

orbis eyewitness



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ISSUE 27

Changing the way the world sees

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Welcome



May I thank every single Orbis supporter for your generosity and commitment to our sight-saving work. Your support has truly inspired us throughout a challenging time.

I would also like to thank everyone who completed the survey that accompanied the last newsletter. The replies we received showed that Orbis supporters are concerned about the environment, society and world poverty. They believe in fairness, justice and equality. They are positive about change and are optimistic about the future. This knowledge will help us communicate better with you and inspire new supporters to join us in working towards a

future where everyone around the world has access to quality eye care.

I hope you find this newsletter interesting as we bring you updates and stories from around the world, and you see the clear impact of your donations in our fight to save sight.

With many thanks,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'A. Jones'.



Andrew Jones
Director of Fundraising and
Communications, Orbis UK
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Photographers: Geoff Bugbee, Genaye Eshetu, Martin Kharumwa, Orbis Ethiopia
(Please note that some pictures were taken before the COVID-19 pandemic)

Your update from Ethiopia



Following your generous response to our recent appeal to end trachoma in Ethiopia, we have an update from our colleagues who are working hard in the field to stamp out this distressing disease which, if left untreated, can cause sight loss.

Distribution of antibiotics is crucial and because of coronavirus and social distancing we are having to do this differently. Instead of gathering at village centres,

our teams are going door-to-door, wearing PPE to distribute this vital medicine. This takes longer and is much more expensive.

Thanks to your support, we can report that surveys in nine districts showed good progress in reaching and sustaining World Health Organisation (WHO) targets for elimination.

With new processes for Covid-safe treatment of infection

Continued over ➤

BELAY'S STORY

Belay suffered excruciating pain in her right eye. As time passed, the pain grew, and her vision got worse. She became isolated from her community. Because she could no longer work she fell ever deeper into poverty.

Belay was referred to an Orbis-supported health centre. After she and her nephew made the long journey, an Orbis-trained worker confirmed the trachoma diagnosis. Fortunately Belay then received urgent sight-saving surgery, which prevented her losing her sight forever.



▲ Belay with her nephew after surgery



and surgery for those with advanced trachoma, we have been able to re-start services at local outreach sites, close to where people live. These are being provided by nurses who have been trained by Orbis as Eye Care Workers.

Looking ahead, your donations will help train more Eye Care

Workers, support surveys in nine more districts, and we plan another distribution of antibiotics before the end of this year.

As you can see, your kindness is putting an end to the blinding pain and unnecessary sight loss caused by trachoma.

▲ Distribution of antibiotics by Orbis trained health extension workers.

We all, especially those working on the frontline in Ethiopia, are so grateful - thank you.

To see our photos from the field in Ethiopia, go to orbis.org.uk/Trachoma-Ethiopia

Government aid cuts

We have received the difficult news that cuts in the UK Government's aid budget put our sight-saving work at risk.

We're not prepared to let the withdrawal of our Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office grant stop the huge progress we have made in Ethiopia and other countries.

Now is not the time to step back from supporting the most vulnerable people, thereby allowing decades of progress to falter.

If you feel strongly that the most vulnerable deserve better, please do write to your MP to express your concerns and to state your support for overseas aid.

See My Future

In March 2019 Orbis launched our See My Future appeal, with all public donations during a three-month period being matched by the UK Government.

Thanks to your generosity we raised almost £1.4 million. This included over £650,000 of match funding from the UK government which was used to expand our work combating childhood blindness in the Parsa and Siraha districts of South East Nepal.

In many parts of the world,

▲ Priya and Priyanka were chosen for the role of vision ambassadors as they are both very active in school. On the importance of vision Priyanka says, "If you get glasses at the right time, you will have avoided blindness, so it's necessary and also if kids get glasses at the right time, it will be good for the nation."

avoidable vision loss means children are dropping out of school - either because their own eye health is poor, or to care for a blind or visually impaired family member. Our REACH (Refractive Error Among Children) initiative

screens and treats children with vision loss, enabling them to continue to attend school and look forward to a brighter future.

By the end of March
2021, we had reached
over 64,000 individuals

Thanks to everyone who supported the See My Future Appeal, over 64,000 people have so far received screening, treatment or training to identify vision issues. Screening has taken place in 213 schools. Most notably, your donations helped to reach children who might ordinarily miss out on eye care services, by helping to fund screening in special needs schools and non-formal institutions. You have also helped to train teachers and support students to become Vision Ambassadors and help promote eye health messages.

With schools closed for much of 2020 because of the pandemic, your support also helped develop an alternative way to look after

children's eye health. Female Community Health Volunteers are established government health workers and as such, know their local communities very well. We therefore worked with them to support door-to-door, rather than in-school, screenings. This adapted approach means that more than 1,000 children who don't normally attend school, so wouldn't otherwise have been screened, have had their eyes checked for the first time.

None of this would have been possible without your support, thank you!



▲ 12-year-old Sneha hopes to become a bank manager one day. Before getting her glasses, Sneha struggled to read the blackboard and resorted to copying her friends' notes so she could keep up in class.

Reflections on volunteering in a pandemic



As a theatre practitioner nurse, for 18 years Ann-Marie Ablett has been an Orbis volunteer, using her annual leave to train hundreds of nurses around the world in the fight against avoidable blindness.

Although the Orbis Flying Eye Hospital is not travelling, our mission continues, with all

“I’ve helped make a difference and it makes a difference for generations to come.”

training taking place online. Ann-Marie’s virtual nursing training saw nurses from low-to-middle income countries

learn about the use of PPE and how to best manage the psychological effects of coronavirus. Ann-Marie says, “What I have learned is we were all frightened, and it’s alright to be frightened because this is so real and it’s something we had never experienced before.” She adds, “What the training revealed is

speak to somebody as another person will have the same problem, the same issues.”

Thanks to supporters like you and volunteers like Ann-Marie, the Flying Eye Hospital has been able to reach so many people. Looking back on what the feeling is like when returning from a trip she says, “I’ve helped make a difference and it makes a difference for generations to come. When you consider how many people Orbis has supported in many countries over the past 40 years or so, it’s just breathtaking. I think - I’ve been a part of all of that.”

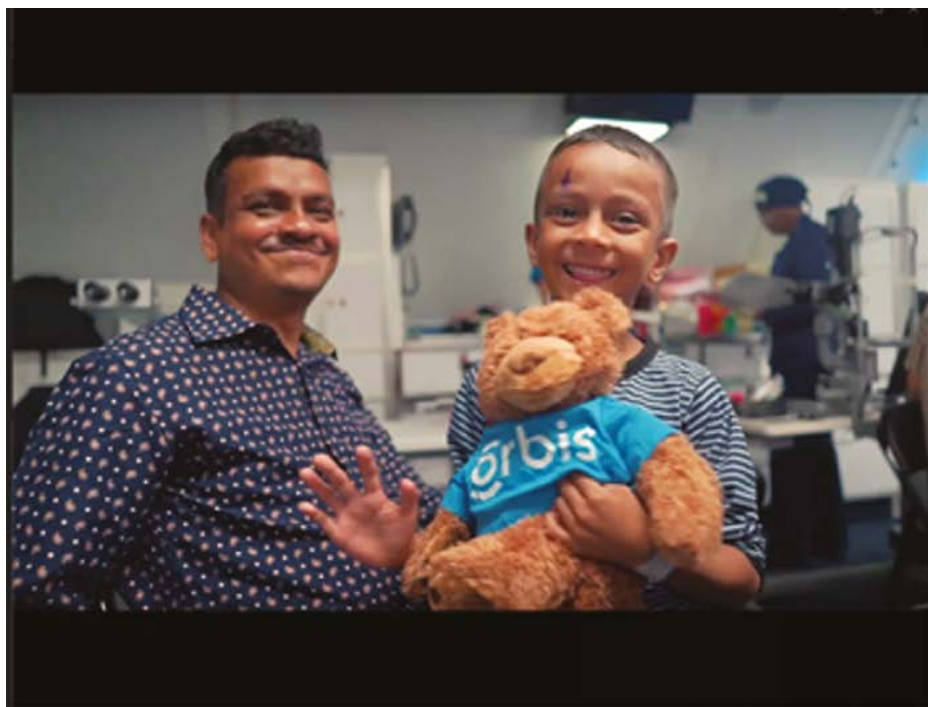


To read more about Ann-Marie and her amazing work, visit orbis.org.uk/Ann-Marie

A conversation with HRH The Countess of Wessex and Orbis

On 28th April we were delighted that Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex joined colleagues and key supporters, including those who have kindly left a gift to Orbis in their will, at an online thank you event.

As Global Ambassador for the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, Her Royal Highness highlighted her support of Orbis's transformative work with partners, building services to treat more people with vision



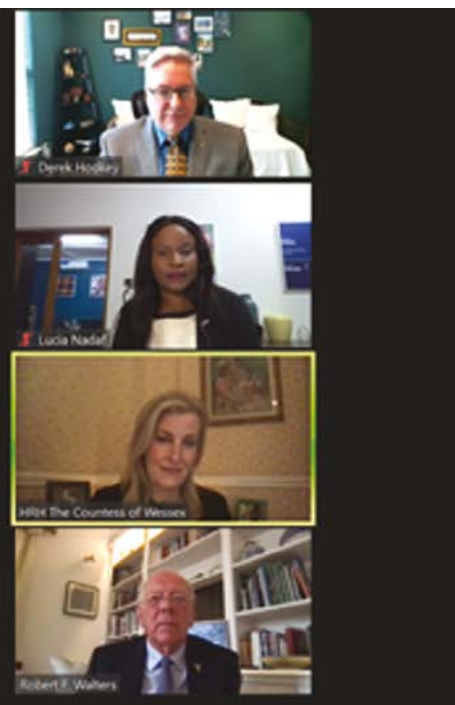
loss in their communities saying: "I love the way that Orbis always trains local doctors, for local needs and leaves a legacy behind wherever it goes. It's a self-fulfilling legacy and that's the beauty of Orbis."

The event was hosted by ophthalmologist and Orbis UK Trustee Robert Walters, who has travelled with the Countess to our programmes in India and Bangladesh, visiting the Orbis Flying Eye Hospital and local partner hospitals.

Derek Hodkey, Orbis International CEO and President and Lucia Nadaf, Director of Orbis Zambia, discussed the challenges that Orbis has encountered in the face of the pandemic, such as our Flying Eye Hospital being unable to travel.

Thanks to our generous supporters, we have been able to adapt and support our partners to deliver eye care to those most in need across Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America. We also spoke about the unprecedented uptake in medics around the world receiving training via Cybersight, our online ophthalmic training platform.

The Countess acknowledged the challenges caused by the pandemic and thanked Orbis supporters for their ongoing support, "We have a long way to go, and Covid has really not helped, we can't forget that actually these eye health issues continue to happen. Thank you on behalf of every individual whose sight has been restored by Orbis and the team."



Pledge to help eliminate avoidable blindness with a gift in your will

Right now, people are losing their sight because they can't get the treatment they urgently need.

You can help create a future where there are enough eye care workers to provide quality eye care to every person, no matter where they live.

We know that you share in our vision of a world where no one has to live with avoidable blindness. Leaving a gift in your will to Orbis UK can make this vision a reality.

Of course, friends and family come first. Once you have taken care of your loved ones, a gift in your will can help equip eye care professionals with the skills to screen for and treat eye conditions.

You can bring eye care services to more communities and make sure that help is always available, before it's too late. And you can help develop a health care

system that recognises the importance of eye care for all.

Tsehay (pictured below) is an Integrated Eye Care Worker who lives in Gamo Gofa, Ethiopia. She took part in Orbis-supported training in 2012 and has since received further training so she can help more people in her community.



A gift in your will can help train the next generation of eye care workers to continue and expand this sight-saving work.

For more information about leaving a gift in your will, call Naomi on 020 7608 7271, or email legacy@orbis.org.uk

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

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