



## COMBAT BLINDNESS FOUNDATION

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February 1, 2011

For immediate release

### **Malnutrition Program Reaches More Children**

(Madison, Wisconsin) -- Nearly 30 percent of the children living in and around Gandhinaga, the capital city of the state of Gujarat in northern India, suffer from one of the results of massive poverty: Vitamin A deficiency. These children have various forms of xerophthalmia, an insidious disease where poor diets cause a drying and thickening of the mucous membrane that lines the exposed part of the eyeball and ultimately leads to a loss of sight. Reports indicate that there are 100,000 new cases of xerophthalmia every year in developing countries, and many of these new cases lead to blindness.

Fortunately, xerophthalmia can be prevented. Vitamin A boosters and oral supplements, combined with nutrition education, are key components to this important intervention. Since its founding in 1984, the Combat Blindness Foundation (CBF) has provided nutritional supplements and education to children and families in India's poorest regions. In 2011, its project directors in Gujarat will increase its level of monitoring to better gauge the success of the malnutrition project there.

Typically, children under the age of ten who are diagnosed as malnourished receive twice-weekly high-potency doses of Vitamin A, as well as meals with green leafy vegetables and fruit, wheat flour, red and bengle grams. In the rural hinterlands of India, however, where every child is severely malnourished to some extent, many of the boys and girls disappear into the population and don't come back.

As a result, CBF is increasing the frequency of this critical medical intervention in these previously unreached pockets of poverty. Program managers in Gujarat hope to provide nutritional and Vitamin A supplements daily to 400 boys and girls between the ages of three and ten. They'll also more closely monitor 200 of the most severely malnourished children for definite signs of improvement. In doing so, they believe they will see more dramatic success in preserving the sight of some of the very youngest of India's poor in rural areas out of the reach of current government nutrition programs.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one child loses his or her eyesight every minute. This has alarming societal implications. Blindness typically guarantees that young people who live in poverty will remain there. That's why the Combat Blindness Foundation wants to make sure that its malnutrition programs are as effective as they are efficient (typically costing \$50 per child annually). It's all a part of its ongoing goal to prevent avoidable blindness in needy parts of the world, no matter how remote, in the lives of needy patients, no matter how young.

*The Combat Blindness Foundation is dedicated to preventing avoidable blindness worldwide and believes it is the responsibility of the fortunate to help the less fortunate in accomplishing that goal.*