



# spirit of service

A PUBLICATION OF SEVA®

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Our heartfelt thanks go to all our photographers for generously donating their work.

# Seva's Vision for Gender Equality in Eye Care

*Blind in both eyes, Ama was unable to care for herself and was fully dependent on others for survival.*

**For over five years, Ama lived in a cloud of white haze. Her remote village in rural Nepal had no doctor, much less access to anyone trained in eye care.**

Completely blind in both eyes, Ama was unable to care for herself and fully dependent on others for survival.

When Seva outreach workers came to her village, they identified Ama's blindness as curable.

Our outreach teams go to great lengths to find and help women

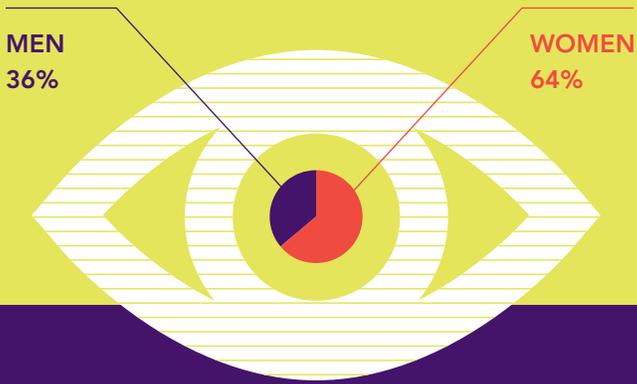
like Ama, because they know that women are much less likely to travel to far off hospitals due to a variety of social and financial obstacles.

Once assessed, Ama received free sight-restoring cataract surgery at a remote Seva eye camp near her village.

The cloudy haze that had rendered her helpless for so many years is now gone, and her world has been brought back into focus.

Blindness affects 39 million people worldwide and 80% is preventable or curable.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



“Two out of three people who are blind around the globe are women.”



Studies show that women utilize eye care services much less frequently than men, and that this disparity is even more pronounced between girls and boys.

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## Seva’s Vision for Gender Equality in Eye Care

Just like Ama, many of the blind are elderly and living in poverty – **and two out of three are women.**

Studies show that women utilize eye care services much less frequently than men, and that this disparity is even more pronounced between girls and boys.

### Overcoming Gender Barriers

Seva-led programs work towards achieving gender equity by focusing on overcoming the traditional barriers to women’s and girls’ access to eye care. These commonly include:

- **The cost of surgery:** Women often have less access to family financial resources to pay for eye care or transportation to reach a hospital.
- **Inability to travel to a surgical facility:** In many cultures where Seva works, it might not be seen as acceptable for a woman to travel alone, even to a hospital. For poor families, the additional cost of having to also send a male escort can present a prohibitive expense.
- **Differences in the perceived value of surgery:** Cataract is often viewed as an inevitable consequence of aging and women are less likely to have social support in a family to seek out care.
- **Lack of access to information and resources:** High female illiteracy rates, especially among the elderly, decreases the chances that women will learn about available eye care services in their area.

### Initiative for Women and Girls

Seva is leading the global initiative to eliminate gender inequality in eye care.

Our first step was to document that inequality exists.

The second step was to identify the barriers that women and girls face to accessing eye care and to develop strategies to overcome these barriers.

Simple strategies are often the most effective. Seva provides counseling to families, offers free transportation and brings eye care to people’s doorsteps through support of local community ophthalmology programs.

Sharing our findings and strategies with the global eye care community has been the third step, and we are happy to report that more and more organizations are now implementing these strategies to reach women and girls.

### Women Helping Women

Seva, with the support of our donors, has reduced, and in some areas, eliminated gender inequality in eye care primarily through active engagement with local women, women’s groups and networks.

The Women Helping Women approach is efficient, sustainable, and remarkably effective.

In central and western Nepal, for example, Seva eye care programs have achieved gender equity in large part due to the implementation of community-based Female Community Health Volunteers. These women are local leaders who are trained to detect eye conditions in their villages and to assist people, particularly women, to utilize available eye care services. In these regions, Seva is now serving an equal number of blind women and men.

In contrast, throughout the remainder of Nepal, blindness among women remains significantly greater than among men. To rectify this problem Seva has helped to establish the National Gender and Blindness Program, which gathers, analyzes, and promotes effective community-based strategies.

In Nepal, and around the world, the compassion of Seva’s donors is turning the tide on gender inequality. Each year, our eye care programs are successfully increasing the number of women receiving sight saving services. We look forward to the day when all women will have equal access to eye care.

To support Seva’s Initiative for Women and Girls, please visit [www.seva.org/women\\_and\\_girls](http://www.seva.org/women_and_girls)

# Yoga For Sight Day

JUNE 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2014

It began as a simple idea, to have a compassionate group come together to practice yoga while raising awareness and funds for the prevention of blindness. But since Seva first announced Yoga For Sight Day, yogis and yoga studios around the globe have been rapidly jumping on board, raising the profile of this exciting event.

Studios in California, Michigan, Montana, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont, and even ones in Italy and India have already joined with more signing up and announcing participating events every day.

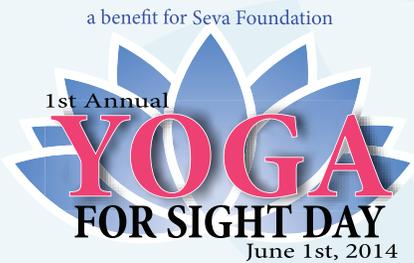
Each studio has created a unique way to invite their community to participate. Leela Yoga in Alameda, California is providing cataract simulation glasses to those who sign up for their Yoga For Sight Day class and are donating the proceeds from the class.

Namaste Yoga in Berkeley will feature live music for their event and is donating all the funds collected from mat rentals over the next three months to Seva.

Yoga Tree will donate \$1 from each and every visitor who takes a class on June 1st at all of their nine Bay Area locations.

Seva and the Yoga For Sight Day community are grateful to the event sponsors, Brightstar Events, Common Ground Magazine, Jammin on Haight, and Zen Chanting Yoga Clothing for their generous support.

If you are interested in hosting or signing up for a Yoga For Sight Day event in your area, and to see a full list of participating studios, we invite you to visit [www.seva.org/yogaforsightday](http://www.seva.org/yogaforsightday).



## THIS MOTHER'S DAY GIVE GIFTS OF SERVICE

### Help A Woman See \$35

**Two-thirds of the world's blind are women**

Give a woman living in a poor rural area the eye care services she needs. Your gift ensures she avoids low-vision and blindness.

### Opportunities for Women and Girls \$100 (or any amount)

**Open new doors for women & girls around the world**

Provide women with training opportunities to become eye care nurses, doctors, and hospital administrators, and help keep girls in school by providing them with the glasses they need to thrive and succeed.

shop online at [www.seva.org/mothersday](http://www.seva.org/mothersday)



## Global Sight Meeting

In early March the extended Seva Family got together to plan for the upcoming year. Participants included staff from Seva Cambodia, Seva Canada and Global Sight Initiative partners Aravind Eye Care System (India), Kilimanjaro Center for Community Ophthalmology (Tanzania) and Visualiza (Guatemala). Topics ranged from budgets and program plans for the next fiscal year to how to better coordinate international sight-saving efforts.

[www.seva.org/gsi](http://www.seva.org/gsi)

# A Generous Donation by MODO Provides Eyeglasses to Nepal and Guatemala



Each year, Seva is the beneficiary of numerous in-kind donations. From volunteers giving their time, to supplies and equipment, the poorest of the poor can be served with sight saving eye care thanks to this important support.

We are excited to share that recently, Seva received a large-scale donation of high quality eyeglass frames from the popular New York based eyeglass company MODO. To date, over 30,000 eyeglass frames have been donated by MODO, with even more in the pipeline for the near future.

These donated eyeglasses are a key to breaking the cycle of poverty.

Seva and MODO are collaborating to assist people in need in several countries. The largest partnership is with the Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh (NNJS) a Nepali organization whose mission is to provide high quality, sustainable, comprehensive and affordable eye care services to all of Nepal's population.

With a population of 31 million and a per capita income of \$750, Nepal is among the poorest countries in the world. The nation currently ranks 157th out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index. With high rates of poverty, and a 43 percent illiteracy rate, a large number of Nepalese are unable to afford eyeglasses.

MODO's generous donation is helping Seva and NNJS to improve vision for people in need. Many thousands of these donated eyeglasses are sized for young children and teenagers. The youths who received these glasses will now be able to stay in school, dramatically increasing their ability to succeed and avoid a lifetime of poverty.

Professor Tirth Mishra, Secretary General of the NNJS, applauded this three-way partnership, saying, "On behalf of Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh, Nepal's Comprehensive Eye Care Society, I want to share our excitement about our new alliance with MODO and Seva which will enable NNJS and our partners to expand service to thousands of people in need of glasses throughout Nepal. Refractive error is the largest single cause of impaired vision in Nepal. MODO's generous support to NNJS will enable us to serve thousands of needy women, men and children who otherwise may not be able to access or afford eye care and the prescription glasses they so badly need."

MODO Global CEO Alessandro Lanaro explains that MODO is very proud of their partnership with Seva and NNJS, noting that "sustainability and social responsibility have become an important part of our DNA. We are excited to extend our social responsibility efforts."

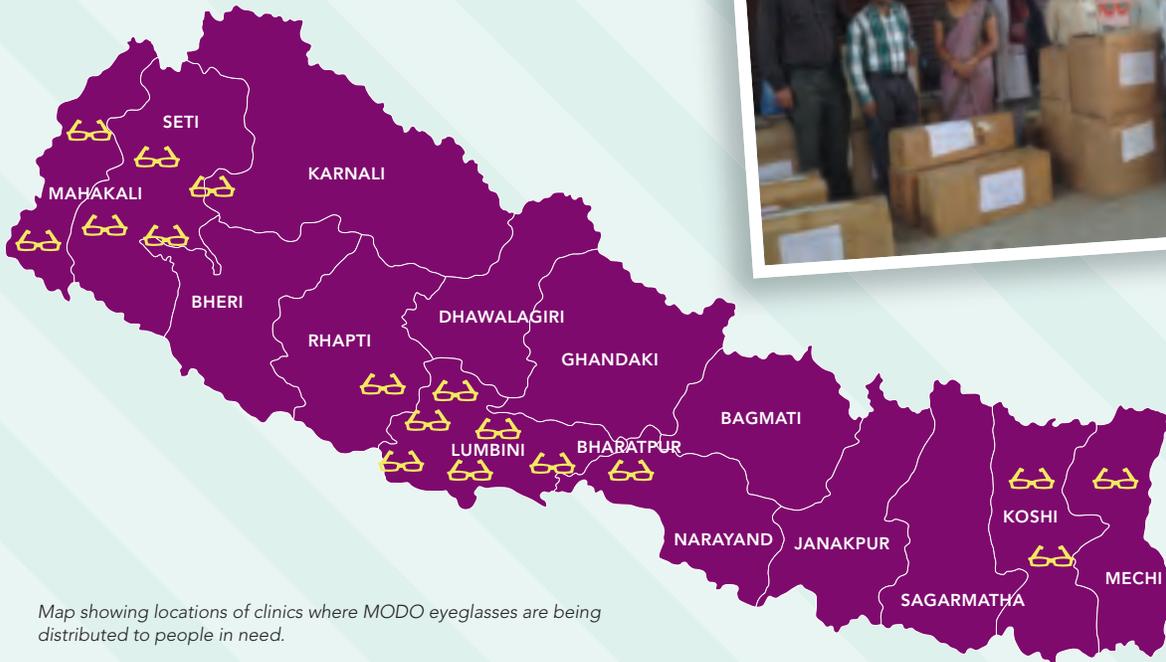
The first 25,000 MODO frames traveled by sea freight to India and then overland to Nepal. In October, a distribution ceremony was organized and representatives from 23 eye clinics and hospitals came together at the Seva-supported Bharatpur Eye Hospital near the Indian border to receive allotments of frames.

In March of 2014, a second donation of 5,000 MODO frames arrived in Guatemala and will be distributed in partnership with Visualiza, a key Seva partner with programs in remote areas throughout the country. Many of these are pediatric frames that are being donated to children who can't afford eyeglasses through "Ventanitas de Luz" [Little Windows of Light], Visualiza's pediatric eye care program.

Corporate partners such as MODO have been integral to supporting Seva's sustainable programs over the years. On behalf of Seva and Seva-supported programs, we would like to thank all of our corporate donors for their continued support."

To see video footage of the donation in Nepal please visit [www.seva.org/modo](http://www.seva.org/modo).

# AREAS OF NEPAL RECEIVING INITIAL ALLOTMENT FRAMES



Map showing locations of clinics where MODO eyeglasses are being distributed to people in need.

# SEVA EVENTS

## Bollywood America

On April 19th, at Oakland California's Paramount Theatre, the exciting Bollywood America dance competition brought together the most talented Bollywood dance teams to compete on one stage.

In honor of each of the 250 dancers who took part, the event is raising funds to provide sight-restoring surgery to 250 people in need. On behalf of those who will have their sight restored, Seva wants to thank everyone who took part and attended this fun event.

## Chris Robinson Brotherhood (of the Black Crowes)

June 30th, Chris Robinson of the Black Crowes will perform at the Mystic Theater in Petaluma, California to support Seva's programs. Joining the lineup is Corinne West Band and The Fall Risk. For VIP ticket-holders, a pre-event meet and greet reception will take place at the Petaluma Women's Club. For details about this event please visit [www.seva.org/mystic](http://www.seva.org/mystic)



## Jason Mraz

On Saturday May 3rd, Jason Mraz headlines a benefit concert at San Francisco's Great American Music Hall with all proceeds going to support

Seva. The evening also celebrates the 70th birthday of Seva Co-Founder Dr. Larry Brilliant. Mraz has won two GRAMMY Awards and garnered six nominations, a People's Choice Award, and his albums have gone platinum five times over. Opening the show is Salman Ahmad from the band Junoon. A number of special guests will also grace the stage, along with your host for the evening, Seva Co- Founder, Wavy Gravy. For more information about this event, please visit [www.seva.org/jason\\_mraz](http://www.seva.org/jason_mraz).

## Portland, Oregon

Seva is about to announce an event in Portland featuring some legendary musicians. Stay tuned to the Seva website for details on the date and location.

# Reaching the Unreached in Cambodia

Seva Programs Plan for Expansion into Two New Provinces



With a tumultuous history, the challenges in Cambodia are great. The nation's medical infrastructure was completely destroyed after many painful years of war and genocide.

The most devastating years of the last century for the Cambodian people were from 1975 to 1979 when the Khmer Rouge brutally ruled over the country and were responsible for the execution of two million innocent citizens.

The ruthless regime proclaimed that they were setting the calendar "back to year zero," declaring war on anything modern and intellectual.

The country's educated were rounded up and slaughtered in the infamous killing fields.

Eyeglasses, perceived as an indicator of an education, were destroyed, and anyone caught wearing them risked becoming a victim of the ongoing horrific genocide.

In 1979, the Khmer Rouge was defeated, but not before the country had been brought to its knees. Poverty was endemic. Nearly all of the nation's doctors had been killed and hospitals demolished.

Just one ophthalmologist survived in the entire country.

In the 35 years that followed, Cambodia has made solid steps to rebound from this national trauma.

International NGOs like Seva continue to be incredibly important as the country regains its footing.

Over the past 15 years, our donor supported programs have been actively working to train Cambodian eye care nurses and ophthalmologists, build and equip eye care facilities, and provide outreach services to the masses who continue to live in poverty.

Thanks to donors like you, Seva now provides over 25 percent of the sight restoring surgeries that take place in the entire country.

In spite of our successes, today, over 43,000 people remain blind throughout Cambodia; a staggering 80 percent could be prevented or cured.

With a focus on sustainability, we have opened clinics like the Battambang Ophthalmic Care Center, a model institution that with our support has become self-financing within just five years.

In Siem Reap, your donations have helped to open the only dedicated pediatric ophthalmic surgical unit in the entire country. Housed at the Angkor Hospital for Children, this facility examines 800 Cambodian children each month, and provides eye care and sight-restoring surgery to thousands of children each year.

The Cambodian Government has been so impressed with our achievements in the Northwestern provinces that they recently invited Seva to expand our work to two new provinces: Pursat (south of Siem Reap) and Kampot, bordering the Indian Ocean.

Funds are needed to expand these vital programs. We invite you to learn more about how your support will increase access to eye care throughout Cambodia, by visiting [www.seva.org/cambodia](http://www.seva.org/cambodia).



“Seva’s work is just so practical,” LaUna told Seva during a recent conversation. She looked at several organizations and was excited that with Seva, for as little as \$50 or \$100, “you could do something real.” There aren’t very many ways that you can change a person’s life for so little.

In 2005, LaUna began giving Seva’s Gifts of Service to her grandchildren. “Every year around Christmas I asked myself what could I give to my family that they needed? The truth was, they didn’t need anything. Too many gifts end up in the back of a closet or in the garage.” Instead, she started the holiday tradition of giving gifts of “sight” from the catalog she receives from Seva in the mail each year.

“My grandchildren now just expect to get a gift of ‘sight’ from me and they really do look forward to it. I am not just imagining that!”

Seva’s Gifts of Service makes great Mother’s Day gifts too. One year on Mother’s Day LaUna decided the best way to honor her four daughters-in-law was to provide sight

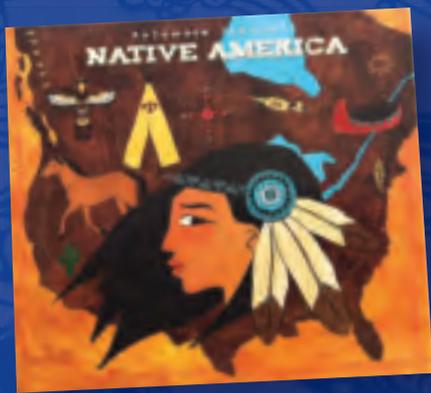
for mothers in Tibet, Nepal and Guatemala through Seva.

LaUna is also one of Seva’s great promoters. During a recent “Tour of Gratitude” visit to Texas, LaUna invited Seva Executive Director Jack Blanks, Board member Gary Hahn and Development Director Julie Nestingen, to meet her family and friends. LaUna asked the trio to share stories about Seva. The attentive group listened and asked many thoughtful questions. By the end of the evening Seva had 10 new members in the “Seva family” and donations enough for 40 people to receive cataract surgery!

Promoting the value of “service” comes naturally to LaUna, the founder and president of Path of Light Studies, a metaphysical organization focused on spiritual alignment. Along with her sister Jean St Martin, they are busy giving workshops and lectures on healing and working for the betterment of humanity. For more information on LaUna’s work, visit her website [www.pathoflight.com](http://www.pathoflight.com).

## DONOR SPOTLIGHT LaUna Huffines

LaUna Huffines is mother of four, grandmother to 15, an internationally recognized lecturer on spirituality and healing, and author of four books, including her best seller *Healing with Light* (translated into 8 languages). This amazing octogenarian is also a committed Seva supporter and promoter.



## Putumayo Releases CD in Support of Seva’s American Indian Sight Initiative

An exciting new CD has just been released by Putumayo World Music titled *Native America*. The album is a beautiful compilation highlighting many of the most popular contemporary Native American and First Nations musicians.

Putumayo World Music is generously donating a portion of proceeds from the sale of this CD to support Seva’s American Indian Sight Initiative – providing eyeglasses to school children in the Navajo Nation and training the next generation of Native eye care professionals.

Order your copy today by visiting [www.seva.org/putumayo](http://www.seva.org/putumayo)



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## About Seva

**Seva is a Sanskrit word meaning service to others.**

Seva works to prevent blindness and restore sight worldwide.

Our programs build the capacity of underserved communities to provide comprehensive and high-quality eye care that is accessible by all.

Since 1978, Seva has been a leading innovator in building partnerships that deliver cost-effective, culturally-informed eye care services for many of the world's most vulnerable — including women, children, and indigenous peoples.

Our programs are made possible by the generosity of donors and volunteers inspired by the spirit of service.

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“Compassion and caring for people in need—that’s simply a moral necessity. But it’s not always easy to do. Seva makes it easy. They know how to put your donations to work in ways that truly benefit people.”



**JOAN  
BAEZ**

SINGER/  
HUMANITARIAN  
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