



Reducing the Burden of Childhood Blindness in Africa

Seva Canada Society was founded in 1982 to eliminate preventable blindness and restore sight. Seva provides funding and expertise to community partners in Nepal, Tibet, India and Tanzania to deliver community and clinical eye care programs that reach the most vulnerable populations – women and children, the very poor and those living in rural areas.

The Need: Worldwide there are at least 200,000 children blind due to cataract. Currently, un-operated cataract and amblyopia (lazy eye) due to late-operated cataract are the main causes of blindness and severe visual impairment in children in eastern Africa.



The approach: Seva and its partner in Africa, the Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology (KCCO), believe that to succeed in eradicating preventable and treatable blindness in children, we must adopt a “whole family approach” to eye care service delivery. This means finding children with cataract and getting them surgery as soon as possible and providing education to parents regarding the urgency of the situation and their role in post surgical care. This process creates strong links between the community and the hospital which ensures that children receive the eye care they need and can be integrated into their communities to lead normal lives.

What is KCCO?: The Kilimanjaro Centre for Community Ophthalmology (KCCO) was co-founded by Dr. Susan Lewallen and Dr. Paul Courtright in 2001 and is dedicated to blindness prevention throughout eastern Africa. Seva is a charter founder of the Center. Dr. Lewallen and Dr. Courtright have been awarded the 2008 International Blindness Prevention Award of the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Their 30 years in international eye care have included development of some of the most important program service models in Africa, as well as a wide range of clinical and community ophthalmology research and training. Dr. Courtright is a world leader on the issue of gender equity and blindness.

The economic burden of blindness is estimated to be 42 billion dollars annually.
Childhood blindness comprises 14 billion.

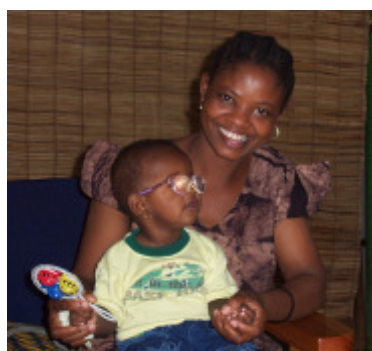
The Goal: The goal of this project is to triple the number of children receiving sight restoring surgery by developing and implementing a media campaign and education program to raise awareness of the problems of childhood cataract (early recognition, treatment and follow up) and assist with referrals throughout the country.

How you can help:

- Train a Childhood Blindness and Low Vision Coordinator to create a comprehensive childhood blindness program in Tanzania.
- Train health workers to recognize a “white pupil” in a child.
- Establish a system to monitor children who have received services, the medical follow up of those after surgery and their integration back into their community.
- Document and publish the challenges and successes in establishing and managing childhood programs to assist the creation of other programs throughout East Africa.
- Prepare and disseminate a “Childhood Blindness” brochure to be used by health workers and parents.
- Replicate knowledge from existing childhood blindness and low vision programs into action in other African countries.

Budget:

Estimated annual budget for childhood blindness initiative	
Training:	
Childhood Blindness and Low Vision Coordinator	\$ 4,000
Training of health workers	\$ 4,000
Post training support	\$ 2,000
Salary for Childhood Blindness and Low Vision Coordinator	\$ 6,000
Getting children to hospital:	
Promotion (radio and brochures)	\$1,000
Transport for children and parents	\$4,000
Phone communication with parents	\$1,000
KCCO Staff and Support (mentoring and follow-up)	\$9,000
Supplies:	
Frames and Low Vision Devices	\$5,000
Pediatric IOLs	\$4,000
Program implementation	\$5000
Total:	\$45,000



For more information on how you can help Seva restore sight and prevent blindness in Africa please contact:

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