



## For immediate release

### **Bringing Hope in Sight – The Importance of Eye Health on World Sight Day**

**Calgary, October 2, 2020** — At least 1 billion people have a vision impairment that could have been prevented or has yet to be treated. Each year, Calgary-based Operation Eyesight celebrates World Sight Day to bring awareness to the importance of making global eye health a priority. In 2020, World Sight Day takes place on October 8, with a theme of “Hope in Sight”.

This year, Operation Eyesight will be taking social media followers to visit their country offices, partner hospitals, board locations and corporate partners. Starting in India, participants will travel to Nepal, Kenya, Zambia, Ghana, the U.K. and North America.

“This event will give people a unique opportunity to see over the course of one day how Operation Eyesight is preventing blindness and restoring sight for entire communities in need,” says **Aly Bandali, President and CEO of Operation Eyesight.**

Avoidable blindness is a global issue that has been made even worse by the strain COVID-19 has put on health systems, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. To mitigate this strain in the countries where they work, in March of 2020, Operation Eyesight shifted priorities by applying the organization’s systems and experience in providing quality eye care to meet the immediate need, providing education and supplies that limited the spread of COVID-19 in these communities.

Recently, the World Health Assembly approved a resolution marking the next major milestone for global eye health. Member countries agreed to prioritize eye health, integrating it into their primary health systems. They recognize that the availability of quality eye care is critical to achieving Universal Health Coverage. This resolution follows the October 2019 release of the World Health Organization’s [World Report on Vision](#), highlighting the urgent need for global action in the fight against avoidable blindness, and proposing to make integrated people-centred eye care the model of choice.

“Our Hospital-Based Community Eye Health model aligns with the WHO’s recommended approach,” says Bandali. “We’re able to empower people to take control of their health and create better outcomes for their families for years to come.”

Operation Eyesight works with local partner hospitals and governments, bringing sustainable, quality care to both paying patients and to those who cannot afford to pay. Operation Eyesight-trained community health workers go door to door in vulnerable communities, screening people for vision problems, referring them for treatment, and educating them on eye health and general health. Operation Eyesight first launched its Hospital-Based Community Eye Health Model in India in 2009, and has since expanded it to Nepal, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya and Zambia.

“The burden of vision impairment weighs more heavily on low- and middle-income countries, and the global demand for eye care is set to surge in the coming years,” says Bandali. “We all have a role to play in making eye health a priority, both for ourselves here in Canada and for those around the world who are struggling needlessly with vision impairment.”

With support from donors in Canada and beyond, Operation Eyesight has restored sight and prevented blindness for millions of people. To learn more or make a donation, visit [operationeyesight.com](http://operationeyesight.com).

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**About Operation Eyesight**

Operation Eyesight is an international development organization working to prevent blindness and restore sight in low- and middle-income countries. Founded in Calgary in 1963, the organization currently has eye health programs in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia and Zambia. In partnership with local hospitals and governments, Operation Eyesight invests in sustainable treatment, prevention and community development activities to address specific eye health problems as well as the root causes of avoidable blindness. To learn more, visit [operationeyesight.com](http://operationeyesight.com).

**About World Sight Day – October 8, 2020**

World Sight Day is an annual day of awareness held on the second Thursday of October, to focus global attention on blindness and vision impairment. It's coordinated by the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, of which Operation Eyesight is a member. This year's theme is "Hope in Sight". For more information, visit [iapb.org/wsd20](http://iapb.org/wsd20).