



# Prevention

One community health worker can assess and treat hundreds of patients each year

Photo © SightLife

## Preventing blindness and strengthening health systems with a simple intervention.

SightLife empowers local communities to provide access to preventative eye care – filling a critical gap in the primary health care system in many rural communities. This proven solution could prevent nearly 1.5 million new cases of corneal blindness each year.

### The Need

In low- and middle-income countries, one of the leading causes of corneal blindness is a simple scratch on the eye – a corneal abrasion – which can be easily treated with medication. Unfortunately, many individuals cannot access care and therefore lose their sight, and often their independence and livelihood.

### Our Focus

SightLife and its partners launched pilot projects in both Nepal and India. Evidence from research led by The Proctor Foundation at University of California, San Francisco has shown that treatment with antibiotics is an effective approach to preventing corneal blindness.

The program is administered by local female community health workers. They are trained to screen and provide first aid care to patients with corneal abrasions, essentially becoming the community’s first responders. Their role fills a critical gap in the eye care system by providing early intervention and treatment that is cost-effective and accessible to rural communities. In addition, the community health workers can provide referrals to eye care centers for more advanced eye conditions. In sum, this program is not only preventing new cases of corneal blindness, but also strengthening local health care systems.

#### SUCCESS RATE

96%

of corneal ulcers treated, preventing the need for a transplant.

#### REACH





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## Meena Kumai Mehto's Story

**Meena Kumai Mehto**, a 22-year old mother from the remote village of Madhya Koluwa in Nepal, is the sole provider for her family since her husband is unable to work due to an illness. When she unexpectedly injured her eye resulting in a corneal abrasion, she was worried what it would mean for her family. Fortunately, Meena visited and was successfully treated by a local community health worker in under one week.



*“ I don't know where my family would be if it weren't for this program in my village. The free treatment and medicine available without traveling means that I can now continue providing for my family. ”*

- Meena Kumai Mehto

## Progress and Scaling

Since 2016, the prevention program has provided training for more than 880 community health workers in Nepal and India who have treated thousands of corneal abrasions. By empowering community health workers with the training to prevent corneal blindness, more access to care is available for those who need it and more communities are empowered to reach their full potential.

SightLife is expanding the prevention program by scaling in new and existing geographies, investing in technology and developing new curricula to prevent new cases of corneal blindness. The program is focused on developing innovative partnerships with governments, other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private companies to collaborate and invest in prevention. When SightLife can stop corneal blindness before it starts, more resources can go to treat the 12.7 million people who are already suffering from corneal blindness.

## JOIN US

SightLife is honored to partner with a distinguished group of surgeons and ophthalmic personnel, companies, and individuals who believe in the power of sight as a means to create a better future. These partnerships empower SightLife to expand its programs and services across the globe. We invite you to join us.

Learn more about how you can find a role in eliminating corneal blindness: [www.sightlife.org/joinus](http://www.sightlife.org/joinus)



[Prevention@Sightlife.org](mailto:Prevention@Sightlife.org)

