

Year End Report

PREVENTIVE EYE CARE FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN IN Odisha

Project Period - August 2012 to July 2013

Project Location - Bhoomika Eye Hospital, Odisha, India.

Supported By

GURU KRUPA FOUNDATION

USA



IMPLEMENTING AGENCY & FIELD PARTNER



**Bhoomika, D 72, Maitree Vihar, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India, EMAIL-
*bprath4@rediffmail.com***

Back Ground

A Project titled “**PREVENTIVE EYE CARE FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN IN ODISHA**” was undertaken by Bhoomika in collaboration with **Gurukrupa Foundation, USA**.

The proposed area in Jajpur district of Orissa covered 205 villages within 5 blocks and 25 gram panchayats. About 90% of the total household mainly depends on agricultural labour, farming, and petty business, which provides them a very low level income, inadequate even to maintain the basic survival needs of their families. About 60% of the families live below the poverty line i.e have an income of less than 6000 rupees per year. The literacy rate in the area is 57% (male literacy is higher than female). But the literacy rate in people below the poverty line is 19%. Most children in this category are deprived of educational facilities, and those who are enrolled in schools face a number of health problems, particularly eye diseases. As such the children and their parents need outside support for their health care & education.

Context of proposed project

One hundred thirty five million of the world’s populations are visually impaired. Eighty five million of them are blind. But 80% of the blindness is due to cataract, which is curable. Odisha is one of the eastern coastal states of India, and is plagued with very poor health care services. The health services infrastructure is concentrated mainly on the coast, and the people in the interior parts of Orissa don't have much access to this infrastructure. In addition to lack of access to these services, low levels of income and a lack of awareness lead to different diseases including visual impairment and blindness.

Blindness is a tragedy in human life. This is all the more so because in spite of there being cures to several types of visual impairment, they are not available to people in this eastern belt due to lack of affordability and accessibility. For instance, the CSR-Cataract Surgical Rate is 8000 (cataract surgeries done per million population) in south India, but only 2000 in Orissa. Besides cataract there are many other eye problems like Glaucoma, Refractive Error, and Childhood blindness which are not treated in this region of the country. Consequently, there is a need for immediate intervention in the area of eye care and services in interior areas of Orissa.

The status of paediatric eye care services is even poorer than adult eye care in Orissa. Paediatric eye care requires some specific expertise, equipment and training to manage the patients. Major barriers to childhood cataract surgery in Orissa are: absence of trained professionals, anesthetists, lack of infrastructure/surgical set up, lack of professional skills to detect pediatric problem & absence of outreach services. Refractive error among children is more than five per cent and its magnitude is greater in rural area.

Bhoomika Eye Hospital has been providing quality eye care services with a two-fold approach (i) center based OPD & (ii) Camp based OPD services. Almost 86% of patients who seek treatment at Bhoomika Eye Hospital cannot pay for the services and are provided with the service either at subsidized rate or free of cost. The free surgeries are partly supported by the Government of India, and partly by local volunteers and corporate groups. But still there

remains a lot of gap to be addressed in pediatric eye care due to lack of technical and financial services.

The proposed project will address problems like cataract, low vision, refractive error and other ocular disorders in the paediatric population of coastal Orissa. The area is primarily inhabited by poor and minority groups (80% are below the poverty line). Incidence of Child Blindness in the Operational area is estimated to be 0.8/1000 in a total population of 21,52,232. Of the 4,57,097 children in the age group 0-17 yrs, 1,14,275 suffer from refractive errors and 1100 suffer from low vision. The area being backward has very poor transportation system and hence health service delivery mechanisms are very inefficient and insufficient in the locality.

Goal and description of proposed project

To detect eye related problems among students at an earlier stage through comprehensive school screening camps in Jajpur district, and to restore healthy sight among poor children through quality eye care, education & awareness. The expected duration of the project is three years.

This project aims to tackle the huge problem of blindness through preventive care at an early stage. Eye checkup services for school children will be provided through a moving van eye clinic. To date, 36 school screening camps have already been organized in different rural schools. Another aspect of this school screening program is to create awareness among the teachers, parents and students about eye diseases, their prevention and care.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN

Outreach Camp for screening the patients/school children.

The outreach screening camps were organized in 8 blocks of Jajpur district covering Badchana, Dharmasala, Rasulpur, Bari, Dangadi, Jajpur, Dasarathpur and Sukinda blocks. These camps were organized by a team headed by an eye specialist, an eye technician, two nurses and a care taker. The team visited 42 schools and organized 36 camps with a prior appointment and publicity about the camp. In those camps more than 8000 children were screened and 872 children were diagnosed with eye problems. Of the students with eye problems, 452 were examined and given medicines and advice. 264 children were diagnosed with refractive errors and were given appropriate glasses, which restored their vision back to normal.

Awareness camp for teachers, parents and students.

A total of 6 awareness camps were organized in the project area. More than 1600 participants including teachers, parents, students, children attended the camps. The camps were conducted by eye specialists and paramedics. They discussed causes of different eye ailments, preventive measures and treatments available for them. The doctors stressed the need for immediately consulting doctors if children developed any eye problem.

Difficulties faced-

During the awareness and screening camps we found that a number of non-school going children attended the camp. Their vision was examined and several of them did need glasses – unfortunately, due to limitation of resources they could not be provided glasses. This highlights the additional risk from eye disease in the non-school-going segment of the child population.



New Mobile Eye Care Van (funded by GKF in 2012-2013)



Old Mobile Eye Care Van (funded by GKF in 2011-2012)