

orbis eyewitness

Inside:

Lucia's sight
is restored

Vital training for
women in areas
affected by conflict



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Bringing Eye Care Everywhere

Welcome



Welcome to your latest edition of Eyewitness. Your donations have allowed the Flying Eye Hospital to return to the skies on a mission to train female eye care professionals working in areas affected by conflict.

As a female ophthalmologist, I understand the challenges many women face in my profession. I was inspired and honoured to volunteer on this mission.

It was eye opening to interact with women medical professionals with difficulties far beyond just insufficient resources.

The women that attended were from areas where conflict can suppress their

ability to learn, including Afghanistan and Syria. For all the challenges we face, it was incredible to hear about the challenges these women and their patients face every day.

Your ongoing support grants me the opportunity and privilege to volunteer with Orbis, sharing my skills and knowledge to ensure more sight can be saved across the world. We all play a vital role in Orbis's global community. Thank you so much for your continuing support.

Samita M

Dr Samita Moolani
Orbis Volunteer



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Vietnam: the good news story



Across Vietnam there are three million children who are visually impaired. 400,000 adults and 23,000 children are living with blindness. Orbis have been working in Vietnam to change this since 1996.

Key achievements:

Thanks to your donations, major successes include hosting seven Flying Eye Hospital visits, setting up 17 centres for screening and treatment of retinopathy of prematurity (which causes

Last year in Vietnam:

38,500 patients were able to access eye care

13,300 community eye screenings and examinations took place

115 eye care professionals were trained.

premature babies to go blind), a major issue in Vietnam, and contributing to six paediatric eye care centres.

And the best news is that cases of blindness have fallen by 26% in Vietnam since 2000.



To get the latest Orbis news, go to our website, www.orbis.org.uk/ news, or sign up for our emails at www.orbis.org.uk



Women in areas affected by conflict receive vital training

In many areas affected by conflict, vulnerable people are unable to access vital eye care. This leads to lives being devastated by avoidable blindness.

Female eye care professionals can face additional barriers to learning and practising their profession. If we can remove these barriers, we can train more doctors and nurses to save even more people's sight.

The Flying Eye Hospital has helped to restore the sight of thousands of people around the world. In October 2022,

"It's been very helpful in improving my skills, especially in our country, as we don't have a programme like this."

Dr Tasneem, Ophthalmology Resident, Sudan

it took to the skies again for its first international training project since the pandemic began. The programme, which took place in Doha, aimed to train women working in



eye care from conflict affected countries.

The Flying Eye Hospital provides a unique way to offer training in a safe environment. The programme used virtual reality, cutting-edge prosthetics and life-like mannequins, so that eye care professionals could build their skills and confidence.

Female doctors and nurses from Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Syria and Yemen participated in the training.

Dr Tasneem, Ophthalmology Resident, Sudan said: **"I feel amazing, this programme was**

very well organised. I would like to thank all the Orbis team for their great effort...it was awesome to be a part of this project. It's been very helpful in improving my skills, especially in our country, as we don't have a programme like this."

We hope that this programme will empower a new generation of female eye doctors and nurses, and improve the quality of eye-care in some of the world's most vulnerable communities.



To support future training on the Flying Eye Hospital, visit www.orbis.org.uk/give or complete and return the enclosed form.

Dr Ron Pelton: My Orbis experience



Orbis's online training platform, Cybersight, has helped to save the sight of many people around the world. It allows experts to share their knowledge and skills with eye care professionals from anywhere in the world. That wouldn't be possible without the support of donors like you.

Dr Ron Pelton, who works in Colorado Springs, USA has delivered sight-saving surgery in Mongolia, Vietnam, India and the Philippines. Here he explains the impact he has

seen Cybersight have:

"I have met a lot of wonderful surgeons throughout my time with Orbis including Dr Battsetseg from Mongolia. She recently contacted me via Cybersight about Sarnai, who had a benign tumour in her eyelid. We talked about the options and potential issues. She went ahead and everything went extremely well. I felt



Cybersight

Cybersight is the world's largest free-to-access online training platform. It allows our expert volunteers to teach and support eye care teams around the world using the latest technological advancements.

"I have seen the incredible difference you make to people's lives around the world"

honoured to help Sarnai and Dr Battsetseg."

"I think that our future for distance learning and for teaching anywhere in the world is incredibly hopeful. It's incredible to think that at some point I can at anytime, anywhere, be of assistance to somebody who's working with a patient they need help with. Cybersight has really taken teaching to a whole new dimension. It means that

virtually any doctor associated with Orbis anywhere in the world can reach out to get advice on a case."

"And it's all thanks to the amazing Orbis supporters. I'd like to say a massive thank you to every one of you who has donated and helped us to provide training and support around the world. I have seen the incredible difference you make to people's lives around the world."

Your gifts can fund more training for surgeons like Dr Battsetseg. To donate visit www.orbis.org.uk/give or return your completed donation form.



Lucia steps into the light

BEFORE

By the time Lucia arrived at the Solwezi District Hospital in Zambia, her world was dark and lonely. She'd lost nearly her full sight and could only see shadows.

"I'm not happy being a blind woman. I used to do my daily activities, but now I can't see." As there were no health centres nearby, Lucia made an arduous 120km journey from her home to reach the hospital.

Mr Chenga Oliver is the only cataract surgeon in the Solwezi district and uses equipment donated through Orbis. His work has helped to save the sight of many patients.

Mr Chenga examined Lucia's eyes and found that she had cataracts in both eyes. To save Lucia's sight, Mr Chenga needed to operate and remove the cataracts – but he would have to do both at the same time, as Lucia had travelled so far.

Lucia was taken in for an operation on both eyes. The procedure appeared to go well and afterwards Lucia's eyes were cleaned and a bandage put over them.

The next morning, when Mr Chenga removed the bandage, she blinked for a minute, as her eyes adjusted



"For so long there was only darkness. I cannot wait to see the world again."

AFTER



to the light.

Mr Chenga administered eye drops and asked Lucia whether she could see him. She nodded and then smiled when she saw Martha, a family friend, who had travelled with her. As her eyes adjusted to the light, her vision became clearer and soon she was on her feet.

Lucia was so excited that she

could see again. She sang and could no longer keep calm. She danced as she sang in her dialect saying, **"God is good all the time and I don't know what to give you for restoring my sight!"**

Thanks to Mr Chenga and the equipment donated to the hospital through support like yours, Lucia is now able to see again and live independently. **"For so long there was only darkness. I cannot wait to see the world again."**

To help change the lives of more people like Lucia, go to www.orbis.org.uk/give or complete the enclosed form.

Boshir becomes an Orbis advocate



When the Rohingya community were forced to flee Myanmar in 2017, many arrived at a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. Orbis and our partner, Baitush Sharaf Hospital, have been providing vision screenings, glasses and cataract surgery ever since 2018 for Rohingya refugees and members of the host community in Cox's Bazar.

One of these patients was Boshir, who was 60 years old and living with his wife and son. Boshir had cataracts in both eyes, meaning he couldn't work or support his family.

After visiting the hospital, Boshir was able to have operations on both eyes. Both were a success.

"I create awareness about the hospital and motivate people to go."

After having his sight restored Boshir said, "I can do everything – from household work to shopping – as I did before my eye problem."

After initially being discouraged from going to hospital by his neighbours, he now fights hard to dispel dangerous myths about cataract surgery within his community. "I have referred at least a hundred patients to the Vision Centre for eye treatment. I create awareness about the services of the hospital and motivate people to go there."

Boshir wouldn't have been able to afford to have his sight-saving operations, but they were provided for free through the work of Orbis. Projects like this couldn't happen without our amazing supporters, so we and Boshir are very grateful for your support.

Tackling the gender gap in Bangladesh



Across the world, 112 million more women than men are living with vision loss. A lack of education, difficulty in accessing finances and an inability to travel mean that women and girls are disproportionately affected by blindness.

In Bangladesh, Orbis is pioneering women-led green vision centres to help tackle the gender gap. 14 year old Eti is one girl who has already benefitted from these centres.

"I can once again do my studies without any difficulty."

Eti had been having headaches for months. Although she was a keen student, at school she was unable to see the board and fell behind. Education can offer

a way out of poverty so it was crucial Eti received support. She visited the women-led clinic and had her eyesight tested. They discovered Eti had a refractive error which was causing blurry vision. The clinic were able to give her a free pair of glasses.

Eti says, "As I began to wear the glasses, I could see everything clearly again. My headache was gone the very next day after I started wearing the glasses. I can once again do my studies without any difficulty."

Eti is now doing well at school again and looking forward to her future.

These centres provide high quality, affordable eye care to people who couldn't access it otherwise, and hope for a fairer future. This is only possible because of your generous support. Thank you.

We can only help people like Eti, with your support. Please donate at www.orbis.org.uk/give or by returning the enclosed form.

Richard and Sharon's lasting legacy



By leaving a gift in your will to Orbis, you will be ensuring our vital work carries on for generations to come, helping to save the sight of people around the world. Orbis supporters Richard and Sharon have already decided to do this.

Richard says: "I became a supporter of Orbis many years ago after seeing a film about the Orbis Flying Eye Hospital. The film showed the plane flying into different countries to operate on people with vision problems

and volunteers were training the local medical teams too. I just thought it was fantastic."

Richard's uncle, Len, went blind when he was 60 so he has personal experience of the impact sight loss can have. He and Sharon once received a letter from Orbis with a postcard of Rachael, a girl from Ghana wearing glasses. It has been on their noticeboard ever since and gives them a chance to talk about Orbis to friends and family.

You will be ensuring our vital work carries on for generations to come...

Richard says "The idea that our gift would go towards preventing people going blind through education or an actual operation – that just seems so incredibly important."

For more information on how you can support our vital work by leaving a gift in your will, go to www.orbis.org.uk/legacy

How you can help

Are you looking for different ways to support Orbis? Why not take a look below for inspiration?

✈ Ryan and Kate (top right) from Espresso Solutions took part in the Great Ethiopian run. They joined 40,000 other participants running through the streets of Addis Ababa. The Great Ethiopian Run is a 10k like no other. It's a carnival of singing and dancing and the most positive way to witness Addis Ababa.

✈ Nurse Angela (right), who works on the Flying Eye Hospital, ran up the stairs of the fifth tallest hotel in the world to raise much needed funds.

✈ Have you got a birthday coming up? Why not setup a fundraising page on Facebook and ask your friends and family to donate to Orbis? To setup your page, go to www.facebook.com/fundraisers

For further inspiration or to let us know what you're up to, go to www.orbis.org.uk/fundraise, or email icare@orbis.org.uk. Thank you.



facebook.com/fundraisers

Thanks so much to Ryan, Kate, Angela and all the amazing supporters who donate, raise funds, leave a gift in their Will and get involved to support Orbis.

How the cost of living crisis is impacting global eye health

The cost of living crisis is being felt by us all. In the countries where we work, this crisis is not only impacting our sight-saving projects, but the people who desperately need eye care and urgent treatment.

In Ethiopia inflation rose to 34% in January, the third highest rate in Africa. People are facing increased fuel and transport costs, and for those living with eye conditions, travelling to get treatment has become even harder. In Bangladesh, prices have also risen significantly and rolling power cuts have also threatened health services.

43 million people globally are already living with blindness, and yet the large majority of these cases are avoidable. Lack of access to treatment is the biggest challenge many people face, which is why it's crucial that even in these challenging times, we can continue to provide life-changing eye-care for vulnerable communities.

Your continued support is vital. If you can donate today, it will help to provide more affordable eye care to people who desperately need it.

Where your donations are changing lives:



Please support our sight-saving work with a monthly gift



Here's my monthly gift of: £

Please debit my account on the ☐ 1st ☐ 15th of each month

Mr/Mrs/Ms First name Surname

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Postcode

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Do you want a world where no-one is needlessly blind?



You can make a donation by returning this form to: **Freepost RTZE-GAZU-ZCEJ, Orbis, 10 Lower Thames Street, London, EC3R 6AF**. Alternatively, you can donate online at **orbis.org.uk/give** or call us on **020 7608 7269**

I would like to support Orbis with a gift of £

I enclose a cheque/postal order/CAF voucher* payable to: **Orbis**
(Please do not send cash by post.) *delete as appropriate

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Card Number:

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Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss First name _____ Surname _____

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We'd love to keep in touch with you and keep you informed about our work, fundraising activity and the difference your donations make. Please tick the below boxes to hear from us:

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☐ I don't require an acknowledgment.

You can tell us to change or stop the way we communicate with you by emailing icare@orbis.org.uk, Please visit orbis.org.uk/privacy-policy to see how we use your data.

☐ Please send me information about leaving a gift in my Will to Orbis.

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