



**Seva Foundation recognized with international award
for work restoring sight to millions in developing world**

California-based organization recipient of prestigious 2015 Antonio Champalimaud Vision Award for efforts to eliminate preventable blindness and visual impairment

BERKELEY, CA – September 8, 2015 – With more than 39 million people living with blindness worldwide and 80% of cases preventable or treatable, California-based, Seva Foundation, is making a major difference around the globe. This year, their efforts to change the lives of some of the most disadvantaged people on the planet have won Seva Foundation and their partner organizations, Seva Canada and the Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology (KCCO), the prestigious Vision Award given by the Lisbon, Portugal-based Antonio Champalimaud Foundation. Considered the “*Nobel Prize*” of the vision care world, the Champalimaud award is presented for outstanding contributions towards the prevention and alleviation of blindness and visual impairment, primarily in developing countries.

“For more than 35 years, Seva has invested in local communities – training future eye care providers, establishing quality eye centers, and creating community-friendly services that are easy to reach,” says Dr. Suzanne Gilbert, Senior Director of Seva Foundation’s Innovation & Sight Program. “This has resulted in more than 1 million people accessing eye care from Seva-supported facilities every year.”

Working in developing countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, Seva helps communities build locally-run programs that serve everyone in the community with affordable services. In many countries, eye centers can become partially or fully financially self-sufficient over time. Rather than simply setting up treatment centres, Seva’s model provides a long-term vision care solution with tools for management, leadership development and continuous improvement that help the local community provide eye care for generations to come.

Not content to serve only those people fortunate enough to get to an eye center, Seva Foundation’s research initiatives have led to strategies to overcome gender, economic and geographic barriers to ensure universal access to eye care. For example, cataract, the leading cause of vision loss worldwide, disproportionately impacts women. Seva’s research found that women develop cataracts at the same frequency as men, but because they have less access to available services, the effects are much more severe.

“Because Seva works collaboratively with eye care organizations in more than 20 countries, we can take the most innovative and effective approaches and share them across our network of partners,” says Gilbert. “As a result, more people can see clearly again, return to school or work and live more fulfilling lives.”

A leader in proven effective and innovative approaches to eye care in developing countries, Seva Foundation intends to strengthen the capacity of efficient eye care programs to provide universal access, to increase the number of effective eye care providers, to generate evidence and service strategies and to continue to develop a global community dedicated to restoring sight to people in need.

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About Seva Foundation

Seva Foundation is a California-based charitable organization whose mission is to restore sight and prevent blindness in the developing world. They believe that giving sight to a blind person is a particularly effective way to relieve suffering, reduce poverty and transform lives. Seva works in more than 20 countries in need of sustainable services including: Peru, United States, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Haiti, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Russia, Egypt, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Cambodia and Tibetan areas of China.

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