



Small Vancouver NGO Has a Big Impact on the Lives of Women and Girls Around the World

*Seva Canada showcases their research and award-winning gender equity strategies with the global community as a sponsor of the **Women Deliver Conference, June 3 – 6***

VANCOUVER, BC – May 28, 2019 – Vancouver-based charity, [Seva Canada](#), the leader in gender equity in eye care, will be on the global stage **June 3 – 6, 2019** as a sponsor of [Women Deliver](#), the world's largest conference on gender equality and the health, rights, and wellbeing of girls and women, to share its research and strategies to improve the lives of millions in developing countries.

Last year alone, Seva and its partners gave the power of sight to approximately 61,000 women and girls in low-income countries through sight-restoring surgeries and hundreds of thousands more benefited from eye care services including glasses and medicine.

Most of the 36 million people worldwide who are blind are women and girls living in developing countries. For many, blindness and visual impairment means poverty and loss of opportunity. Blindness limits childhood education and minimizes adult productivity, which negatively impacts individuals, families and communities.

“Prioritising investments in vision and gender-integrated health interventions is a no-brainer because it ensures women and girls are healthy, can get an education and work, and help lift themselves and their families out of poverty. When women have an income they spend it on good food, healthcare and education for their family, improving the lives of the next generation.

Seva Canada's research and award-winning strategies connect women and girls in developing countries with the eye care they need. This knowledge can be applied and adapted to many other public health issues and we want to ensure the information is available to everyone. That is what is so powerful about the Women Deliver conference, the opportunity to share and learn from each other to make a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of entire communities.” – Penny Lyons, Seva Canada Executive Director

The World Bank has stated that restoring sight is one of the most cost-effective health interventions.

80% of blindness is avoidable by prevention or treatment with cataracts being the leading cause of treatable blindness worldwide. A 15-minute cataract surgery costing as little as \$50 can restore a woman's sight, dignity, productivity and independence.

“Sponsoring, participating and sharing what has worked in eye care with the global community at the Women Deliver conference is imperative because we know that when women and girls succeed, we all succeed.”

– Penny Lyons, Seva Canada Executive Director

Men and women go blind at nearly the same rate but in low-income countries, a large majority of those who

receive treatment are men because women face socioeconomic and cultural barriers to accessing care.

The disparity is especially drastic among children, where 2 out of 3 children living with treatable blindness are girls. Girls face all the same barriers as their mothers with the added challenge of being too young to advocate for themselves.

For every additional year a girl stays in school her income will rise by 10-20%, UNESCO.

Human capital – defined as the collective potential of individuals – is directly linked to a country's growth and

is one of its greatest assets. Human potential grows, in part, by ensuring equitable access to health and education, promoting innovation and creating sustainability, both human and financial.

Seva Canada builds human potential by creating sustainable eye care programs that ensure entire populations receive high-quality eye care services, including the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

If women could fully and equally participate in the economy, global GDP could increase by 26% - up to \$28 trillion by 2025 according to the McKinsey Global Institute.

But it wasn't until Seva Canada supported and published the first research identifying gender inequality in the treatment of blindness in every region of the world that anyone was even aware of the inequity and the repercussions for the social and economic development of entire communities.

Seva, along with its partners, was the first eye care organization to create strategies to overcome the inequities and to share them with the global eye care community.

The good news is that globally, due to strategies like the ones that Seva and its partners have implemented, the number of women who are blind has decreased by 10% since the original research was conducted.

Unfortunately, that statistical improvement does not extend to girls who are still only half as likely as boys to receive eye care services.

“While significant progress has been made, we know that for poverty reduction and overall health of populations, women and girls need to have equitable access not only to eye care but all areas of healthcare. Sponsoring, participating and sharing what has worked in eye care with the global community at the Women Deliver conference is imperative for Seva Canada because we know that when women and girls succeed, we all succeed.”– Penny Lyons, Seva Canada Executive Director

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Seva Canada at Women Deliver:

- Visit Seva Canada's Booth (#623) in the Fueling Station at the Vancouver Convention Centre
- See Executive Director, Penny Lyons at Ask the Expert Desk Wednesday, June 5th 1:00pm– 1:30pm PST
- Watch [Anjana](#), produced by Seva Canada and created by Analog Content Inc. on [June 5th](#) 1:30pm PST at the Film Festival. The short film shares the story of a Nepalese girl and her family's journey for sight.
- Learn more at Equalrighttosight.com or by reading our [Gender and Blindness Booklet: Addressing Inequity](#)

About Women Deliver:

The Women Deliver 2019 conference, the world's largest conference on gender equality and the health, rights, and wellbeing of girls and women in this decade, will take place June 3-6, 2019 in Vancouver, Canada at the Convention Centre. It will serve as a catalyst to achieve a more gender equal world.

About Seva Canada: Seva Canada (seva.ca) is a charitable organization that restores sight and prevents blindness in developing countries. Since 1982, Seva has given over 5 million people the power of sight through life-changing surgeries and provided eye care services including glasses and medicine to millions more.

Seva works with local partners to create sustainable eye care programs that achieve long-term change, are culturally sensitive and reach those most in need – women, children and people living in extreme poverty and isolation.

For more information or to schedule an interview please contact:

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