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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Combat Blindness International Receives \$75,000 Grant from Madison Community Foundation's Jaya G. Iyer Endowment Fund to Support Women's Empowerment and Workforce Development Programs.

[Madison, Wisconsin] – Combat Blindness International (CBI) is delighted to announce that it has been awarded a transformative grant of \$75,000 from Madison Community Foundation's (MCF) Jaya G. Iyer Endowment Fund. This generous grant will bolster CBI's women's empowerment and workforce development programs, including the Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic (COP) Fellowship Program and the Aadya Initiative, aimed at combating avoidable blindness, while empowering women in underserved communities.

The Certified Ophthalmic Paramedic (COP) program pioneered by Dr. Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital (SCEH) is a transformative initiative focused on addressing both the healthcare staffing shortage and gender empowerment in rural India. Composed entirely of young women, the COP program provides comprehensive two-year training in ophthalmic care, equipping graduates with skills for various mid-level healthcare roles. By absorbing training costs into its budget, SCEH has achieved program sustainability, allowing attention to shift towards the Fellowship program, offering further career advancement opportunities. Meanwhile, the Aadya Initiative, a collaboration between SCEH and CBI, utilizes mobile technology to train rural women as vision screeners, facilitating decentralized mass vision screening and ensuring timely access to follow-up care. This initiative not only enhances healthcare accessibility but also empowers rural women through education, financial independence, and community service, exemplifying a holistic approach to healthcare and social empowerment. The grant will specifically support 40 fellows in the COP Fellowship Program in New Delhi and 20 screeners in the Aadya Initiative in Saharanpur, India.

Rooted in Madison, Wisconsin, Madison Community Foundation's (MCF) mission is to engage greater Madison in philanthropy to advance a more vibrant and equitable community. The Jaya G. Iyer Endowment Fund, held at MCF, supports projects that empower women and promote workforce development, aligning closely with CBI's goals.

"The partnership between Combat Blindness International and Madison Community Foundation exemplifies our shared commitment to creating positive change," says Reena Chandra, MPH, Executive Director. "Together, we are working towards developing a workforce of empowered women to combat the severe shortage of eye care professionals in low-income countries, a major obstacle to providing care to those who need it the most."



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MCF's investment in CBI reflects CBI's commitment to enhancing the lives of those facing preventable blindness, while empowering young women in rural India through education and training opportunities, creating a ripple effect of empowerment and opportunity.

"Madison Community Foundation is honored to steward the Jaya G. Iyer Endowment Fund. This fund was established on her passing to support organizations treating blindness, eye diseases, injury or other afflictions impairing the eyesight of people living in India," said Angela Davis, MCF's Director of Grantmaking. "Combat Blindness has been a leader in innovative programming in these areas, and this grant will help them continue this work. This program also will employ and empower women by providing them with employment training and opportunities."

Over the last 40 years, Combat Blindness International has supported the eye screenings of over 4.8 million men, women, and children and over 430,000 surgeries around the world – spanning 19 countries on 4 continents. In addition, CBI has supported the education of over 850 young women to become Certified Ophthalmic Paramedics (COP). CBI's founder, Dr. Suresh Chandra, envisioned the organizations mission in 1984 and has spent his life working to help the poor in low-income countries.

Combat Blindness International

Combat Blindness International (CBI) is a 501(c)(3) dedicated to eliminating preventable blindness worldwide by providing sustainable, equitable solutions for sight through partnerships and innovation. Founded in 1984 by Dr. Suresh Chandra, Emeritus Professor of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, CBI partners with indigenous hospitals and health systems to screen and treat adults and children suffering from avoidable blindness and increase access to ophthalmic and cataract care internationally. In addition, CBI serves as an incubator for programs and partnerships with the goal of creating sustainable capacity and infrastructure globally and educate and train technicians and ophthalmologists to increase the health care workforce in partner countries. Over the last 40 years, CBI has supported projects in 19 countries on 4 continents including in India, Botswana, Paraguay, Brazil, Kenya, Gambia, Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, Lebanon, South Africa, Nigeria, Mali, Namibia and the United States. Combat Blindness International also serves as council member of Vision 2020: Right to Sight—a global joint initiative of the World Health Organization (WHO) and International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB)

For more information about Combat Blindness International, please visit
www.combatblindness.org