



Combat Blindness
INTERNATIONAL

SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER



CBI'S IMPACT FROM 1984-2022



18 countries where
we have restored vision

3.84+ million
Vision Screenings

2,958,133 adults screened

888,588 children screened

410,000+ sight-restoring
surgeries performed

725+ women empowered
by technical training

420,000+ pairs of
glasses distributed

\$530,000+ in equipment
and medication from
2005 to 2022

Dear CBI family and friends,

I hope you and your loved ones are healthy, happy, and enjoying your summer.

Combat Blindness International continues to make great strides in alleviating avoidable blindness around the world. While remaining true to our mission, we're exploring innovative ways to reach those without access to eyecare and to empower women. We focus on underlying issues that restrict access to equitable eye care, like the lack of trained ophthalmologists, ophthalmic technicians, and screeners.

In February, CBI staff, board members, and students from UW Whitewater Enactus travelled to India to visit our partners at Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH). We spent time with Aadya screeners and SCEH's Certified Ophthalmic Paramedics (COP) to see the impact of our collaboration. In this newsletter, Margaret Wolfgram, CBI's Operations Manager, shares her perspective on what this trip meant to her.

We are pleased to share our impact numbers ([details at left](#)), and you can learn more about CBI's work in our 2022 Annual Report at combatblindness.org.

In this issue, you will also hear from Dr. Peter and Mrs. Mary Kay McCanna, long-time donors and advocates of CBI, on why they support CBI. The McCanna's were instrumental in supporting the UW-Whitewater Enactus students' trip to India.

Finally, we are back in person! I am pleased to invite you to our annual World Sight Day event on Friday, October 6. During the event, you'll learn about our sight-restoring impact throughout the year, including a glimpse into the life of an Aadya screener. We encourage you to learn more at combatblindness.org/world-sight-day.

We are so grateful for your support, which helps to provide opportunities for so many men, women and children who need our help.

With gratitude,

Reena Chandra, MPH
President & Executive Director



Margaret Wolfgram and the CBI team together with a pair of COPS Fellows at Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital

“Seeing first-hand the barriers to accessible eye care that our partners and their patients face daily gave me a better understanding of the challenges we are working to solve.”

- Margaret Wolfgram

MARGARET'S STORY

Since joining Combat Blindness International in 2018, I have met and worked with some of the most caring, selfless, and dedicated people. Traveling to India this February was no exception.

We met with the staff of Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital, including COPS students and Aadya screeners, and, after traveling to Hubli, the staff at Jayapriya Eye Hospital. I came away from the experience a much better partner and advocate for our mission.

Seeing the barriers to accessible eye care that our partners and their patients face daily gave me a better understanding of the challenges we are working to solve. Every facility we visited was packed with people

in need of eye care. One patient we met had traveled over 180 miles to get care for their children. Every staff member seemed to have multiple roles and responsibilities, and yet seeing patients remained the priority.

Our partners treat hundreds of thousands of patients each year. Last year alone, they screened over a half million. Throughout the course of CBI's 39 years, we have touched the lives of nearly 4 million people. I have always known that the work our partners do is incredible. Seeing how they accomplish this work is awe-inspiring.

During the trip, we were able to have in-depth conversations with our partners and share our plans, vision, and dreams for the future of our programs and of preventable

blindness. We work with so many partners, supporters, donors, and allies who are passionate about this mission. I returned home with so much hope.

I am hopeful for the future of the COPS program and how it can build eye-care workforces in more hospitals and across countries.

I am also hopeful for the future of the Aadya Initiative and how these screeners can reach more people more quickly and be change-makers in their communities. I am especially hopeful that through these innovative programs and the dedication of our partners, more people than ever will have access to a simple cataract surgery or a pair of glasses.

WHY I SUPPORT CBI: PETER & MARY KAY MCCANNA

Here in the US, we often don't experience the burden of cataract blindness in the same way as other parts of the world.

As an eye surgeon, I've had the joyful experience of removing a patch from a patient's eye after cataract surgery, then watching them smile as they see the faces of their family as well as details of the world taken away from them years earlier.

We've known Dr. Chandra since my residency many years ago. At that time, he had just begun bringing modern eye surgery to clinics in India and worked to increase the availability and affordability of intraocular lenses essential to modern cataract surgery.

Every year, he brings American eye doctors and residents to India to train, to share their expertise,



Dr. Peter and Mary Kay McCanna servicing patients in Myanmar

A person who once may have been a burden is now able to be productive again. That miracle is repeated again and again in clinics and hospitals supported by Combat Blindness International (CBI).

My wife Mary Kay and I were privileged to accompany Dr. Suresh Chandra and his team on a CBI-sponsored trip to Myanmar. We witnessed the fruits of CBI's funding and planning through successful cataract surgeries for hundreds of patients in the space of a single week.

and to gain direct exposure to the work involved in tackling cataract blindness.

CBI's contributions have expanded far beyond surgical funding to their current efforts to increase the number of ancillary eye care technicians and vision screeners who can help amplify their work.

We hope you will join us in supporting Combat Blindness International. It's a great return on your investment.

UPDATES ON THE AADYA INITIATIVE

In partnership with Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH), the Aadya Initiative continues to provide access to quality, equitable eye care by bringing vision screeners and mobile technology to the doorsteps of the rural poor.

By training teams of women to conduct door-to-door screenings using a custom-built screening survey on smartphones, Aadya reaches significantly more people in less time than conventional screening efforts while promoting gender equity by equipping women with training, patient skills, and jobs with decent wages.

To date, over 400,000 people in rural Saharanpur and Vrindhavan have been screened via the program. In addition, young women in these communities are empowered with medical training, flexible employment, and income which help to put them on a path to financial freedom.



An Aadya Initiative worker screening a patient



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INTERNATIONAL

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BECOME A CBI ALLY!

- Be a monthly donor and see your impact throughout the year.
- Be a CBI Volunteer.
- Follow, like and share our posts on social media.
- Have your company match your gift and double your impact.



SAVE THE DATE!

WORLD 
SIGHT DAY

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2023

5:30-8:30 pm

Monona Terrace • 1 John Nolen Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

We are so excited to be back in-person this year. The evening will feature a look at CBI's impact, a glimpse into the life of an Aadya screener, food from around the world, a silent auction, and more!

Please visit combatblindness.org/world-sight-day to learn more.

