



Fund a Cataract Surgical Eye Camp in Tibet

THE NEED: Tibet has one of the highest rates of blindness in the world. Most of this blindness is due to cataract. Cataracts can be removed and sight restored with a relatively simple and highly cost-effective operation, yet most Tibetans blinded by cataracts never regain their sight because they cannot access the limited eye care services available. The Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) alone has over 30,000 people who are cataract blind with an annual incidence of over 2,000.

The huge land area of Tibet, the dispersed nature of the population, the inaccessibility of much of the terrain, the lack of public transport, and the poverty of the majority of the population add to the challenge of delivering adequate eye care in the region. Eye camps are part of the solution.

SEVA IN TIBET: Seva has been working in Tibet since 1995 and is the leading eye care provider in Tibet, responsible for two-thirds of the cataract surgeries in both the Tibetan Autonomous Region and in Tibetan areas outside the TAR.

Each year Seva runs up to 25 mobile eye camps and each camp serves about 300 or 400 people and does up to 300 sight-restoring cataract surgeries. In addition, thousands of patients are screened each year for refractive error and other conditions. Beneficiaries of sight-restoring surgery range from young children to the very elderly. Local Tibetans call the surgeons "eye openers".

Here are some stories from recent camps:

"When I was blind, life became dreadfully difficult and suicide was the only thing on my mind. I thought that my death might ease my husband's burden of supporting the family. There were a couple of nights when I intended to bump my head very hard against the wall to end my life. However, I considered that my death would leave a tragedy for my four children, ranging in age from 11 years old to 2 months."

Renzen, a middle-aged mother of 4 who received cataract surgery at a Seva eye camp in Tibet, August 2008

Datso, a blind 12-year-old girl, before surgery in Aug 2008 (right): *"I am blind and don't deserve any friends. I am not capable of doing anything but sitting in my home with my grandparents all the time. Nobody is willing to play with me. I can't see now and I am afraid that I won't see ever again in my life."*

... and after her surgery: *"I feel like doing everything now, but first of all I need to see my one-month old brother at home!"*

BUDGET: The total cost of one eye camp (1–2 weeks long) is \$15,000. This covers supplies, medicine and intraocular lenses, transportation, patient subsidies, staff costs, implementation and organization.

