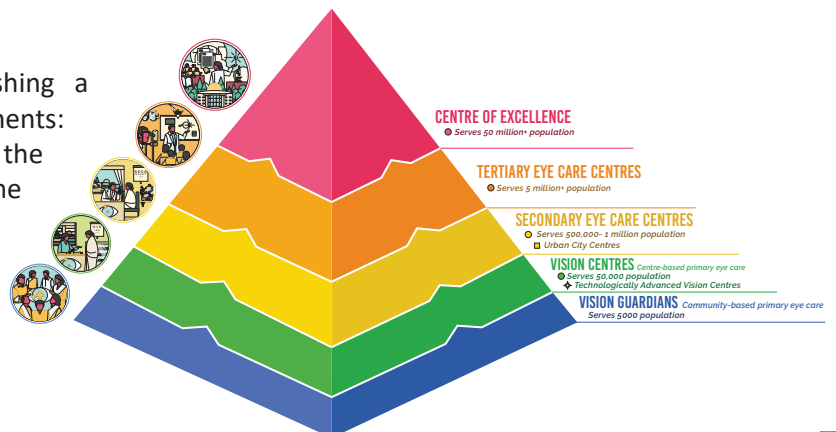
## VISION & MISSION

Our vision statement is: *“To create excellent and equitable eye care systems that reach all those in need.”*

Our mission statement is: *“The mission of L V Prasad Eye Institute is to be a centre of excellence in eye care services, basic and clinical research into eye diseases and vision-threatening conditions, training, product development, and rehabilitation for those with incurable visual disability, with a focus on extending equitable and efficient eye care to underserved populations in the developing world.”*

## STRUCTURE & FUNCTION

My initial vision was limited to establishing a centre in Hyderabad with three components: patient care, education, and research; and the additional component of rehabilitation. The scope broadened in subsequent years, when we saw the need and shifted our focus to rural areas. The structure evolved over the years into the **LVPEI Pyramid of Eye Health**, with ten functional arms that cover all aspects of eye care services.



Today, structurally we are the LVPEI Pyramid of Eye Health - from community based primary care at the bottom level served by Vision Guardians, going upwards through Primary Vision Centres, Secondary Service Centres, Tertiary Centres, all the way to advanced care at the apex, the Centre of Excellence in Hyderabad. From simple screening to management of complex eye problems, we offer care that is appropriate to each level, available to all people, affordable, and most importantly accessible to everyone, without compromise on quality.



Functionally, the ten segments are **Clinical care, Education, Research, Rehabilitation, Public Health, Eye Banking, Product development, Innovation, Capacity Building, Policy and Planning**. Each of these arms functions at a high level of productivity and efficiency, while also remaining closely linked through the shared institutional values.

## CULTURE

From day one, we have been innovative, pursuing the “Road Not Taken”, as we created systems with a patient-centric approach. We built a culture of discipline characterized by punctuality; high standards of cleanliness and hygiene; and respect for the dignity of every individual, be it a patient, trainee, visitor or employee.

The foundational values, therefore, aim to reconcile excellence with equity. Whatever we do shall be of the highest possible quality; and whatever care we provide shall be made available to everybody. To facilitate the achievement of our goals, we have always striven to provide a positive work environment that is fair, safe and free of any form of harassment or discrimination.

We have always worked to uphold the **Vision and Mission** of the Institute, demonstrating the 5 Values (**Patient First, Excellence, Equity, Integrity, and Togetherness**) in all our functions and behaviours. (The five Values are detailed on the Website and public messages). We should continue to pursue these values and reflect on them each day, and be an inspiration to others.



We have nurtured an environment that has the following elements in place; and, to continue demonstrating these, we should –

- Uncompromisingly uphold and promote a culture of **discipline built on egalitarianism and a caring work environment**
- Encourage innovative approaches that support the 5 aspects of our work: **Comprehensive Care; Commitment to Quality; Closer to the doorstep of those who need care; Continuity of Care; and Compassion**
- Foster the growth of the **Individual** as well as the **Institute**
- Ensure **ongoing sustainability**, by increasing income with credibility and quality services, and disciplined expenditure control

## IMPACT

LVPEI is now a centre of international repute. We wouldn't have been where we are today if we had pursued the traditional path that existed in India in 1986. In our journey of three decades, we have served close to 37 million people, with more than 50 percent services provided free of cost regardless of complexity, reached close to a 13 thousand villages, trained more than 62 thousand eye care professionals, and published over 4500 papers. We are one of the biggest corneal transplantation centres in the world. We are now a WHO Collaborating Centre for Prevention of Blindness, proactive in policy, planning, training and capacity building activities, nationally and internationally. This has been possible because of the efforts of every individual in the LVPEI team and a strong network of support from around the world.

## LEADERSHIP

The overall head of the Institute will be an Ophthalmologist. Leadership and management should be fair, fully committed and based on common sense. The leader should take care of the team in its entirety. I believe in a leadership style that is mostly intuitive, while also drawing on a solid knowledge base and a sense of pragmatism and compassion.

## FUTURE

To describe the future in one phrase, LVPEI will be ***"A CARING Institution with relevance and impact."***

I believe that the foundation that we have built over the past 36 years is quite strong, and it can withstand a very large superstructure. We should take care to never allow that foundation to crack.

At the conclusion of our first 25 years, we came up with a program called "Next 25", under which we have identified two major strategic pillars:

- The first is what we call the Institutes of Excellence
- The second focuses on Primary Eye Care

The Institutes of Excellence are those that will become global resource centres for a particular area of eye care, incorporating all of LVPEI's structural, functional and cultural aspects into each of those niche areas.

The second pillar is focused on the three states in which we are predominantly present – Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha. We aim to develop a robust high-quality primary care model for a 150 million population. We can further segment it into a model for 100,000, one million, etc, as these segments are available within our pyramidal structure. We then support others to replicate it in their states, by providing the model, the systems, and training the human resources.

All this can be credibly achieved if we continue with the good practices pursued over the years:

- Quality has been a strong pillar of our Institute; that should remain our focus and never be compromised
- We should continue to foster collaborations with other organizations locally, nationally, and internationally; collaborations that will bring strength to overcome our weaknesses
- One of our major objectives is that 95+ percent of the patients that come to us should leave happy with the care received; if each member of our staff focuses on that goal every single day, we will continue to be a credible organization

To accomplish all this, we have to be more agile, continue to safeguard and further hone our expertise, and hold ourselves more accountable to ***every action*** we undertake, as individuals and as groups. We must work on our weaknesses to make our standards robust, make the practice of our values more robust, and build more robust human resources. We need to harness technology in appropriate and cost-effective ways to serve our mission and vision.

Whatever we do, it has to be more impactful than what is already there; more innovative, and more equitable, and through all these, make an impact, directly through our own service mechanisms and indirectly through our trainees, alumni, and partners around the world.

The benefits of all that we do should reach the most vulnerable populations of the world; we should remain focused on that. Every village in a remote rural location anywhere in the world should have access to the best possible comprehensive eye care for everybody – that should be our final goal!

The future model of eye care for our Institute should be one that is a combination of what we might call the three Ts – Talent, Technology, and Tenderness. I strongly believe that any medical institution that can optimally combine Talent with Technology, and add the element of Tenderness, will remain a winner in future and continue to be known as a **CARING INSTITUTION**.

That is the future, as I see it, for LVPE!

