



Combat Blindness
INTERNATIONAL

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Restoring sight. Empowering people.



It is my great pleasure to present Combat Blindness International's 2023 Annual Report.

2023 has been a year of partnerships, collaboration, and innovation for CBI. While alleviating preventable blindness through cost-effective cataract surgeries and screening children in school will always be at the center of our work, in 2023, CBI continued to develop and grow programs and initiatives with a consistent emphasis on sustainability.

In 2023, CBI proudly extended its support for both the Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic Fellowship Program (COP) and the Aadya Initiative, with the goals of championing educational and career pathways for women while cultivating a sustainable workforce in underserved regions and ensuring access to quality, equitable eye care. This expansion marks a significant stride towards securing the long-term success of our initiatives, as we actively collaborate with other CBI partners in India to replicate these impactful programs, amplifying our reach.

In 2023, we forged a partnership with the Madison Metropolitan School District and began development of a new Mobile Vision Van Program. This initiative is dedicated to ensuring that our children receive the essential vision care they require, thus preventing any from slipping through the cracks.

For the woman in India receiving an eye screening for the first time, the man in Kenya regaining his sight after a free cataract surgery, the young child in Madison, Wisconsin, whose screening and glasses allow them to see the chalkboard, and the woman in India whose education and training means she can be financially independent, we are committed to providing limitless opportunities for better vision and brighter futures.

As we enter our 40th year of service, we continue to be deeply humbled by your unwavering support. Your generosity and enthusiasm fuels our mission and makes all these achievements possible. Your support has made a transformational impact on people's lives by giving the opportunity for life, work, education, family, and community.

We thank you.

With gratitude,

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

Suresh Chandra, MD
Founder & Chief Visionary Officer



Our Impact So Far 1984-2023

19

Countries Where
We Have Restored Vision

4.87+ MILLION
Vision Screenings

3,664,224
Adults Screened

1,211,422
Children Screened

430,000+
Sight-Restoring Surgeries

850+
Women Empowered
by Technical Training

426,000+
Pairs of Glasses Distributed

\$685,000+
in Equipment and Medication
from 2005 to 2023





83

Aadya Screeners
Trained & Employed

804,590

Vision Screenings

90,277

Referrals for Further Treatment

2,199

Eye Surgeries

INNOVATION IN ACTION: THE AADYA INITIATIVE

The Aadya Initiative

In 2023, CBI continued to grow the Aadya Initiative in collaboration with Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH) in New Delhi, India. Born out of the pandemic and the need to decentralize mass vision screening, the Aadya Initiative is a unique program that identifies, selects, and trains local women from rural villages in India. These women are employed and deployed back into their village to administer free eye health exams door to door within their communities. Through this program we are working to increase rural women's access to education and training, increase their financial independence, positively impact women's poverty levels, and provide role models and mentors for other young women in rural communities, all while providing free eye care to everyone.

In October of 2023, our 83 Aadya screeners in Saharanpur and Vrindavan completed over 1 million screenings since the inception of these programs in 2021.

"I am thrilled at the initiative and drive of these young women in providing so many underserved people access to a simple eye exam, glasses, and treatment if needed," says Reena Chandra, Executive Director of CBI. "They have taken ownership of the program and become advocates for their patients and community."

As the program grows, CBI will focus on supporting the training and education of these young women, and collaboratively with SCEH, we will seek additional partners to support the stipends of these young women.

Portrait of an Aadya Screener

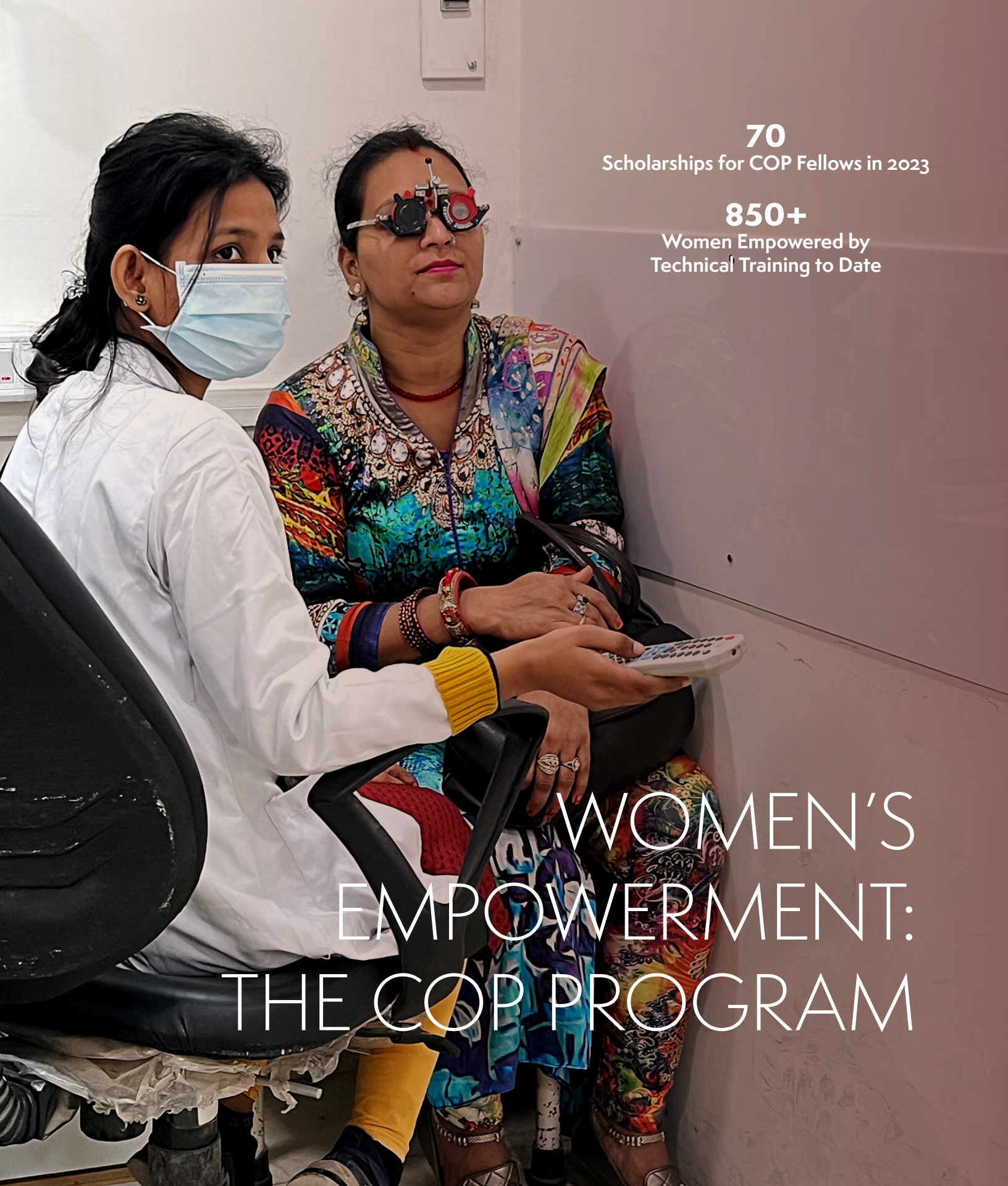


Ms. Sheetal Kumari's inspiring journey from a small village in Uttar Pradesh to becoming an integral part of Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital's efforts to combat blindness showcases remarkable determination and compassion. Despite facing limited resources and familial obligations, Sheetal prioritized her family's needs over her education, working as a blood collection personnel. However,

upon learning about the Aadya Initiative at the hospital, she seized the opportunity, undergoing rigorous training in eye care.

Since then, Sheetal has conducted screenings for over 17,000 individuals, facilitated 41 cataract surgeries, and distributed near vision glasses to over 90 individuals, significantly improving their quality of life. Additionally, she actively mentors and trains new screeners, strengthening the healthcare workforce and empowering others to join the fight against blindness.

Her new role has also elevated Sheetal's status within her family, granting her inclusion in decision-making processes. Sheetal's journey exemplifies resilience and underscores the potential for meaningful change through compassion and service, making her a pivotal figure in combating blindness.



70
Scholarships for COP Fellows in 2023

850+
Women Empowered by
Technical Training to Date

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: THE COP PROGRAM

The Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic (COP) Program

In low-income countries, the severe shortage of eye care professionals is a major obstacle to providing care to those who need it the most.

Since 2014, Combat Blindness International (CBI) has supported training young women as eye health technicians through the Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic Program (COP) at Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH) in New Delhi, India. Today, these bright, engineering women represent 80% of the entire SCEH workforce, serving in roles such as ophthalmic nursing assistants, vision technicians, medical record administrators, and patient counselors. The COPs have become indispensable pillars of SCEH, increasing the hospital's capacity to screen and treat patients while providing a more personalized experience for the patient.

In mid-2023, the Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic Program achieved sustainability as SCEH absorbed the COPs' training and stipend costs into their operating budget, a goal pursued since the program's inception in 2013. As a result, CBI is now focusing on the COP Fellowship program, a 1-2 year program allowing promising students further study and training in administration, patient counseling, clinical care, or surgical care, fostering career advancement opportunities as many fellows progress to become trainers, unit managers, and supervisors. Additionally, many continue to pursue advanced degrees such as nursing and optometry. SCEH recognized the value of this advanced training and placement of COPs Fellows throughout the SCEH network, as rural patients are increasingly accessing regional surgical centers more than the primary hospital in New Delhi.



Building a Future: Portrait of a COP Student

Tanvi's journey, beginning in 2019, as a Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic (COP) at Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH) in New Delhi, India, illustrates the profound impact of education and opportunity. Despite early hardships, including the loss of her father, Tanvi's resilience and determination propelled her to excel in the program, earning her an Appreciation Certificate. From a shy student, to a confident counselor and patient educator, Tanvi now leads a retinoblastoma project, providing essential eye care to children. Her aspirations include pursuing a Master's in Hospital Administration, aiming to become a hospital administrator and eye care manager. Tanvi's story highlights how empowering women through education can have a profound impact on their lives and the people they serve.



20,788

Adult Cataract Surgeries Performed

172,833

Adult Patients Screened

VISION FOR ALL:
THE INTERNATIONAL
CATARACTS PROGRAM

The International Cataracts Program

Combat Blindness International's International Cataracts Program is the cornerstone of our mission, driven by the urgent global need for vision restoration. With cataracts persisting as a leading cause of blindness worldwide, our commitment to addressing this challenge remains unwavering. Nearly 100 million individuals worldwide suffer from cataracts, representing 39.55% of total blindness¹. In India, the challenge is particularly acute, where 62.6 million people are visually impaired, with cataracts being the primary cause of blindness at 62.6%².

In the past year, our efforts have yielded significant results. Through extensive screening initiatives, we reached over 1,000,000 individuals, identifying those afflicted by cataracts and in need of assistance. Moreover, we're proud to

have supported over 20,788 sight-saving cataract surgeries in 2023, offering renewed vision and hope to those who previously lived in darkness.

Combat Blindness International's International Cataracts Program remains steadfast in its commitment to combating blindness, one surgery, one screening, and one transformed life at a time. Through our resolute commitment and collaborative partnerships, we continue to make strides toward a world where preventable blindness is a thing of the past.

¹ Zhang, X., Zhang, R., & Wang, Y. et al. (2024). *Prevalence and causes of vision impairment and blindness in China, 1990–2020: findings from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2020*. *Nature Eye*, 8(1), 1-9.

² *National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment (NPCBVI) - Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India*. (2021).



Restoring Hope in Nairobi

Hannah Wangare, a weaver from Naivasha, Nakuru County, Kenya, relied on her craft as both her passion and primary source of income. However, her livelihood began to unravel as she started losing customers due to declining quality in her baskets and delays in meeting sales targets. It wasn't until she visited the Lions SightFirst Eye Hospital Camp she discovered her vision was the culprit, with a mature cataract in her left eye and an early one in her right. Following successful surgeries on both eyes, Hannah expressed her gratitude and optimism, eager to return to her work with restored vision and renewed confidence in her ability to thrive.

A woman in a grey long-sleeved shirt is examining a young girl's face. The girl is wearing a denim jacket and glasses. In the background, a woman in a green shirt and a man in a white shirt are looking on. There are boxes of glasses on a table in the foreground.

51,221
Children Screened

89
Pediatric Surgeries Performed

2,245
Pairs of Glasses
Distributed to Children

VISION FOR
THE FUTURE:
THE INTERNATIONAL
PEDIATRIC PROGRAM

The International Pediatric Program

At Combat Blindness International, we recognize that vision serves as more than just a sense, it's a gateway to opportunity, especially for children. Our International Pediatric Screening Program stands as a fundamental aspect of our mission, ensuring that children worldwide receive essential eye care to secure a brighter future.

Our recent trip to Paraguay signifies a significant milestone in our global efforts to provide crucial pediatric eye care. Collaborating with Fundación Visión, we initiated the country's first-ever pediatric vision screening program, addressing a critical gap in children's healthcare. Through this initiative, over 14,000 screenings have been conducted across rural and remote schools, resulting in remarkable outcomes.

Research underscores that 80% of learning occurs visually during a child's formative years. Visual impairments can significantly impede a child's ability to learn and develop essential skills, potentially hindering their

academic and social progress. Through our screening program, we proactively identify and address visual issues early, ensuring children have the necessary tools to excel academically and beyond.

Furthermore, vision plays a pivotal role in a child's overall health. Undetected visual impairments can exacerbate existing health conditions or lead to new complications, posing potential risks to a child's life. By providing comprehensive screening and early intervention, we mitigate such risks, ensuring that children receive the care they need to thrive.

Beyond screenings, our collaboration with Fundación Visión emphasizes capacity building, including training schoolteachers to conduct screenings and providing follow-up care through mobile eye vans. This journey has reinforced the significance of CBI's collaborative approach, showcasing the transformative impact of pediatric eye care initiatives in underserved communities.



Pediatric Screening in Paraguay

Last year, Combat Blindness International collaborated with Fundación Visión to conduct screening sessions across various locations, including the Clotilde Paredes School in San Lorenzo, near Paraguay's capital. At this school alone, approximately 200 children were screened, including the Gonzalez Morinigo brothers, Adael and Marcos. Adael, the older brother, is five years old and attends the preschool. By participating in these screenings, Adael and Marcos are sparking hope and potential, propelling themselves on a transformative path toward success and a brighter future. Their clear vision enables them to effortlessly see the chalkboard and excel in sports. As they journey into adulthood, their vision will open a world of opportunities for themselves and their families.



ACTIVE PROJECTS

- 1 India
- 2 Brazil
- 3 Ghana
- 4 Kenya
- 5 Pakistan
- 6 Paraguay
- 7 United States

PREVIOUS PROJECTS

- 8 Angola
- 9 Botswana
- 10 Gambia
- 11 Haiti
- 12 Lebanon
- 13 Mali
- 14 Myanmar
- 15 Namibia
- 16 Nigeria
- 17 Philippines
- 18 South Africa
- 19 Vietnam

Our Impact in 2023

THE AMERICAS

Madison Metropolitan School District Vision Project
Madison, Wisconsin, USA
3,247 Pediatric Screenings
21 Pairs of Glasses Distributed

Right to Sight Clinic
Madison, Wisconsin, USA
130 Screenings
54 Pairs of Glasses Distributed

Fundación Visión
Asunción, Paraguay
335 Teachers Trained as Screeners
14,255 Pediatric Screenings
21 Pediatric Surgeries
657 Pairs of Glasses Distributed

AFRICA

Lions SightFirst Eye Hospital
Nairobi, Kenya
5,973 Screenings
2,515 Eye Surgeries

Usha Kiran Surgery Mission
Tamale, Ghana
91 Screenings
71 Eye Surgeries

ASIA

Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital
Delhi, India

COP Program Capacity Impact
70 Scholarships for COP Fellows
72,791 Additional Screenings
5,418 Additional Eye Surgeries
Donated Surgical Equipment

The Aadya Initiative
83 Stipends for Aadya Screeners
804,590 Screenings
2,199 Eye Surgeries
3,536 Pairs of Glasses Distributed

39 Years of Vision Around the World



Graham Layton Trust

Karachi, Pakistan

838 Eye Surgeries & Screenings

Jayapriya Medical Foundation

Karnataka, India

5,948 Screenings

2,500 Eye Surgeries

510 Pairs of Glasses Distributed

L.V. Prasad Eye Institute

Bijayananda Patnaik Eye Center

Keonjhar, India

25,879 Screenings

1,893 Eye Surgeries

Nav Bharat Jagriti Kendra

Bihar, India

19,817 Screenings

1,655 Eye Surgeries

5,000 Intraocular Lenses Donated

Rai Govind Shyam Trust

Mumbai, India

93 Eye Surgeries & Screenings

Shri Jalaram Arogya Seva Trust Hospital

Meghraj, India

49,300 Screenings

3,607 Eye Surgeries

2,035 Intraocular Lenses Donated

694 Pairs of Glasses Distributed

Usha Kiran Eye Hospital

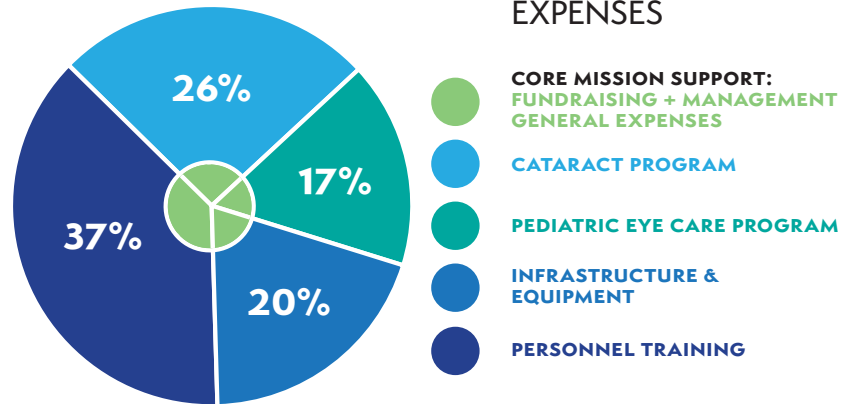
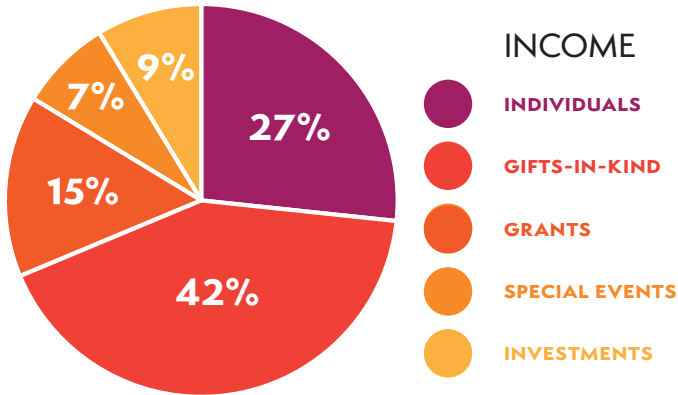
Mysore, India

25,692 Pediatric Screenings

67 Pediatric Surgeries

873 Pairs of Glasses Distributed

2023 FINANCIAL REPORT OVERVIEW



We are proud of CBI's commitment to growing its programs and to funding direct patient care. These charts highlight how our fundraising, management, and general expenses are not slices of the pie that "take away" from our program spending. **Instead, they provide a core foundation for our programs and contribute directly to our ability to carry out our mission.**

Because you cared, 1,028,644 people received eye care in 2023.

OUR 2023 FINANCIAL DETAILS

INCOME

Individuals	\$201,996
Gifts-in-Kind	\$317,450
Grants	\$113,000
Special Events	\$57,528
Investments	\$65,786

Total Income \$755,760

TOTAL NET ASSETS

\$502,653

EXPENSES

Program Services (77%)	
Cataract Program	\$182,625
Pediatric Eye Care	\$118,545
Infrastructure & Equipment	\$140,000
Personnel Training	\$268,371

Program Services Subtotal \$709,541

Fundraising (13%)	\$121,128
Management & General (10%)	\$89,636

Total Expenses \$920,305





YASMIN'S STORY

Joining Combat Blindness International (CBI) was a natural choice for me, driven by a passion ignited over two decades ago. Engaging with Dr. Suresh Chandra during World Sight Days, his dedication to adult cataract surgery projects resonated deeply with me, despite initially feeling disconnected as a pediatric eye surgeon. However, my interest and support for CBI's initiatives only grew over the years.

What truly impacted me was hearing about the Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic Program (COP) and learning about how young women from rural Indian villages were trained as ophthalmic technicians, provided with stipends, and empowered to support their families and communities. Witnessing the transformative effect this program had on individual lives and entire communities reaffirmed that this was a cause worth championing.

As CBI expanded its focus to include pediatric vision screening projects, I saw an opportunity to leverage my expertise. Collaborating with CBI, I traveled to Paraguay to assess and support their pioneering efforts in pediatric vision screening. Witnessing firsthand the impact of these programs, from providing glasses to over 14,000 children to saving lives by detecting serious eye conditions like retinoblastoma, reaffirmed my commitment to CBI's mission.

Looking ahead, I see immense potential for CBI's vision screening initiatives, both locally and globally. With advancements in technology and a dedicated team driven by a shared passion for improving vision worldwide, I am excited about the future possibilities.

For anyone considering joining CBI, I wholeheartedly encourage you to take that step. It's not just about supporting a cause; it's about being part of a collaborative, passionate community committed to making a tangible difference in the lives of others.

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INTERNATIONAL

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Become a CBI Ally today!

- Become a monthly donor
- Share our story
- Like and follow CBI on social media
- Have your employer match your donation
- Save the date to attend World Sight Day

For more details, visit
combatblindness.org or email
us at info@combatblindness.org

Save the Date

CBI ONLINE BIRTHDAY CHALLENGE

Thursday, June 27 –
Friday, June 28, 2024

CBI 40TH ANNIVERSARY AND WORLD SIGHT DAY CELEBRATION

Featuring world music group,
Funkadesi!

Thursday, October 10, 2024
Majestic Theatre

For updates, visit combatblindness.org



Platinum
Transparency
2023
Candid.

