



spirit of service

A PUBLICATION OF SEVA®

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Seeing the World Through A Child's Eyes

Photographers

Jack Blanks, Johannes Burge, Christine Chu, Ellen Crystal, Jon Kaplan, Julie Nestingen

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

In less time than it takes to read this article, a child will lose their eyesight.

One every minute.

The child will likely be living in poverty, struggling for survival in one of the many parts of the world where access to even the most basic of eye care services continue to be out of reach.

Each year an additional 500,000 children will lose their eyesight.

A child's life expectancy can decline dramatically if they go

blind. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) estimates that half of children in the developing world will die within one year of losing their vision.

Seva's Pediatric Eye Care Initiative

Around the globe there are an estimated 19 million children under the age of 15 who are visually impaired.

Seva and our donors know that 80% of this blindness is preventable or curable, and that when a child's sight is restored — their life is changed forever.

This is why Seva is dedicated to the expansion of pediatric eye care services around the globe.

Seva builds the capacity of local eye care programs to serve

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Seeing the World Through A Child's Eyes

children living in the many of the world's poorest communities.

From children living in remote villages of Cambodia and Bangladesh, to students in underserved Native American communities, Seva's programs provide vital eye care that reaches those who until now were unable to access even the most basic of services.

Through school screenings in poor communities and the

distribution of free and low-cost eyeglasses, at-risk students are now able to see the blackboard and read the pages of their textbooks. We know that good vision is a key factor in their education. With the world in focus, these children now have a fair chance to succeed in life and to achieve a better future.

Seva's pediatric screenings also regularly identify many children who require more complex

intervention. Thanks to Seva donors like you, over 130,000 children are provided with eye care screenings each year and thousands are provided with surgery to prevent future blindness.

On behalf of the millions of children who have been screened over Seva's 35 years of service, we thank you for your ongoing support of this important work.



Two Featured Gifts of Service:

KINDNESS FOR CHILDREN
\$100 (or any amount)

The well-being of the world's children is a responsibility we all share. With your special gift, you support Seva's work to prevent and treat blindness for children around the world. From simple screening and eyeglasses to complicated surgeries, your act of compassion helps create the world that children deserve.

GIVE SIGHT TO A CHILD
\$100

One child goes blind every minute. Provide a child with specialized pediatric surgery and follow-up care. An entire family benefits when a child regains vision. Now able to attend school, a child's life is changed forever.

www.seva.org/giftsofservice



The Launch of A New Initiative!



35th Anniversary – Join the Celebration!

Seva's legacy of compassion in action reaches a milestone this year with the celebration of our 35th year of service.

We are proud of all Seva is able to accomplish each and every year thanks to you, our generous and caring community of supporters.

And we believe, when we have things to celebrate, let's celebrate!!!

Over the past 35 years, Seva has become well known for throwing truly epic world-class benefit events. With founding Board Members like humanitarian activist Wavy Gravy and spiritual leader Ram Dass, our events tend to bring together an unique array of talent and are once-in-a-lifetime experiences!

The proceeds from these benefit concerts and gatherings help us to serve one million people each year with eye care services as we strive to restore eyesight and prevent blindness around the globe.

And as part of our celebration, we'd like to take a moment to recognize the many generous volunteers, sponsors, and friends who have enabled us to organize our hugely successful concerts and events year after year. We want to send a special shout out to Seva founding board member Wavy Gravy, who dedicates so much of his life to producing these incredible FUNdraisers.

We are also proud to have the support of so many talented artists, including members of the Grateful Dead family (like Bob Weir who serves as an Honorary Lifetime Board Member), and world-class performers like Phish, Ani DiFranco, Bonnie Raitt, Jackson Browne, Elvis Costello, Bruce Hornsby, Crosby & Nash, Steve Earle, Joan Baez, and Dr. John to name just a few.

In honor of Seva's 35th Anniversary, we're excited to invite you to join our celebration. On November 2nd, 2013 at the Fillmore in San Francisco, Seva will throw what is sure to be an incredible party. This event features Hot Tuna, Ivan Neville's Dumpstaphunk, and the five time Grammy Award winning group The Blind Boys of Alabama, plus special guests! Tickets and details about our VIP package, which include access to a special *meet and greet* afterparty with the artists are available on our website at www.seva.org/fillmore.



Check out our website for a full list of artists who have performed for Seva over the years!
www.seva.org/events

For over 30 years, Seva Foundation's Native American program has addressed a broad range of community issues from cultural preservation to educational and economic development, conservation, and health and wellness. This year, we are proud to announce the launch of a new focus, the American Indian Sight Initiative (AISI), a U.S. based program focused on addressing vision needs among Native Americans.

This initiative stems from Seva's efforts to streamline our mission and tap into our global expertise in providing vision care, while still honoring our commitment to serving American Indians. There are many parallels between the eye health needs of Native Americans and the underserved communities we support around the world. Despite the existence of U.S. government supported tribal health programs, unmet eye health needs among our Native population are significant:

- Only a minority of tribal health programs have an eye care provider on-site.
- Tribal health programs that provide vision services do not have adequate funding, staffing, or equipment.
- Due to their limited resources, most programs cannot conduct outreach activities, so providers must wait for patients to come into the clinic.
- Language and other cultural barriers prevent American Indians from seeking eye care. Few eye care providers are American Indian.

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A Day in the Life of a Seva Outreach Worker



Mr. Leng Pisith



Meet Mr. Leng Pisith.

Leng is a community eye health outreach worker based out of the Seva field office in Battambang, Cambodia. Each week Leng packs up his set of basic optometry tools and travels to remote communities throughout his assigned region of Cambodia along the border of Thailand.

The area he travels is rural and undeveloped with particularly high poverty rates. Signs along the roads warn of the presence of land mines that still riddle the fields. Farmers missing a leg or arm are a sad and all-too-common sight.

To reach isolated villages Leng travels on his Seva provided motorbike, riding for hours until the pavement ends — this is when his journey really begins.

Dirt roads quickly turn to muddy, washed out paths. Passing villages of thatch roof huts, Leng often finds himself in areas where there are no hospitals and no clinics.

Families in these villages live in poverty, or even extreme poverty (surviving on less than \$1 per day) and struggle to grow enough food to sustain themselves.

As Leng rolls into the first village, he explains “I cover as much as 120 miles each day. When I arrive in a village I first meet with the community leadership and elders and plan for a group eye screening.” With their blessing, he gains the trust of those who live in the surrounding area. Leng goes on to note “I’ll work in the remote community for 5 days and screen approximately 40 people per day.”

After locating a central place, he unpacks his eye exam tools and prepares for the first day of screenings. The eye chart Leng has brought looks a bit different as it does not have a

variety of letters as we are used to, but rather has been designed so that he can provide eye exams where more than one in four who come to have their eyes checked are illiterate.



As word spreads throughout the village, community members line up to have their vision checked. Many are elderly and arrive led by a grandchild. These elders often are unable to even see the eye charts, suffering from mature cataracts that have clouded their vision leaving them to struggle with blindness. It is a common story for Leng to hear that the child who led them is not in school. With their parents busy in the fields tending to the crops, the child is left home to care for their grandparent who would be otherwise helpless at home alone.

Other patients who arrive suffer from eye injuries, infections, and other potentially blinding and often painful conditions.

Leng carefully evaluates each person who comes to have their eyes checked. He explains that donors to Seva will provide them with whatever it is they need so that they will be able to see clearly again.

For children, this may mean simply providing a pair of prescription glasses, allowing them to see the blackboard, to stay in school, and hopefully allowing them a chance at a better future.

For the elders and those who have conditions that require corrective surgery, Leng arranges free transportation to the Seva funded eye clinic in Battambang.

Here, thanks to Seva’s generous donors, these patients receive world-class eye care. For the many with cataracts, a 15-minute surgery with a man-made lens implant restores their sight, providing a new lease on life.

These services, even just the cost of travel to see a doctor, would have been prohibitive to these rural villagers.

World Health Organization figures estimate that around the globe 80% of blindness can be prevented or cured.

Leng notes that “The best part of my job is seeing the success rate of the eye care and teaching people about the services.” He goes on to explain “when I can show them someone who has already had a successful treatment, they are not so afraid of the eye care.”

“One patient I identified could not see anything at all, not even the faces of his grandchildren. Thanks to Seva he was able to receive surgery. I was there when he first saw his grandchildren, and he also recognized me. He called out to thank me for bringing him to the clinic.”

Thanks to outreach workers like Leng and Seva donors like you, we have restored eyesight to nearly 3.5 million people around the globe.

MEET:

Ram Bahadur Pandley

Age 56, male

Family: his wife, 8 children

(5 daughters and 3 sons)



Seva's eye care team met Mr. Ram Bahadur when he and his wife came to a Seva remote eye camp in the town of Arghakhanchi, Nepal.

Bahadur couldn't see our faces because he had completely lost his eyesight, but he told us his story.

Many years ago, Bahadur explained how he had lost vision in his right eye after an accident while working to make gravel for concrete. He was breaking rocks by hand when a piece flew up and injured his eye. His eye got infected and though he went to traditional healers, he did not seek medical care from eye specialists because of his poverty. Eventually the infection worsened and he lost his eye. Had Bahadur simply had access to eye care at that time, a \$1.00 bottle of antibiotic drops would have treated his infection.

In the years that followed, Bahadur began to lose vision in his left eye as well, until eventually he went completely blind. He didn't know why his left eye had lost vision and was too poor to afford a visit to an eye doctor.

Bahadur explained that for years he has been completely dependent on his wife and children to guide him by the hand to his food and to the bathroom. Without eyesight, he felt he had become a burden on his family and seemed very sad.

Bahadur's wife heard that Seva was setting up a surgical eye camp near their remote village in Nepal. Filled with hope, she carefully led him by the hand along a rocky mountainside, slowly making the journey to the Seva camp.

Upon arrival, Seva's team of doctors guided Bahadur to an eye chart where his vision was tested. Not only was he unable to see the eye chart, he could not even count the fingers of the doctor held just a foot in front of his face. In desperation, Bahadur reached out to try to feel the doctor's hand to count the fingers by touch.

It was determined that though he had been blind for years, Seva would be able to restore eyesight to his left eye by removing the mature cataract which had formed and clouded his vision.

That afternoon, thanks to the generosity of Seva donors like you, Bahadur was provided with a free cataract surgery. The simple 15-minute procedure would reverse years of blindness and suffering.

Following the surgery, an eye patch was carefully placed over the eye and it was allowed to heal overnight. Bahadur and his wife spent the night at a friend's home nearby, waiting and hoping for a new life the next day.

In the misty morning light, Bahadur waited quietly for the bandage to be removed. As soon as the patch was removed he was able to see his wife's face!

Within about two minutes, he stood up and began walking around on his own, heading over to examine the eye chart that he had been unable to see just the day before.

Bahadur's smile beamed for all to see. But he was not the only one smiling. Bahadur's wife as well was clearly thrilled. Her broad smile showed how relieved and happy she was that both of them had regained their independence and dignity. She told us how grateful she is to not have to lead him everywhere and how proud she is that he will once again be independent.

For over 35 years, Seva has been helping people just like Bahadur. To date, nearly 3.5 million people have had their sight surgically restored, and 1 million are provided with glasses or other eye care services each year around the globe.

Your support not only provides eye care, but also helps to train local eye care professionals and build local capacity so that more people like Bahadur can have access to affordable eye care.

We join Bahadur in saying thank you for your compassion and generosity. Without support from donors like you, none of this work would be possible.

World Sight Day

October 10th, 2013



For most of us in the United States and in other developed countries; we wake up each day, open our eyes, and greet the morning.

Most of us take for granted that we are able to see the world around us.

But sadly, for 285 million people around the world, that is not the case.

Each year on **World Sight Day**, Seva and our global network of eye care providers join forces to raise awareness about the fact that 8 out of 10 cases of blindness and low vision around the world are curable or preventable.

The World Sight Day theme this year is **"Get Your Eyes Tested!"** As a preventative measure, Seva urges you to get your eyes tested at least once a year.

Sadly, we know that many people around the globe are unable to afford access to eye care services, even if they are experiencing low vision or have sustained an eye injury.

It is all too common for those living in poverty to go blind from a cause that could have easily been treated and prevented.

This World Sight Day, we urge you to join Seva's campaign to restore eyesight and prevent blindness — with a focus on bringing eye care services to those in need.

A donation of just \$50 will provide someone living in poverty with sight-restoring cataract surgery. Find out how you can get involved by visiting www.seva.org/worldsightday.



Center for Innovation in Eye Care Spotlight — VMANNN, West Bengal, India



Just as Seva service programs reach out to provide eye care to people in need, Seva's Global Sight Initiative is focused on helping eye hospitals improve.

Seva organizes and helps to fund the efforts of nine "mentor" eye care institutions. Mentors share their expertise with eye hospitals seeking to strengthen their services and sustainability.

"At the core of this approach is a mentor hospital that demonstrates the high volume, high quality, sustainable services that mentees strive to achieve," explains Dr. Sandra Dratler, a Seva Advisor. "The mentor serves as the 'laboratory' — a place where mentees can see practical daily processes in real-time."

Mentors can easily relate to the issues facing eye hospitals in their quest to reach the many people who need services in their communities.

Seva's network of mentor institutions has worked through the various challenges. They have developed important strategies for the establishment of high-quality surgical programs, attract and retain professional staff willing to work in rural areas, and are successful at building visibility within the community.

By sharing these strategies, mentee hospitals learn to rapidly increase the number of patients served — with a particular focus on providing care to the poor.

Seva is proud to highlight one such mentor eye hospital — the Vivekananda Mission Asram Netra Niramay Niketan (VMANNN) located in rural West Bengal, India, which serves an area comprising approximately 10 million people.

VMANNN joined Seva's Global Sight Initiative as a mentor institution in 2006. The staff of VMANNN knows the challenges facing hospitals that want to provide quality services

to all patients — they have been focused on self-sustainable comprehensive eye care delivery in their community for nearly 20 years.

With support from Seva Foundation and other Global Sight Initiative partners, VMANNN now provides training and capacity building services to six other hospitals in Seva's network.

It takes time and consideration to assess hospitals and build relationships with potential partners to ensure it is a successful partnership. VMANNN's Chief Medical Officer Dr. Subhra Sil notes that "we look for partners with good management, committed doctors, and good teamwork between clinical and non-clinical."

"VMANNN is like our parent — they look out for us and want us to grow," explains mentee partner Ashim Pramanik with Sundarban Social Development Center (SSDC).

With VMANNN's assistance, SSDC has increased its number of cataract surgeries by 23% since it joined Seva's Global Sight Initiative in 2009.

Mentee hospital staff regularly learn from watching VMANNN in action.

When Purnima, another VMANNN mentee, visited for the first time, the staff noted how important it had been to have the opportunity to observe VMANNN's outreach camps.

In rural areas, people do not know that eye care services exist or that services could restore their sight. VMANNN's rural screening activities were very effective in building that critical awareness as a first step to reaching underserved communities.

This was an important lesson for Purnima in how to attract more patients. The benefits of the partnership are not just one way. "When you try to analyze someone else's systems you have to analyze your own," said VMANNN's director, Dr. Asim Sil. "Let us interact. The more we interact the more we benefit."

VMANNN MENTOR NETWORK



-  VMANNN, West Bengal, India
-  SSDC, West Bengal, India
-  Marium Eye Hospital
-  Kalinga Eye Hospital
-  Purnima Netralaya Hospital
-  Siliguri Greater Lions Eye Hospital
-  Lok Nayak Jai Prakash

www.vmaindia.net

LOCATION

**West Bengal,
India**



NUMBER OF
EYE SURGERIES
(2012):

14,000

TOTAL NUMBER
OF EYE EXAMS
(2012):

94,000



NUMBER OF PARTNER
HOSPITALS SUPPORTED:

6

GIFTS of SERVICE

Gifts that do a world of good



We are proud to be publishing Seva's 35th Anniversary edition of this ever-popular alternative gifts catalog. Every year, thousands of Seva supporters donate to Seva while showing their love for friends and family by giving Gifts of Service in their honor. Alternative gifts are rapidly gaining popularity, and Seva's Gifts of Service offers particularly moving gifts.

Our most popular gift continues to be the Gift of Sight. For just \$50, you can restore eyesight to someone in a poor community around the globe who has lost their eyesight due to a preventable eye condition.

Imagine your delight to open a beautiful card and read the personalized message from your loved one explaining how, in your honor, a person was given back their eye sight, perhaps after years of being blind. This is the experience that Gifts of Service honorees have every day.

The current issue is available for download on the Seva website at www.seva.org/catalog, or you can request a copy be mailed to you by calling the Seva office at **510.845.7382**.

The 35th Anniversary Gifts of Service catalog will hit mailboxes in October, just in time for the 2013 holiday season.

This year, join the many Seva donors who have taken up a new tradition, let loved ones know that instead of traditional gifts for your birthday and holidays, that you would prefer they give you Gifts of Service!

Learn more about Gifts of Service or shop online by visiting www.seva.org/giftsofservice.

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The Launch of A New Initiative!

- Many American Indians cannot access existing eye care services due to limited incomes and transportation as well as long waiting lists.
- Unless American Indians have insurance coverage, they must pay out of pocket for eyeglasses, which are still out of reach for many on a limited income.

American Indians are at greatest risk for diabetic eye disease, such as diabetic retinopathy, due to having the highest rates of diabetes among all racial/ethnic groups in the U.S. However, only half of American Indian diabetics get a recommended annual eye exam.

Seva Foundation's current focus is on expanding eye care services to Native populations living in California and New Mexico. We are exploring providing support for American Indian vision technician training, making glasses more affordable, and telemedicine opportunities in the provision of prescription eyeglasses and diabetic retinopathy screening.

School Screening Program in New Mexico

Seva Foundation and Helen Keller International's ChildSight® program are partners in a school screening initiative in the Gallup, New Mexico, area that provides students with professional vision screenings and, if needed, a pair of prescription eyeglasses, all at no cost to their families.

Native American children tend to have a higher rate of astigmatism, one of the three types of refractive errors, the others being nearsightedness and farsightedness. Astigmatism is caused by an irregular shape of the cornea or lens. In the 2012-2013 academic year, 5,209 students were screened and 1,501 (29%) were provided with a pair of prescription eyeglasses. In addition, 221 (4%) were referred for follow-up care. Compounding this high prevalence is the critical level of rural poverty within the Navajo Reservation. These vision screenings are a bright spot in a community where vision care is neither affordable nor accessible to the vast majority of families.

By providing children a free pair of eyeglasses, we're not only providing them with ability to see clearly we're also giving them back their potential to learn, to earn a living, and to engage with the world.

To learn more visit www.seva.org/AISI

Seva Gear

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A great way to help spread the word about Seva!

www.seva.org/merch



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spirit of service

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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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Please pass this newsletter along to a friend!

“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
ACTIVIST



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