This year, Combat Blindness International (CBI) celebrates 35 years of service alleviating avoidable blindness throughout the world. In the life of our organization, we have supported over 2.2 million eye screenings and over 360,000 cataract surgeries. Working with partners in India, Myanmar, Lebanon, Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Mali, Namibia, Botswana, Paraguay, Brazil and the United States, CBI is on the forefront of creating sustainable solutions in eye care.

In this two-part article, we will share a snapshot of CBI’s 35-year impact in preventing and eliminating avoidable blindness through direct patient care and capacity building.

CATARACT

CBI’s International Cataract Program started small by initiating four eye camps and supporting 319 cataract surgeries at King George Medical College in Lucknow, India in 1984. In 2018, CBI supported the screening of 344,977 men, women and children, 33,225 cataract surgeries and the distribution of 13,793 pairs of glasses. We have expanded our work to include 15 countries on 4 continents all to bring sustainable, world-class eye care to areas with the greatest need.

This year, CBI will complete the Bring Sight to Botswana project, where our goal was to alleviate the backlog of 6,000 cataract patients awaiting surgery in the country. May 21, 2019 will mark the start of the 6th and final campaign in this effort. Botswana has a population of 2.8 million people and it has the third highest prevalence of blindness and visual impairment in Africa. The vast majority of visual impairment in Botswana is caused by refractive error or cataract, both easily treatable. Working with our partners, Dr. Shroff’s Charity Eye Hospital, Cambridge Global Health Partners, PEEK and the Botswana Ministry of Health and Welfare, we will eliminate blindness due to cataracts in the entire country of Botswana in 2019.
Through school screenings, we ensure that pediatric eye diseases and conditions are identified and treated as soon as possible. If vision problems are caught early enough in a child’s development, we can preserve vision in order to ensure a child’s ability to learn. Whether through screening or providing glasses and surgeries, we believe that each child should have the opportunity to reach their highest potential.

CBI currently supports worldwide eye screenings for 80,000 to 90,000 children per year, including children in India, Africa, South America and the United States. One such program is CBI’s partnership with Usha Kiran Eye Hospital in Mysore, India. In this program, children are screened for refractive errors, eye diseases and given basic healthcare. Working in one of the most rural areas of India, this program has screened more than 170,000 children, provided more than 4,000 pairs of glasses and supported over 600 pediatric eye surgeries to date.

We are proud of the patient care we’ve been able to provide in 35 years and we look forward to continuing to work toward a world free of preventable blindness.

Read our next newsletter to learn how we work with communities to train eye care professionals, build infrastructure and bring eye care to the doorsteps of those who need it most.

Our work is made possible by the contributions of donors like you! Celebrate with us throughout 2019 by using the hashtag #35yearsofvision.
BIJAYANANDA PATNAIK EYE CENTER-KEONJHAR

Combat Blindness International established the Bijayananda Patnaik Eye Center last year in Keonjhar, Odisha in partnership with the Bijayananda Patnaik Family, the Jack DeLoss Taylor Charitable Trust and L.V. Prasad Eye Institute. Odisha is one of the poorest states in India with a blindness rate nearly double the national average. The city of Keonjhar has a population of 1.8 million and the closest eye center is located in Bhubaneshwar, which is 220 kilometers away.

Since its opening in March 2018, the Bijayananda Patnaik Eye Center has screened 2,130 children and distributed 51 pairs of glasses. They’ve screened 13,205 adults and provided 315 cataract surgeries.

One such patient is Jatani Patra, who visited Bijayananda Patnaik Eye Center in March of 2018. Her vision had diminished over the course of 2 years and was negatively affecting her quality of life. She couldn’t go up or down stairs by herself and was having trouble reading her medication bottles. She received her cataract surgery free of charge and her vision was completely restored. Jatani is very happy to be able to see clearly again. She expressed enormous gratitude to the donors from CBI who helped support her surgery.

WELCOME OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Combat Blindness International is excited to announce that Reena Chandra Rajpal, MPH, will assume the role of Executive Director starting in April. Reena currently serves as the President of CBI’s Board of Directors. She will continue this role in an ex-officio capacity as she assumes the Executive Director role. Reena was the Director of Development for the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Nursing at the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association. Prior to this, she was the Director of Development at Combat Blindness International for 6 years and joined the CBI Board of Directors in 2013. Reena brings with her 18 years of experience in strategic planning, development, grant making and management for nonprofit organizations, higher education and international NGOs.

Reena is excited to help continue CBI’s legacy of alleviating preventable blindness and serving those less fortunate, saying, “Combat Blindness International’s ability to help so many people around the world for so little is incredible. For $25, you can give someone their whole world back. That, to me, is impact and I’m proud to be part of this organization.”
HELP US GO GREEN!
Please consider providing us with your email address at www.combatblindness.org

Combat Blindness International is dedicated to eliminating preventable blindness worldwide by providing sustainable, equitable solutions for sight through partnership and innovation.

Combat Blindness International
PO Box 5332 www.combatblindness.org
Madison, WI 53705 info@combatblindness.org

COMBAT BLINDNESS INTERNATIONAL IS A 501(C)(3) ORGANIZATION.

On Thursday, October 10, help us celebrate World Sight Day 2019
Find out more online at www.combatblindness.org/wsd19

For $25, you can change a person’s whole world. Visit www.combatblindness.org/donate today!