

Operation Eyesight India

Provide 5000 cataract surgical services for senior citizens in 7 states of intervention areas

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Story

A ray of light in the darkness

Kiran, 60, is a working woman from the Kamrup Rural district of Assam. The livelihood of her entire family depends on the income she makes by hand loom weaving, which requires careful hand-eye coordination. For the last three years, Kiran suffered from cataracts. Her visual impairment hindered her work, and eventually she had to rely on her family to care for her.

One day, an Operation Eyesight-trained community health worker conducted a door-to-door survey in Kiran's community. She identified Kiran's condition and educated the entire family about eye health care and the treatment available at Operation Eyesight's nearby partner hospital. The family was hesitant at first; they loved their mother dearly and were worried about the surgery.

The community health worker visited the family continuously, providing counsel and assuring them of the quality of care and the free service available to restore Kiran's sight. Eventually, the family was convinced, and they certainly never regretted their decision. After receiving sight-restoring cataract surgery, Kiran is full of life! She is once again working at the hand loom, and her production is even better than before.

"Thank you to the community health worker and the hospital," says the family. "You became a ray of light in the darkness."

There are many senior citizens like Kiran looking forward to your support.

The Issue

In 2020, an estimated 596 million people had distance vision impairment worldwide, of whom 43 million were blind. Another 510 million people had uncorrected near vision impairment, simply because of not having reading spectacles. A large proportion of those affected (90%), live in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs). However, encouragingly, more than 90% of

people with vision impairment have a preventable or treatable cause with existing highly cost-effective interventions ¹.

Although high-quality data for global economic estimates are scarce, particularly for LMICs, conservative assessments based on the latest prevalence figures for 2020 suggest that annual global productivity loss from vision impairment is approximately US\$410.7 billion purchasing power parity ².

India is home to the world's largest blind population. Of the total blind people across the globe approximately 18 million live in India³. Even worse, over 90% of these people lost their sight due to avoidable reasons. Anecdotal evidence suggest that cataract is the major cause of blindness across the globe and predominantly seen in population above 50 years⁴. In India too, cataract is the major cause of blindness (66.2%), severe visual impairment (80.7%) and moderate visual impairment (70.2%)⁵. Study suggests that 30-92% of the cataract patients remain blind to various reasons like lack of accessibility, affordability, and adequate knowledge⁶.

The addition of nearly 3.8 million new cataract patients every year⁷ further increases the burden of Cataract backlog and is also responsible for increasing the socioeconomic burden on the families and the nation. Increasing age⁸, lower socio-economic status and lack of awareness⁹ to access a cataract surgery are attributed to the growing prevalence of cataracts in India.

Operation Eyesight India is a non-governmental organization based in Hyderabad. It is part of Operation Eyesight Universal, a Canada-based organization that has been working in India since 1963 to prevent blindness and restore sight. In India, we are currently working with 35 partner hospitals (including government health departments and eminent universities) across 18 states, covering over 90 underserved districts. We have established 144 vision centres to date and declared over 1,071 villages as avoidable blindness-free. In 2021 through our initiatives, nearly 700,000 people received a comprehensive eye examination, nearly 60,000 patients received

¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(20\)30488-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30488-5/fulltext)

² ibid

³ Dandona, L. A. L. I. T., R. A. K. H. I. Dandona, and RAJESH K. John. "Estimation of blindness in India from 2000 through 2020: implications for the blindness control policy." *The National medical journal of India* 14.6 (2001): 327-334.

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/blindness-and-visual-impairment>

⁵ <https://npcbvi.gov.in/writeReadData/mainlinkFile/File341.pdf>

⁶ Lewallen, S., & Courtright, P. (2000). Recognising and reducing barriers to cataract surgery. *Community Eye Health*, 13(34), 20.

⁷ Minassian, D. C., and V. Mehra. "3.8 million blinded by cataract each year: projections from the first epidemiological study of incidence of cataract blindness in India." *British journal of ophthalmology* 74.6 (1990): 341-343.

⁸ https://journals.lww.com/ijo/Fulltext/2019/67040/The_prevalence_and_risk_factors_for_cataract_in.8.aspx

⁹ <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/health/ataract-top-cause-of-blindness-in-india-finds-survey-67187>

sight-saving surgeries and over 100,000 pairs of prescription eyeglasses were dispensed. Learn more at operationeyesightindia.org

However, with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown imposed across the country, India came to a standstill in terms of personal and professional lives. The pandemic has acutely impacted the livelihood of the people, especially those of informal sector with a risk of falling into poverty leading hunger. Similarly, it has posed unprecedented challenges in provisioning quality eye care services and financial sustainability of the charitable eye hospitals. The pandemic led restrictions in the country suspended most of the eyecare services in India for more than 12 months in the last two years further the patient footfall to hospitals have also reduced significantly in the wake of pandemic which ultimately resulted in a surge in untreated cataract cases¹⁰.

There is extensive evidence showing that improving eye health contributes directly and indirectly to achieving many Sustainable Development Goals, including reducing poverty and improving work productivity, general and mental health, and education and equity. Improving eye health is a practical and cost-effective way of unlocking human potential. Eye health needs to be reframed as an enabling, cross-cutting issue within the sustainable development framework¹¹.

For many years, Operation Eyesight has been working to bring quality, affordable eye health care services closer to communities. Our work is critical now more than ever.

Our Approach to address the Number of Cataract cases

Operation Eyesight and our partners will address the cataract backlog using our community-based approach. Community health workers, trained by Operation Eyesight, will conduct door-to-door eye screenings in the target areas. Patients identified will be referred to a nearby vision centre or to one of Operation Eyesight's partner hospitals. We'll ensure that patients receive transportation to and from the hospital, and that they receive regular pre- and post-follow up care to ensure the timeliness and quality of their treatment. In addition, we'll monitor and evaluate the project activities and provide our generous donors with an update.

We're currently focusing our efforts on seven High Focus States^{12 13}(Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Odisha in the North; and Assam in the North-East) where there is a high prevalence of blindness and visual impairment among people

¹⁰ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34571641/>

¹¹ *ibid*

¹² https://nhm.gov.in/New_Updates_2018/Quarterly_MIS/dec-2019/High-Focus-States-Other-than-NE.pdf

¹³ <https://nrhmcommunityaction.org/high-focus-ne/>

aged 50 and above¹⁴. Across these states, a total of **5,000 patients** living in our program areas are in need of cataract surgery but cannot afford the high cost of the procedure. Of these, nearly 80 per cent may go permanently blind if their treatment continues to be delayed.

Action

Goal: Promote cataract blindness backlog-free villages/communities in selected areas

Objective: Provide cataract surgical services for senior citizens in need in the intervention areas.

Target beneficiaries:

List names of the project with number of cataract surgeries and name of partner hospitals

S.N	Partner Hospitals	Zone	State	Target Surgeries
1	Rotary Eye and ENT Hospital, Udhampur	North	Jammu and Kashmir	300
2	Vivekananda Netralaya, Dehradun		Uttarakhand	500
3	JL Rohatgi Memorial Eye Hospital, Kanpur		Uttar Pradesh	900
4	CL Gupta Eye Institute, Moradabad		Uttar Pradesh	1000
5	Sewa Sadan Eye Hospital, Bhopal		Madhya Pradesh	1000
6	Trilochan Netralaya, Sambhalpur		Odisha	300
7	Sri Sai Lions Netralaya, Patna		Bihar	500
8	Chandraprabha Eye Hospital, Jorhat	East	Assam	200
9	Sri Sankaradeva Netralaya		Assam	300
	Total			5,000

Impact:

The sight-saving surgery will clear the backlog of cataract in 5,000 patients across seven High Focus States of India. With their vision restored, individuals will no longer have to depend on their family members for support. They'll have the opportunity to work or help care for their families, enjoy their favourite activities and watch their grandchildren grow up. More importantly, seniors won't be isolated at home anymore; they'll be able to participate in and

¹⁴ <https://indiavisionatlasnpcb.aiims.edu/national-blindness-and-visual-impairment-survey-2015-2019/#>

contribute to their family and community. Their overall health and well-being will improve, and their entire family and community will be stronger as result.

The support will also help the partner hospitals to kickstart the provision of free surgeries, which will increase the patient flow to the base hospitals in turn adding to the sustainability of the partner hospital.

Budget

The cataract surgery budget is INR 2500 per surgery. So the total budget for 5000 surgeries is INR **12,500,000**.



Thank You