



SUMMER 2020 NEWSLETTER



MEET OUR WORLD SIGHT DAY SPEAKERS



TWO BLIND BROTHERS

Visually impaired since childhood, **Bryan and Bradford Manning** donate their company's profits to eye disease research.



LUCY EDWARDS

After losing her vision at age 17, **Lucy Edwards** has fearlessly blazed trails as a broadcaster, YouTuber and champion of disability rights.

Dear CBI family and friends,

I hope you and your loved ones are safe, healthy and adjusting to these challenging times.

As you will see in this newsletter, COVID-19 has affected our partners, but their resourcefulness has enabled them to continue helping others in need. Thanks to your steadfast commitment and generosity, CBI is able to support our partners' work, and remain true to our mission.

Meanwhile, the pandemic also has impacted our plans for World Sight Day this fall. While we would love to see you in person, we want to ensure you can safely and easily participate from the comfort of your own home. That's why we're inviting you to attend our first-ever **virtual** World Sight Day event on **Thursday, October 8, 2020!**

This easy-to-access **online** celebration will highlight our impact and our path forward. You'll also get to know **Bradford and Bryan Manning**, founders of the **Two Blind Brothers** clothing line, who have been featured on The Ellen DeGeneres Show, NBC Nightly News and more. Plus, we'll talk to **Lucy Edwards**, an engaging young BBC broadcaster, YouTube star and disability activist. And, our **online silent auction** will offer something for everyone, including international art, food, master classes and enriching experiences.

We really hope you will participate in this must-see event! Register today at combatblindness.org/wsd20.

Now, more than ever, you are making a crucial difference in the lives of others who deeply need our help. We are truly grateful for your support.

With gratitude,

Reena Chandra Rajpal, MPH
President & Executive Director

PREVENTING BLINDNESS DURING A PANDEMIC

In February 2020, just weeks before a lockdown was implemented to curb the spread of COVID-19, Reena Chandra Rajpal, president and executive director of Combat Blindness International (CBI), and Suresh Chandra, founder and chief visionary officer, traveled to India to meet with some of CBI's partners. Here is a look at how these partners have risen above and beyond to serve those in need.



Pictured with Reena Chandra Rajpal is Iqra, a 19-year-old cancer survivor enrolled in the COP Program.

DR. SHROFF'S CHARITY EYE HOSPITAL, DELHI

Early in 2020, staff members at Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH) were working hard to provide surgeries, screenings and other eye care services, while taking extra precautions due to COVID-19. Personal protective equipment, hand sanitizing stations and other measures helped safeguard patients and staff. Additionally, Certified Ophthalmology Paramedic (COP) classes continued, with students adhering to SCEH's special Coronavirus protocols.

When India's lockdown was declared on March 24, SCEH moved quickly to comply. The hospital provided in-

person care only for emergency cases, and doctors provided consultations via phone calls and videoconferencing. Additionally, SCEH's Saharanpur surgical center was among the hospitals nationwide that were converted into quarantine facilities.

Once India relaxed its lockdown order, SCEH continued adhering to new practices, including seeing patients individually at vision and surgical centers, instead of hosting eye camps attracting large groups of people. And in-person COP classes are being replaced with videoconferencing classes. Through innovation, SCEH is keeping its commitment to caring for patients from all backgrounds.

SHRI JALARAM AROGYA SEVA TRUST HOSPITAL, MEGHRAJ

Earlier this year, the staff at Shri Jalaram Arogya Seva Trust Hospital were busily treating a higher-than-usual volume of cataract cases. For many patients surviving on subsistence-level incomes, Shri Jalaram's free cataract surgeries offered their only hope for overcoming lifelong visual barriers.



The gift of sight has empowered this woman to pursue a business degree.

One of these patients had big wedding plans and a bright future, but her engagement was broken off. The reason? She was diagnosed with cataracts in both eyes, which is considered a social stigma in her village. But her story did not end there. After doctors at Shri Jalaram restored her sight, she went back to school to pursue a business degree. For her, the gift of sight opened the door to new opportunities.

Meanwhile, India's lockdown led to a reduced caseload at Shri Jalaram. Since then, staff have followed special precautions, including providing free masks and protective gear to patients.



Dr. Uma Ravishankar examines a child at Usha Kiran Eye Hospital.

USHA KIRAN EYE HOSPITAL, MYSORE

Before the pandemic, Usha Kiran Eye Hospital continued to deliver crucial eye care services, including pediatric vision screenings, surgeries and free eyeglasses. Many patients had traveled hundreds of miles to receive much-needed care at Usha Kiran.

However, after India's lockdown order went into effect, Usha Kiran Eye Hospital focused only on urgent, emergency cases. Additionally, the Usha Kiran team took advantage of technology, using a videoconferencing app for outpatient consultations.

In the time since the lockdown has been lifted, doctors at Usha Kiran have proceeded with pediatric eye checkups and surgeries, while practicing extra safety protocols. But school vision screening programs remain on hold until conditions improve.

AUROLAB, MADURAI

When India's lockdown was announced, Aurolab had to temporarily suspend production of its eye care products. However, it quickly responded to a new challenge: meeting the demand for special protective equipment designed for eye care professionals on the front lines.

Specifically, Aurolab played a key role in developing a slit lamp shield, a face shield and an indirect ophthalmoscope shield. These low-cost innovations are designed to protect both ophthalmologists and their patients during examinations.

As the lockdown gradually was lifted, Aurolab began to resume production, which eventually rebounded to pre-pandemic levels in June. To protect its employees, Aurolab's workforce was initially at 25 percent after the lockdown, and eventually ramped up to 85 percent by the end of June.



During the pandemic, Aurolab moved quickly to design and produce protective gear, like this indirect ophthalmoscope shield.

As a result of recent events, Aurolab now has proven systems in place to protect its employees and handle the impact on its production of vital eye care products.

Combat Blindness International is grateful for these and other partners' efforts to continue the fight against preventable blindness during the pandemic.

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT!

The Coronavirus pandemic has had devastating implications for eye care in the countries we serve. You can help change that by contributing at combatblindness.org/donate.

All donations will be matched up to \$50,000, thanks to one of our generous supporters. Be a hero in someone's life today!



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We'll keep you informed with
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CBI supports free vision screening for kindergartners in Madison, Wisconsin.

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