



**Combat Blindness**  
INTERNATIONAL



**FUND A NEED**

The Aadya Initiative has been such a success that we are now working with our partner, Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital, to replicate the program across five surgical center catchment areas in Northern India.

Through your support, we can make sure young women have the training and equipment they need to effectively screen their community, and that their community has access to quality, equitable eye care across generations.

Help us raise \$40,000 to support the expansion of the Aadya Initiative!

## WINTER 2023 NEWSLETTER

**Dear CBI family and friends,**

**As we approach the holiday season, it's a poignant time to look back on the year and appreciate the moments spent with our loved ones.**

In 2023, Combat Blindness International (CBI) continued to make significant progress in our efforts to provide quality, equitable care to so many in need. And thanks to your generous support, CBI expanded our cataract, school screening, and technician training programs.

This October, we traveled to Asunción, Paraguay to witness firsthand the impact of our pediatric school screening program in collaboration with Fundación Visión. Venturing into remote schools and communities, we witnessed the pressing needs and the commendable efforts of our partner to address them. In this newsletter, you'll read Dr. Bradfield's personal reflections on how this experience profoundly affected her.

We also celebrated World Sight Day in October and shared the powerful story of Poonam, a senior Aadya screener. Her story is an inspiring glimpse into how being an Aadya screener has impacted her, her family, and the community she serves. If you haven't already, I encourage you to watch and share *Poonam's Story* on CBI's website at [www.combatblindness.org/world-sight-day/](http://www.combatblindness.org/world-sight-day/).

As 2023 comes to a close, we invite you to once again participate in CBI's Year-End Campaign that asks, "How Far can \$25 Travel?"

The campaign highlights how little it takes to make a transformational impact on someone's life and thanks to a generous gift from our board, all donations will be matched up to \$40,000.

We continue to be humbled by your generosity and enthusiasm for the work of Combat Blindness International. Your support is vital in many ways, giving people the opportunity to provide for their families, return to school, and regain their independence – physically and financially.

CBI's mission has always been to serve as many people as possible. We hope you can join us in this mission and give generously from your heart to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those in need.

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

**With gratitude,**

**Reena Chandra, MPH**  
**President & Executive Director**

## THE FIRST PEDIATRIC VISION SCREENING PROGRAM IN PARAGUAY A CBI PARTNER REPORT FROM DR. YASMIN BRADFIELD



An elementary school teacher outside of Asunción, Paraguay, conducting an eye screening with her student.

As a newer Combat Blindness International (CBI) board member and pediatric ophthalmologist, I wanted to work on a project that would impact children. I traveled with the CBI team to Asunción, Paraguay to assess CBI's joint pediatric vision screening initiative with Fundación Visión (FV). Paraguay does not have vision screening requirements for children, so this program would be the first in the country.

The FV team has developed a program that trains schoolteachers to perform screenings. Children who failed a vision test received an eye examination by an ophthalmologist at a FV clinic or mobile eye van. This project started almost 2 years ago, so CBI wanted to check in to see if screenings were performed appropriately, if children received follow up eye examinations, to review data, and to hear from the Fundación Visión team about any obstacles they faced.

Over 14,000 screenings have been performed in urban and remote schools, and glasses have been prescribed to over 600 children. One child with retinoblastoma, a malignant retinal tumor, was diagnosed and is undergoing chemotherapy in Buenos Aires. This school screening saved his life!

We strategized ways to increase acceptance by teachers, ensure program quality, and reach children in very remote areas. We traveled to variety of schools as we observed FV's enthusiastic team (which included an ophthalmology resident) giving lectures and leading a hands-on training session for teachers at their school. We gave feedback to teachers performing the screenings, met a young girl who had strabismus surgery after failing a screening, and interacted with the mobile eye van staff. The van served as the eye clinic in rural areas, providing dilated eye examinations

and prescribing glasses to children who had failed their initial screening. It's always challenging to develop buy-in from municipalities, principals, and teachers, but the FV team has done amazing work garnering support and enthusiasm from each of these stakeholders. I was particularly impressed with the organization, dedication, and camaraderie of the entire FV screening team.

Finally, we met with a Ministry of Health ophthalmologist who is introducing legislation that requires mandatory vision screening for school children. What fortuitous timing! I am hopeful it will pass, so CBI and Fundación Visión can work together with local municipalities until every child across Paraguay is screened. I am grateful to contribute to this effort. It opened my eyes to the ways CBI collaborates with different partners, the impact CBI is having on pediatric eye care, and the real need for quality pediatric eye care in countries like Paraguay and around the world.



Yasmin Bradfield, MD, helps examine a young patient.



## WORLD SIGHT DAY

Thanks to you, we exceeded our 2023 World Sight Day goal! CBI raised over \$105,000, which includes a generous matching gift from a friend and loyal donor of CBI.



We invite you to watch *Poonam's Story* on our website at [combatblindness.org/world-sight-day](https://www.combatblindness.org/world-sight-day)

The World Sight Day Celebration included updates on CBI's impact this year, a fun silent auction, and the powerful and inspiring short film, *Poonam's Story*. Poonam's story demonstrates the ripple effect education, training, and professional growth can have on a young woman's life, and also the patients she serves.

You can view *Poonam's Story* on CBI's website at [www.combatblindness.org/world-sight-day/](https://www.combatblindness.org/world-sight-day/). A special thank you to Paul Berkbigler of Paul Berkbigler Design and Multimedia, and Deepanjali Chopra of Deepanjali Productions for their amazing work on this film.

We are deeply grateful to all who joined us and gave from your hearts.

## RIGHT TO SIGHT CLINIC



The CBI-supported World Sight Day Right to Sight Clinic, was once again held on October 7th. Spearheaded by Dr. Anna Momont of the UW–Madison Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences (DOVS), the dedicated volunteers gave free eye care to over 80 underinsured patients. Huge thanks to Dr. Momont and the DOVS team!

### 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.
- Host a Facebook fundraiser.
- Give a legacy gift.



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## STAY INFORMED!

If you aren't receiving our emails, please send your name and email address to [info@combatblindness.org](mailto:info@combatblindness.org). We'll keep you up to date with the latest news about projects, events, and more.



## How far can \$25 travel?

- A month's subscription of music streaming
- Screen 50 children for glasses so they can thrive in school

With CBI, \$25 is all it takes to create a ripple of change. Donate today!



Restoring Sight. Empowering People.