



Combat Blindness
INTERNATIONAL

40 YEARS OF SERVICE

CBI'S IMPACT FROM 1984-2024

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



SUMMER 2024 NEWSLETTER



Dear CBI family and friends,

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

Exciting things are happening at Combat Blindness International! We're on a mission to eradicate avoidable blindness worldwide, and we're making incredible strides. With our commitment to innovative solutions, we're reaching those without access to eye care and empowering women in the process. By addressing key challenges like the shortage of trained ophthalmologists, ophthalmic technicians, and screeners, we're ensuring that equitable eye care becomes a reality for everyone.

From mid-January to mid-March, I had the privilege of living and working in India. This experience gave me the opportunity to visit a majority of CBI's projects and I am excited to share my personal insights and reflections on what this inspiring journey meant to me.

We are pleased to share our impact numbers (details at left), and you can learn more about CBI's work in our 2023 Annual Report at combatblindness.org.

Finally, CBI is celebrating its 40th Anniversary! I am pleased to invite you to celebrate our anniversary and annual World Sight Day event on Thursday, October 10. During the event, you'll learn about our sight-restoring impact throughout the year and enjoy the sounds of world music band, Funkadesi. We encourage you to learn more at combatblindness.org/world-sight-day.

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

With gratitude,

Reena Chandra, MPH
President & Executive Director

LIVING AND WORKING IN INDIA:

A PERSPECTIVE BY CBI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, REENA CHANDRA



Reena Chandra with Aadya Screeners and SCEH Staff.

This past winter, I had the privilege of living in India for a few months. This was something I had always wanted to experience, and it gave me the opportunity to visit Combat Blindness International's projects without a time constraint.

My first week, I visited the young women in the Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic Program (COP) at Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH). It's incredible to see the growth of this program since 2014, now sustainable and fully integrated into the SCEH system. CBI continues to support the 1-2 year COP Fellowship Program, which offers graduates advanced training in administration, patient counseling, clinical care, or surgical technology, leading to roles as trainers, managers, and supervisors,

supporting upward mobility and career advancement. Witnessing these smart, confident young women efficiently serving their patients was incredibly heartwarming.

I also traveled north to Saharanpur to meet with the dedicated Aadya Initiative screeners, who recently surpassed a million screenings since 2021! I spoke with the screeners and gathered valuable feedback, which allowed SCEH, Aadya leadership, and I to map out the next steps, focusing on streamlining efficiency and increasing our impact. I am excited for the future of the Aadya Initiative, and I remain in awe of these women's commitment and enthusiasm.

Next, I traveled south to visit our pediatric project at Usha Kiran Eye

Hospital in Mysore. I visited several schools, where I observed eye screenings, and saw how accessible eye care even inspires parents to seek care. I visited with children and their families that had received CBI supported surgeries and the children shared with me their favorite classes and hobbies. It was clear how happy they were to return to school. I was thrilled with a surprise visit from Gagana, a 10-year-old girl I met in 2018 after she received squint surgery. Seeing Gagana and the other children thriving in school and life was a powerful reminder of CBI's impact and the inspiration behind our work.

My final visit was to the Jayapriya Eye Hospital in Hubli, where I visited with patients. During one of the home visits, I met an elderly woman who had been unable to work due to her blindness. She shared with me what a true blessing her cataract surgery was and the immense joy and pride she felt returning to work and providing not only for herself but her daughter and grandchildren.

Living and working in India was one of the most incredibly rewarding experiences of my life. Each day, visiting our projects, partners, and patients, I learned so much about how life may be very different, yet our wants and needs remain so similar. We all deserve to receive accessible, equitable eyecare no matter who we are or where we live, it is a universal necessity. This trip humbled me in countless ways and reignited my continued commitment to this powerful work.

CBI WELCOMES HEIDI LUCARELLI TO OUR BOARD



Heidi Lucarelli

We are excited to welcome Heidi Lucarelli to Combat Blindness International's (CBI) board of directors. With over 25 years of nursing experience, including her position as a nurse in the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD), Heidi has played a vital role on the Vision and Hearing Screening Team, and our school screening program. Heidi and her husband, Mark are long-time supporters of CBI, even visiting our projects in India, seeing firsthand how cataract surgery can transform lives.

Heidi has spearheaded the Mobile Vision Van Initiative (described below), diligently

researching a model, connecting with community leaders, and developing the program. Heidi is an inspiration to many, including her three children—two of whom have followed her footsteps into healthcare, embodying CBI's dedication to creating ripples of change.

CBI Vice Chair, Amy Murray, expressed Heidi's contagious passion and believes "it's evident that her nursing background and experience with MMSD bring a wealth of experience and insight that will greatly benefit the initiative."

We are thrilled to welcome Heidi to the CBI Family!

PROJECT UPDATE: MOBILE VISION VAN INITIATIVE

Since 2014, CBI has partnered with the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) to conduct vision screenings for all children in 3K to 5K, and created a fund to provide glasses for students from 4K to 12th grade. We have screened over 26,000 children, including 3,247 children in 2023 alone. Despite the program's success, barriers still exist for children who fail their vision screening.

If a child fails their vision screening, a notice is sent home in English and Spanish explaining follow-up vision care, specific clinics available, and encouragement to connect with the school nurse for additional resources.

Despite this, issues like language, culture, transportation, and parental time constraints prevent follow-up.

To tackle this problem, CBI is collaborating with MMSD to create a Mobile Vision Van (MVV), much like the Mobile Dental Van created by MMSD and Access Community Health Center. The MVV will ensure that every child receives the essential follow-up eye care they need. Simple screening and interventions have a profound impact on changing the lives of every child. Stay tuned for ways that you can help make the Mobile Vision Van a reality for children in Dane County!



An MMSD school nurse screening a student.



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INTERNATIONAL

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DONATE TO TRANSFORM LIVES!

Help us celebrate our
40th Anniversary by
supporting us.



SAVE THE DATE!

World Sight Day 2024
Thursday, October 10

We invite you to join us in celebrating
World Sight Day 2024 and Combat
Blindness International's 40th Anniversary
with a special performance by world
music band, Funkadesi!

EVENT SCHEDULE

5:30 PM • Silent Auction & Presentation

8:00 PM • Funkadesi Concert

The Majestic Theater
115 King Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53703