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Namaste.

My name is Dr. Salma KC Rai and I am an ophthalmologist from Nepal.

I was born in a remote village of Nepal. It was my father's dream that I should study medicine so that I could serve the poor communities in my country. Thanks to the support of Seva donors, my father's dream came true. Seva supported my ophthalmology training and, for the past seven years, I have been practicing ophthalmology and providing eye care for the people in Nepal.



I'm examining a child with a slit lamp, but because he's so small his mother has to hold him up while I look into his eyes.

In May 2009, I began a one-year fellowship program in Canada so that I could gain specialist training in pediatric ophthalmology. The fellowship is based at UBC and the BC Children's Hospital in Vancouver and exists thanks to the generosity of Dr. John Pratt-Johnson, a renowned pediatric ophthalmologist who supports the training of doctors from developing countries. It has provided me with the skills that I need to treat eye conditions in children back home in Nepal.

Just before I visited Canada, I led an eye care team to a remote village in the hills; it was the village I had grown up in. It was one of the most moving and satisfying experiences of my life.

We drove for hours on rough roads, in a jeep packed with eye care support staff, surgical equipment and supplies. On our arrival, we were greeted by the entire community.

Many people had walked for days to reach the eye camp. Over the course of our three-day stay, I operated on 65 people for cataracts, including my own grandmother! Our team also tested vision and checked for eye problems in children from many of the surrounding regions. Four thousand children at 22 schools were tested.

The gratitude of the people was overwhelming. Countless garlands of bright orange marigolds were draped around my neck. Everywhere we went, people stopped to thank us for giving them the gift of sight.

The thanks must go to you too. As a Seva supporter, you make this work possible through your generous donations.

Since 1982, Seva Canada has been working to restore sight and prevent blindness. Seva is truly a development organization,



Here I am in the village where I grew up, removing the bandages from cataract patients and checking their eyes one day after surgery. During that one camp we operated on 65 patients, the youngest being 14 and the eldest about 85.

supporting both the training of doctors like me as well as the creation of local facilities so that eye care is accessible to all. Seva goes to the hard-to-reach areas where there is virtually no access to eye care.

Recently I had the opportunity to share stories of my work in Nepal with ophthalmologists in the Vancouver training program. I showed them pictures of the surgical camps held in the remote hill districts and of people carrying their blind relatives on their backs just to reach the camp. I shared stories about the patients I see and the eye conditions that I treat at the hospital in Lumbini where I am based.

At the end of my talk, many of the doctors were in tears. They were shocked and saddened at the number of people requiring eye care, the limited resources, and the difficulty accessing basic eye care. Some of the doctors told me that they never realized how lucky people in Canada were to have such excellent resources and easy access to eye care.

It's a dangerous world for the blind in developing countries. Without sight, children and adults alike can have serious falls, some with terrible consequences. If the main provider in the family loses their vision, they can no longer work and the whole family can starve. Some go blind while waiting for these surgical camps to reach them. If left untreated for too long, patients who have cataracts may get complications such as glaucoma, leaving them permanently blind. Around the world, there are millions of blind people who don't have access to any care. They become a burden on their families and spend years living with poor vision that could have been treated in most cases.



Checking the eyesight of children is a vital part of every Seva program. The period from birth to age 8 is critical for the development of a person's vision, so if a child has a vision problem it is an urgent matter.

Photo courtesy of Johannes Burge

Thanks to you, Seva is reaching out to those most in need -- the very poor, women and children, and those who live in remote areas. As it has always done, Seva trains local doctors like me to do the work, so that we can provide eye care and pass on our knowledge to local people.

For me, it is very rewarding to be able to give the gift of sight. I am proud to be involved with Seva's work, which now provides eye care services in the villages and remote communities not just in Nepal, but in Tibet, Cambodia, eastern Africa, Guatemala and Egypt.

Ninety percent of the world's blind live in the developing world. Eighty percent of the 45 million blind people could see if they had access to care.

Please support Seva's work to reach those in need and give the gift of sight.

Your gift will help train doctors, establish eye care centres, screen children for eye problems, fund eye camps in remote areas, and provide equipment and medical supplies.

I have seen Seva in action with my own eyes and it is the most beautiful sight.

Salma

P.S. Please consider becoming a Circle of Sharing monthly donor and supporting Seva's work throughout the year.

To donate you can complete the enclosed form or call us toll-free 1-877-460-6622 Mon-Fri 8-4 Pacific time, or you can donate online at www.seva.ca by clicking the "Donate Now" button.