



Combat Blindness
INTERNATIONAL

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

Restoring sight. Empowering people.





Dear Friends,

What a year 2020 has been. For the children, parents and grandparents who we serve in low-income countries, the COVID pandemic has created unimaginable challenges.

On our trip to India in February 2020, we had the unique opportunity to visit several of our projects in Meghraj, Mysore and Delhi, as well as Aurolab in Madurai. We were so impressed with the progress and hard work of our partners to ensure their patients were getting much-needed eye care. Never did we think within a few short weeks of our return, the world would be on lockdown.

As you can imagine, COVID-19 has severely hindered our partners' ability to see patients in clinics and eye camps, and screen children in their school screening programs, but it also affected the Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic Program significantly. All of our partners drastically changed their protocols to ensure the safety of the physicians, staff and patients, doing their best to adapt to this new reality.

Despite these challenges, our commitment to reducing preventable blindness worldwide is stronger than ever. As we all recover from the pandemic, Combat Blindness International continues to explore how we can serve as many men, women and children as possible around the world, including new projects in Kenya and Paraguay in 2021. Our resilience and that of our partners has been strengthened by your continued support and belief in our work.

We are forever grateful to all who generously contributed to CBI's sight-restoring work during the pandemic. From longstanding donors to recent supporters, your compassion has transformed so many lives, especially at such a critical time.

With gratitude,

Suresh Chandra, MD
Founder & Chief Visionary Officer

Reena Chandra Rajpal, MPH
President (ex officio) & Executive Director

EDITOR'S NOTE: Photos taken prior to the March 2020 World Health Organization pandemic declaration are indicated by a



Our Global Impact, 1984-2020

17
Countries Where
We Have Restored Vision

OVER 2.66 MILLION
Vision Screenings

1,952,719
Adults Screened

711,647
Children Screened

MORE THAN 372,000
Sight-Restoring Surgeries

OVER 500
Women Empowered
by Technical Training

NEARLY 400,000
Pairs of Glasses Distributed

OVER \$500,000
in Equipment and Medication
from 2005 to 2020





RESTORING SIGHT DURING THE PANDEMIC

In the face of a global pandemic, Combat Blindness International (CBI) maintained its support for free vision screenings and sight-saving cataract surgeries for those in need, just as we always have done.

However, a series of lockdowns and quarantine protocols in the countries we serve dramatically reduced the volume and pace of our International Cataract Program throughout 2020. In India, countrywide lockdowns, government restrictions on public gatherings — including eye screening

camps — and the suspension of elective surgeries had a devastating impact on our ability to support cataract treatments and eye care for the underserved.

“During the initial lockdown in early 2020, we provided in-person care strictly for emergency cases, while remotely handling most patient consultations via phone calls and videoconferencing,” said Umang Mathur, MD, executive director of Dr. Shroff’s Charity Eye Hospital in Delhi, India. “But in the post-lockdown period, we resumed in-person patient care with rigorous protocols, from screening patients and staff for COVID symptoms, to modifying equipment and patient areas to ensure the safety of patients and staff.”

Dr. Shroff’s Charity Eye Hospital also directly contributed to India’s fight against COVID itself: its surgical center in the city of Saharanpur was converted into a quarantine facility, providing critical care to COVID victims.

In partnership with the UW–Madison Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences (DOVS), CBI supported free eye care to underinsured patients during the pandemic at the DOVS Right to Sight Clinic. “We examined almost the same number of patients we typically see,” explained





Anna Momont, MD. “Even with COVID restrictions, we still managed to provide care to at-risk populations with CBI’s committed support.”

The pandemic also dramatically affected our International Pediatric Program. The closure of primary schools, where our partners typically conduct childhood vision screenings, significantly reduced our partners’ ability to screen large numbers of children.

“For eight months, we were unable to conduct children’s vision screenings, and elective surgeries were around 15 to 20% of the usual numbers,” said K.V. Ravishankar, MD, managing director of Usha Kiran Eye Hospital in Mysore, India.

Alternative options for large-scale pediatric screenings also were extremely limited, due to strict bans on public gatherings. This had an unfortunate cascade effect: fewer vision screenings led to significantly less referrals for free eyeglasses and pediatric eye surgeries.

Despite these obstacles, our International Pediatric Program still continued to transform young children’s lives, albeit on a smaller scale, delivering crucial eye screenings, exams, corrective glasses, and surgeries.



Vision Loss: A Global Health Crisis

1.1 BILLION
People with Vision Loss in 2020

1.7 BILLION
People with Vision Loss by 2050

90%
of Blind People Live in Low-
and Middle-Income Countries

STATS SOURCE:
IAPB Vision Atlas, 2021.
iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas



International Cataract Program Impact in 2020

5,026
Adult Cataract
Surgeries Performed

78,934
Adult Patients Screened



\$25 = Life-Changing Vision

CBI offers one of the lowest-costing solutions in sight for those with cataracts — just \$25 per surgery. The return on investment is nothing short of miraculous, increasing patients' economic productivity by up to 1,500% of the cost of their surgery within the first postoperative year.¹

¹ "Blindness and Poverty in India: The Way Forward," *Clinical & Experimental Optometry: Journal of the Australian Optometrical Association*, 90, pp. 406-14; 2007.

OUR INTERNATIONAL CATARACT PROGRAM



Eliminating Cataracts for 36 Years

Cataracts are the largest cause of vision loss, affecting 100 million men, women and children worldwide. While cataract surgery typically is easy and inexpensive, it often is too costly and not as accessible in low- to middle-income countries where 90% of the world's blind people live.²

Since 1984, Combat Blindness International has supported free cataract screenings and surgeries as one of the most direct, cost-effective ways to restore sight to those suffering from this leading cause of blindness.

By reducing the cost of cataract surgeries to as little as \$25 each, we have exponentially increased our sight-restoring impact through the years.

Over the past 36 years, our International Cataract Program has supported over 1.9 million adult vision screenings and more than 372,000 surgeries.

² IAPB *Vision Atlas*, 2021.
iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas





Serving the Underserved: Shri Jalaram

Before India's first lockdown in March 2020, Shri Jalaram Arogya Seva Trust Hospital in the rural town of Meghraj actually experienced a surge in cataract cases. But that abruptly stopped once the country's lockdown was declared, requiring Shri Jalaram to close its Ophthalmic Department for two months.

After restrictions were lifted in May, Shri Jalaram focused its efforts on outpatient examinations, and in June it resumed eye surgeries — but only for critical cases.

Jayapriya: Our New Partner's Impact

In the fall of 2020, CBI formed a new strategic partnership with Jayapriya Medical Foundation (JMF), the philanthropic branch of Jayapriya Eye Hospital in Hubli, India. Through its outreach, JMF provides free eye screenings, surgeries and treatment to the economically disadvantaged.



Like CBI's other partners, Jayapriya Eye Hospital scaled back its operations due to India's COVID lockdowns, which substantially reduced the volume of patients treated. Yet Jayapriya continued to deliver the same high quality of care, while protecting all patients and staff through rigorous safety measures.



Revitalizing Rashidan's Life

For years, Rashidan suffered from poor eyesight, which took quite an emotional and physical toll on her. At the age of 60, this soft-spoken woman from Delhi, India, was beginning to lose hope.

"I would stumble against things and bruise myself," Rashidan reflected. "I found it difficult to judge distances, or would bump into people."

Treatment seemed out of reach, especially during COVID. But CBI's generous donors made Rashidan's free cataract surgery possible — restoring both her vision and her hope for the future.

"With cataract surgery, it's magical how I can see things better again," she exclaimed. "I will forever be grateful."





OUR INTERNATIONAL PEDIATRIC PROGRAM

International Pediatric Program
Impact in 2020

5,792
Children Screened

19
Pediatric Surgeries
Performed

205
Pairs of Glasses
Distributed to Children



Visually impaired children
have poorer educational
outcomes and are
more likely to be
excluded from schools.¹

¹ IAPB Vision Atlas, 2021. iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas

Childhood Blindness: An Urgent Priority

We believe childhood blindness requires decisive action.

An estimated 2.1 million children and adolescents worldwide are blind and another 30.2 million have moderate to severe vision impairment.²

Visual impairment literally is a life-or-death proposition for the majority of children in low-income countries where up to 60% die within a year of becoming blind.³

Vision is crucial to children’s educational development. It is estimated that nearly 80% of learning takes place visually.⁴ Children with vision loss often fall behind in school, and in low-income countries, many drop out altogether.

Early childhood screenings are vital to reversing these trends, as they identify vision problems that often can be corrected.

For 36 years, CBI’s International Pediatric Program has supported over 711,000 vision screenings, more than 26,200 pairs of glasses, and over 2,000 surgeries for children in need.

Through our International Pediatric Program, we have removed educational and developmental barriers for thousands of children, paving the way for their future success.



Why We Must Act

2.1 MILLION
Children and Adolescents
Globally Are Blind

30.2 MILLION
Have Moderate to Severe
Vision Impairment

UP TO 60%
of Children Age 5 and Under
Die Within a Year
of Becoming Blind

A Brighter Future for Deeksha

Ever since she was a little girl growing up in Mysore, India, Deeksha suffered from strabismus, a condition in which one's eyes are not properly aligned. In Deeksha's case, both eyes were affected, which seriously impacted her ability to learn, help her family, and socialize with others. Even worse, her parents simply could not afford surgery to improve her vision.

But CBI and its supporters made it possible for Deeksha to receive transformative surgery. Today, this bright and energetic teenager can see clearly, and has an exciting future ahead of her — all because people generously helped her when she needed it most.



"Imagine what it's like for parents whose children really need eye care, but they lack the money to provide it, or they simply don't have access to it. But then Combat Blindness International is able to help, transforming their children's lives and setting them on a path to educational enrichment, personal satisfaction and empowerment. As a parent, that would mean everything to me."

Sean Lynch,
CBI Board Member

² IAPB Vision Atlas, 2021.
iapb.org/learn/vision-atlas

³ "Preventing Blindness in Children: Report of WHO/IAPB Scientific Meeting," World Health Organization, Geneva, 2000.

⁴ "Uncorrected Vision Problems, Childhood Literacy Deficits Linked," American Optometric Association News, Clinical Eye Care, March 11, 2016.
aoa.org

Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic Program Impact in 2020

125
Women Supported in
the COP Program

116
COP Program Graduates
Employed at SCEH



“What if you couldn’t see your spouse’s loving smile, your children’s proud faces, or your grandchildren’s sparkling eyes ... and then you were given that gift? That’s the miraculous impact Combat Blindness International has had on hundreds of thousands of people around the world. In the countries where CBI operates, restoring sight completely turns people’s lives around.

Specifically, I passionately support the Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic Program because it fills a tremendous need for qualified technicians, while equipping young women with valuable skills and a career path. The world needs more programs like COP that advance gender equality.”

Diane Ballweg

OUR CERTIFIED OPHTHALMIC PARAMEDIC PROGRAM



Empowering Tomorrow’s Eye Health Technicians

There is an eye health workforce shortage in low-income countries, especially in India, where one-third of the world’s visually impaired live. CBI has been addressing this critical staffing shortfall by supporting the Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic (COP) Program at Dr. Shroff’s Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH) in Delhi, India.

Since 2014, CBI has provided stipends for over 500 COP students to serve as ophthalmic nursing assistants, vision technicians, patient counselors and more.

Besides meeting the dire need for eye care staff, our support for the COP Program gives young people from economically depressed rural areas financial independence, an income to support their families, and crucial life skills for success.

We are proud to empower tomorrow’s eye health leaders by supporting the COP Program!

COP Students: Shroff's Pandemic 'Heroines'

Although the global pandemic resulted in lower COP Program enrollments, it actually led to innovative changes in the program itself.

Most importantly, COP students and graduates were pivotal to Shroff's eye care services during the pandemic.

At Shroff's central hospital in Delhi, and at its satellite hospitals and vision clinics outside the city, COP Program graduates conducted COVID screenings and rapid antigen testing, and played important roles in specially triaged patient care.

Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital also responded to restrictions on mass gatherings with a new COVID-safe door-to-door vision screening outreach program. COP technicians were key to the success of this effort. From SCEH's remote vision clinics, COP graduates screened household members in surrounding villages. Thanks to this program, the poor in rural areas continued to get the care they needed.

"They say opportunity always lies in the 'untimely distress' that life throws at us, which is painfully true," said Umang Mathur, MD, Shroff's executive director. "Our COP Program is much stronger now because of how we adapted to the pandemic."



Ilma: From Patient to COP Student

Generosity is a gift that eternally gives. Just ask Ilma, an amazing young woman from Delhi, India.

At age 6, life was difficult for Ilma. Her dad left home, leaving it to her grandmother to take care of Ilma and her mom, who was physically challenged. Living in extreme poverty, Ilma's family could not pay for cataract surgery in both of her eyes. But her world changed overnight, after CBI-supported cataract surgeries at Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital restored her vision.

That was 13 years ago.

Through the years, the Shroff team took extra steps to ensure Ilma received medications and glasses free of charge, so she could continue to thrive.

And in 2020, Ilma decided to help others who are visually challenged, by enrolling in SCEH's Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic Program. She is already excelling in the program, and is eager to "pay it forward" after she graduates.

SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

In low-income countries, the lack of facilities and equipment is one of the biggest obstacles to getting quality eye care treatment. That is why CBI has helped provide our partners with state-of-the-art equipment, and has ambitiously helped build surgical centers, as well as an eye care equipment manufacturing facility. Our infrastructural investments have paid lasting, sustainable eye health dividends — even during the pandemic.



Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra, Hazaribagh, India

In 2020, CBI established a new partnership with Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra, which focuses on health services, education, microfinancing and more for the rural poor. Our support helped provide critical screening and diagnostic equipment at the Lok Nayak Jai Prakash Eye Hospital in Gaya, India.



Bijayananda Patnaik Eye Center, Keonjhar, India

Launched in 2018 through CBI's partnership with L.V. Prasad Eye Institute and the Jack DeLoss Taylor Charitable Trust, this surgical center was required to close for two months, and public transportation shutdowns further limited patient access in 2020. Yet the Keonjhar center forged ahead, screening 13,957 adults and providing 666 eye surgeries.



Aurolab, Madurai, India

Aurolab, a revolutionary manufacturing facility CBI helped establish in 1992, has made affordable eye care accessible to millions through high-quality, low-cost lenses and products. And in 2020, Aurolab rapidly responded to the high demand for protective equipment by creating specially designed gear to keep patients and ophthalmic professionals safe during COVID.

2020 ANNUAL REPORT FINANCIALS

INCOME

Individuals	\$184,757
Gifts-in-Kind	\$88,371
Grants	\$193,964
Investments	\$62,278
Special Events	\$58,600
Total Income	\$587,970

EXPENSES

Program Services	
<i>Cataract Program</i>	\$130,202
<i>Pediatric Eye Care</i>	\$97,737
<i>Personnel Training</i>	\$104,444
<i>Infrastructure</i>	\$13,325
Program Services Subtotal	\$345,708
Fundraising	\$150,491
Management & General	\$86,335
Total Expenses	\$582,534

TOTAL NET ASSETS

\$991,882



You can change someone's future forever by giving the gift of sight.



DESPITE COVID, OUR MISSION CONTINUES

Throughout the past 36 years, our team has overcome many barriers in the fight against preventable blindness. But the global COVID pandemic created unprecedented challenges unlike any before.

“We have never experienced a situation in which our partners had to shut down their eye hospitals and clinics for months, radically limit contact with patients, and suspend large-scale vision screenings,” said Suresh Chandra, CBI’s founder and chief visionary officer.

But CBI and its partners met these and other challenges through resourcefulness, innovation and our unwavering dedication to the world’s most vulnerable people who lack the means for eye care. Looking ahead, CBI will continue to build on our adult cataract and pediatric vision initiatives in India, Kenya and Paraguay. And, our new Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic Program fellowships will elevate the skill levels and contributions of select COP Program scholars.

Your compassionate generosity makes all of this possible. We encourage you to continue supporting our work, and share our successes with friends and family, so they can join our global efforts to reduce preventable blindness.





IN MEMORIAM SUSAN AXELROD 1947-2020

The Combat Blindness International team was deeply saddened by the loss of our very dear friend, Susan Axelrod.

Kind, caring, and passionate about making a difference in this world, Susan increased CBI's impact in her role as a treasurer and board member.

"Susan was always willing to roll up her sleeves and help CBI in any way she could," said CBI Founder Suresh Chandra, MD. "Her passion and commitment to others will always inspire me."

Susan first got involved with the work of CBI as a volunteer. It was her trip to India with CBI in 2011 that motivated her to join the board in 2013. While in India, Susan traveled to a rural surgical center where she saw firsthand the many men, women and children who need quality eye care.

"Susan's commitment to the issues she believed in are what I will remember most about her," recalled CBI Executive Director Reena Chandra Rajpal. "She loved to tell people about CBI and her work to strengthen its impact. I am extremely grateful and honored to have known her."

Susan will forever be in our hearts. We will miss her friendship, wisdom, laughter and generosity of spirit.

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Combat Blindness
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Become a Monthly Sustaining Donor

When you become a monthly sustaining donor, you'll provide more men, women and children around the world with desperately needed eye care.

For details, email us at
info@combatblindness.org

Save the Date

CBI BIRTHDAY VIRTUAL EVENT

Thursday, June 24 –
Friday, June 25, 2021

CBI WORLD SIGHT DAY EVENT

Thursday, Oct. 14, 2021

For updates, visit combatblindness.org
in the future.

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