

# Combat Blindness International Winter 2018 Newsletter



Combat Blindness  
INTERNATIONAL



## A Message from Our Founder, Suresh Chandra, MD

Dear Family and Friends,

Greetings! 2018 was a year of strong progress and growth for CBI thanks to your generosity and support.

This year, we have restored sight to 15,000 people blinded from cataracts, screened 90,000 children in India, Gambia, Paraguay and right here in Madison, Wisconsin, and distributed more than 14,000 pairs of glasses to adults and children. Finally, we opened our second surgical center in Keonjhar, Odisha, India, which provides vital eye care to 1-2 million rural poor.

In the last 34 years, we have supported the screening of over 1.9 million people around the world, supported over 345,000 free cataract surgeries and screened more than 600,000 children for glasses and other eye conditions. In addition, CBI has trained over 300 young women to be ophthalmic technicians and assistants in India.

This year, the theme for World Sight Day was Eye Care Everywhere. This theme really resonates with me, because throughout the years, it has been incredibly important to me that CBI's work creates lasting change through equity and sustainability – that we provide eye care everywhere, to everyone.

I am grateful to you all for supporting CBI, helping us build awareness of this important work and volunteering both here in Madison and around the world. I never imagined that we would make this kind of impact. This holiday season, I ask that you continue to support CBI. Together, as global citizens, we can change the lives of our neighbors around the world.

I wish you all peace, happiness and good health in the new year.

Thank you for your kind support,

*Combat Blindness International is dedicated to eliminating preventable blindness worldwide by providing sustainable, equitable solutions for sight through partnership and innovation.*

Earlier this year, we had the opportunity to travel with Combat Blindness International to India. Dr. Suresh Chandra and the extensive CBI network provided us with an incredible understanding of what the organization has accomplished through its efforts to eliminate preventable blindness. Each portion of the trip deepened our appreciation for the CBI mission and left us with great admiration for a truly wonderful country.



*Olivia Scott and her aunt, Kristine Porter, visiting with COPS students*

Upon arrival in Delhi, Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH) welcomed us into their facility and walked us through the very impressive achievements made possible by its partnership with CBI.

We were especially struck by the Certified Ophthalmic Personnel (COP) Program. This program trains young women from India's most underserved communities to be ophthalmic technical assistants. After completing the training at SCEH, the COPs students return to their communities to participate in the screening, treatment and follow-up care of patients. The program was initiated as an effort to serve more patients by increasing the support needed by physicians to effectively care for their patients during each stage of treatment. While speaking to the students, it was evident that in addition to making the hospital more efficient, the program was also empowering each of the young women to lead a life that would otherwise not be accessible. The students

described coming from backgrounds where they had very little opportunity for formal education or means of economic independence. Each young woman spoke about her role in the program with commendable pride and enthusiasm. Each expressed a genuine dedication to becoming the best care provider possible, as well as a role model for other women in their community. It was overwhelmingly clear that the program would have lasting effects on both the quality and sustainability of eye care, while also strengthening the next generation of Indian women. The willingness of the hospital and CBI to champion this program exemplified the value of integrating creative approaches to the traditional system of care.

Next, we traveled to a screening camp near Vrindavan, between Delhi and Agra. The screening camp was set up in a local one-room schoolhouse and made possible by the partnership between key community members, SCEH and CBI. COPs graduates screened each patient upon arrival. After screening, the doctors further evaluated patients and offered treatment options. Some patients were able to

*Each COPS student expressed a genuine dedication to becoming the best care provider possible, as well as a role model for other women in their community.*

*- Olivia and Zoe Scott*

travel and undergo surgery at the Delhi clinic the very same day. Patients that did not require surgery were fitted and provided with glasses. Dr. Chandra explained some of the most common problems screening centers catch and demonstrated how these were identified and then corrected. What struck us most was the patients' gratefulness to Dr. Chandra and the other onsite providers. Patients expressed that they wanted and needed help with their eye health, but had few means of gaining access to it prior to visiting the screening camp. It was very uplifting to see the level of trust CBI's efforts have been able to establish with each and every patient served.



We would like to thank everyone at CBI for allowing us to take part in the critical work they do and to experience the impact they are having on millions of lives throughout India. This trip clearly illustrated not only the importance of CBI’s mission of compassion, but its ability to execute that mission with such graceful efficiency. After seeing what this incredible organization does day in and day out, we have full confidence that the organization will only continue to serve higher numbers of people in need through its thoughtful partnerships and dedication to sustainable programs.

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Olivia and Zoe Scott learning about cataract patient screening in Vrindhavan, India

## World Sight Day Gala a Roaring Success!

Combat Blindness International celebrated World Sight Day with a gala for over 160 people at the Madison Concourse Hotel and Governor’s Club in Madison, Wisconsin on October 10, 2018. World Sight Day (WSD) is an annual day of awareness, held on the second Thursday of October, to focus global attention on blindness and vision impairment.

This year, CBI created a crowdfunding campaign via social media in an effort to increase awareness of our organization’s impact and introduce CBI to a new audience. With the generosity of a matching donor, CBI raised over \$80,000 to provide sight-saving eye screenings and treatment to men, women and children around the world!

The event was highlighted with an inspiring presentation by Jonathan Patz, MD. Dr. Patz shared how addressing the root cause of climate change – burning fossil fuels – actually presents widespread and substantial health benefits to societies across the globe.

Dr. Patz is the Director of the Global Health Institute at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He shares the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore for his work as a lead author for the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

We are grateful to all who joined us this year and for your continued support!



Dr. Jonathan Patz, 2018 WSD Keynote Speaker and Dr. Suresh Chandra, CBI Founder

For \$25, you can change a person’s whole world, visit [www.combatblindness.org/donate](http://www.combatblindness.org/donate) today!



*UW physician examining Right to Sight clinic patient*

The 2018 Right to Sight World Sight Day Clinic was held on October 6, 2018 at the UW Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences' University Station Clinic. This partnership, lead by Dr. Anna Momont and Combat Blindness International, provided nearly 60 underinsured patients with free eye care. Many thanks to all the UW DOVS faculty and staff that volunteered their time to serve the people of Madison.

## 34 years of Service, CBI by the Numbers

345,000 surgeries through our  
International Cataract Program

Over 600,000 children screened for  
glasses and other eye conditions in  
our International Pediatric Program

Over 300 young women empowered  
through professional growth and  
economic freedom in our COPs  
program



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