

‘Lusophone nations can benefit from low-cost Indian healthcare’

Published on: January 15, 2014 - 00:02

PANAJI: Companies doing social business are capable of doing well and earning profits, said Ravilla Thulasiraj, executive director, Aravind Eye Care System, an eye hospital chain based in Tamil Nadu.

The hospital chain which revolutionised eye care in India by providing affordable surgeries for the poor is enthusiastic to replicate success in Lusophone countries, said Thulasiraj, adding that the south-based chain was especially interested in Angola for a potential ophthalmic hospital.

Speaking to a captivated audience at the Lusophone Congress, Thulasiraj said that Aravind Hospitals conducts 1,500 surgeries a day with patients paying only a fraction for a cataract operation than what they would have paid in the US. However, despite keeping pricing at low levels, the company is able to make a profit.

The ability to provide service at reasonable rates, he said, is through focus on the demand side and giving access to eye care to the vast populace of India who live with limited means. The hospital, he said, has a section that takes on poor patients for free and at the same time also charges market rates for those who can pay.

With a major chunk of cataract surgeries on account of the cost of lens, the hospital chain has gone in for backward integration by manufacturing lens, a move which enabled them to cut down the cost of operations significantly and make it affordable to the poor.

It would be beneficial for Lusophone economies, many of which have a large section of deprived population to adopt the concept of low cost hospitals, said Thulasiraj. He pointed out that low cost did not mean a compromise on quality.