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Aravind Eye Care System

*Profitability of a vision centre is an important indicator for sustainability,
but it's not the only measure of success*

— AECS Chairman Emeritus Dr Namperumalsamy

Aravind Eye Care System (AECS), a network of hospitals in India, was founded by Dr G Venkataswamy (“Dr V”) in 1976 with the mission “to eradicate needless blindness by providing appropriate, compassionate and high-quality eye care for all.” In the midst of all the excitement, Mohammed Gowth, who was responsible for managing Aravind’s vision centre (VC) network, could not help but think of the day when the centre was inaugurated in Ambasamudram in the state of Tamil Nadu¹ in 2004. Dr V and Chairman Emeritus Dr Namperumalsamy (“Dr Nam”) had articulated their vision for these primary eye care centres thus:

We want to create the best eye care zone by providing on-demand access to eye care to each and every person. We also want to move away from curative to preventive eye care services. Vision centres are going to help us achieve this vision and eliminate needless blindness.

Until 2004, Aravind’s primary method of outreach had been to conduct “eye camps” in remote rural locations. It had served them well for many years, but it had become clear that this approach had to change. Ten years later, Dr Nam reflected on this approach:

The concept of an outreach eye camp was an innovation that we introduced many years ago. Through these camps, we treated patients in remote villages and referred them to our hospitals. Despite all this, the camps served only one main purpose. They were a pipeline for surgeries at our base hospitals², but this was not a permanent solution – camps were held at Aravind’s convenience and not at patients’ convenience as they happened only once in six to 12 months at any location. A research study we were involved in showed that only

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