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Seva Foundation Makes Commitment to Clinton Global Initiative to Revolutionize Eye Care Services in Developing World

Ambitious Pledge Will Restore Sight to Millions Worldwide

BERKELEY, CA (September 22, 2008) – As part of its commitment to the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI), Seva Foundation is launching the *So One Million Eyes See Again* campaign, a plan that will revolutionize eye care in the developing world. Seva will help over 100 hospitals scale-up their capacity so that by 2015 one million more eyes receive cataract surgery each year above current levels. Chosen as one of only 25 global health organizations to attend CGI this year, Seva and its partners have pioneered programs that have already restored vision to nearly 3 million people in underserved communities around the world.

“We are honored to unveil our campaign at this year’s CGI Annual Meeting,” says Seva’s Executive Director, Mark Lancaster. “It’s a wonderful acknowledgement of Seva’s leadership role over the last 30 years in building innovative, sustainable eye care systems that can literally transform the lives of millions of people in need.”

Seva’s *So One Million Eyes See Again* campaign will harness the power of a global coalition of community eye care facilities throughout Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East to ensure that by 2015 one million more blind people receive sight-restoring cataract surgery each year. In addition, more than 10 million people will be screened and treated for other eye problems each year, with an emphasis on serving women and girls. In total, over 200 million people will have increased access to eye care services by 2015 as a result of Seva’s campaign.

“Our *So One Million Eyes See Again* campaign is exactly the kind of innovative and sustainable program that CGI commitments aim to create,” explains Dr. Suzanne Gilbert, Director of Seva’s Center for Innovation in Eye Care. “Through our *Global Sight Network*, we’re taking the proven models we have developed with our partners over the last 30 years and applying them to make a quantum leap in worldwide capacity to deliver cataract surgeries to patients in low-income, developing countries.”

Forty-five million people in the world are blind — two-thirds of whom are women. Cataract remains the leading cause of blindness despite the fact that a simple 15-minute surgical procedure can restore sight immediately, making it one of the most cost-effective health interventions in developing nations according to the World Bank.

“Eye care is not just a health issue — it’s also a key aspect of solving poverty,” added Dr. Gilbert. “A study in India found that 96% of people with cataract blindness stopped working. But among those unemployed patients who received cataract surgery, more than 70% returned to wage-earning activities within a week of their treatment. That’s one of the key reasons cataract surgery produces such a high return on investment.”

Seva’s campaign will also focus on bridging the gender gap in eye care services so that millions of women and girls, who would otherwise remain blind, will be able to go to school, return to work, and become contributing members in their respective communities.

Launched by President Bill Clinton in 2005 as a non-partisan catalyst for action, CGI brings together a community of global leaders to devise and implement innovative solutions to some of the world’s most pressing challenges. Participation in the CGI Annual Meeting is by invitation only, limited to a select yet diverse group of heads of state, business executives, philanthropists, foundations, religious leaders, non-profits and original thinkers.

For more information about Seva's *So One Million Eyes See Again* campaign, please visit:
www.seva.org/cgi

About Seva Foundation

Seva Foundation is most widely known for its innovative eye care programs in Asia and Africa, which have helped nearly three million blind people to see again through affordable cataract surgeries. In Guatemala and Mexico, Seva works with indigenous communities to provide the tools and training needed to sustain clean water systems, health care, and educational opportunities. Here in the U.S., Seva partners with Native American communities that are committed to building healthy communities, sustaining cultural values, and protecting the environment.

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