



October, 2002



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### Inside this issue:

Rotary Vision Mission: A Project of Rotary Bangalore Mid-town	2
Get to Know 'VOSH'	3
Projects from Ranchi Birsa	3
Another Rotarian Volunteering Service	3
ABTF Welcomes New Member-at-Large Gabriel Minder	4
Upcoming Avoidable Blindness projects in Zanzibar & Botswana	4

Rotary International 2002-2003

# Avoidable Blindness

*"Next to life itself, God's most precious gift is sight - Protect it, Save it, Restore it."*

## Task Force

## Good News from Geneva, Switzerland

by Gabriel Minder, ABTF Member-at-Large ([ggminder@bluewin.ch](mailto:ggminder@bluewin.ch))

*In preview of World Sight Day on October 10, the following progress can be reported from Geneva, Headquarter City of WHO, the United Nations' World Health Organization:*

- Personal contacts have been reinforced between ABTF (Members-at-Large T. Kwako and G. Minder) and WHO Headquarters in Geneva, namely with Drs. Resnikoff (France), a Honorary Rotarian, Para (Sri Lanka) and Kocur (Czech Republic).

- PAHO, the WHO Panamerican Headquarters in Washington, DC (Dr. Silva, Colombia) has arranged for a first working session with the participation of Rotarians, to take place in Orlando, Florida on 23 October in the framework of the worldwide alliance Vision 2020, who also stage World Sight Day. The Orlando event will be attended by various ABTF members, led by PPRI Frank Devlyn and by T. Kwako. The membership of our TFAB membership in Vision 2020 should thus be ripe for discussion at WHO Geneva at the end of February 2003.

- This is an opportunity to congratulate PAHO on the occasion of its Centennial! In 1902, the Second International Conference of American States (Mexico, January 1902) recommended that "a general convention of representatives of the health organizations of the different American

republics" be convened. It met in Washington, D.C., on 2-4 December 1902 and established PAHO, a permanent directing council, which much later became the UN's WHO arm for the Americas.

- A high-tech project has been launched on 21 September in Yverdon, Switzerland in the presence of Mexican Ambassador José Luis Bernal, a personal friend of Frank Devlyn: a joint Swiss-Mexican team will perform free cataract operations for poor Mexican people at the Guerrero Ophthalmologic Hospital in Acapulco, Mexico in the week of 7 October, incl. on 10 October (World Sight Day). Nestlé/Alcon (Mexico) have sponsored an Alcon YAG-Laser device for the treatment of Capsular Fibrosis, whereas a PHAKO-OS3 equipment from Oertli, Switzerland, was purchased with contributions from a number of Swiss donors, incl. RC Olten and RC Goesgen, both from D. 1980 (Switzerland).

- This Acapulco project has been actively supported by Mexican Rotarians PDG Rosa Maria Acevedo de Vazquez (Zone 21 ABTF Coordinator) and Virginia Sanchez (Mexico City): It is now coordinated by President Luis Raudón Uribe of RC Acapulco Icacos (D. 4180, DG Hector Ordonez) and involves Acapulco Rotarians to make this project sustainable and meaningful for Guerrero State and later possibly for the whole of Mexico. In particular, it will be very valuable to operate side-by-side within the

Chairman Frank Devlyn wishes to congratulate Trevor Powell, the new Area Coordinator for Great Britain and Ireland.

Chairman Devlyn says, “[Trevor,] You know that we are counting on you to carry out as many Avoidable Blindness projects as you can in your area and that you have our full trust and support. Keep up the good work!”



## Good News from Geneva, Switzerland (*continued*)

same environment the traditional ECCE technique and the most modern PHAKO technology, so as to appreciate better the effectiveness and limits of both approaches.

- In France and Switzerland, various Districts close to Geneva are already considering fundraising for the new DAF (Donor Advised Fund) of the Rotary Foundation which reduces to a minimum the paperwork involved. However, since the Clubs' major international fundraising effort goes to PolioPlus, they find it sometimes difficult to raise additional money for AB. One way is to stage a party at a Rotarian's home, with guests contributing only 9 Euros each (about 8.50 dollars). This is then matched by the Club to about 17 \$, i.e. the lowest cost of one cataract operation in India. As soon as 250 \$ are reached, the money is sent to the Vice-Chair of ABTF, Rtn. Steve Brown in Del Mar, California, USA, for another matching by the DAF. Thus each 8.50 \$ finally becomes 34 \$, covering two low-cost cataract operations ! Furthermore, the new DAF form allows the Club to designate a specific project.

- From Cambodia, a WHO meeting reports that the Rotary Club of Singapore in collaboration with SEE International will conduct an eye camp in Svay Rieng, Kandal Province and at the Preah Ang Duong Hospital in Phnom Penh, Cambodia from 1 to 31 December, 2002 and plan to perform up to 300 cataract operations. The camp is being planned with assistance provided by the Rotary Club of Phnom Penh.

- Last but not least, I must be reminded that our Indian Coordinator for the whole of Asia, Dr. Prithvi Raval ([prithvi@vsnl.com](mailto:prithvi@vsnl.com)) is constantly informing all of Rotary about the needs and plans of our Asian Clubs in his [RotaryAvoidableBlindnessTaskForce] ABTF Asian Issue "yahoogroup" Newsletters. October starts with a remarkable event: the Multi-District AB Workshop in Goa, India, convened for Oct. 4 and 5 by our Zone 6 Coordinator, PDG Rekha Shetty ([rekhasmindpower@eth.net](mailto:rekhasmindpower@eth.net)), who lists 10 projects in India and Sri Lanka, all worth being supported by Rotary Clubs worldwide.

## Rotary Vision & Mission: A Project of Rotary Bangalore Midtown

Report by PP. Rtn.Kunja

[Recently, the] Rotary ideal of Avoidable Blindness was implemented in a rural area. The Govt. School at Gottigere was chosen for this project. 752, Students from class one to tenth and teachers numbering 30 were examined by team of 3 doctors and 7 Para medics on Saturday ,Sept 07 2002. The camp commenced at 10 AM and went on till 1.30 PM.

Glad that the children were healthy; 31 students needed vision correction glasses, this provided . Rotarian Sundeeep Shah met the entire cost of the camp , including spectacles, thanks to Pre. Malik & Hon. Sec.Bhandari for motivat-



ing Mr. Shah. Special thanks to Drs. Mohan, Meena, Mohan Kumar from Robano Eye Hospital for conducting this program successfully. Rotarians Sundeeep Shah, Bimal Desai, Kamal Bhandari, Quresh Merchant participated in implementing the project.

**ABTF BROCHURE**  
**NOW AVAILABLE!!**



The newly developed ABTF brochure, describing the focus of the Task Force and featuring examples of Avoidable Blindness Projects from around the world, is now available for download from the Task Force Website. Share it with governors, clubs, district leaders, use it at Zone Institutes, Conventions, Assemblies, etc. *Start Using it today!*

## Get to Know 'Volunteer Optometric Service to Humanity' (VOSH International)



The primary mission of VOSH International is to facilitate the provision of vision care worldwide to people who can neither afford nor obtain such care. In On December 6, 2001 VOSH International signed a declaration with the World Council of Optometry and the World Health Organization to ELIMINATE AVOIDABLE BLINDNESS by the year 2020.

The need for eyecare in underdeveloped nations where wages may be less than \$1.00 a day is overwhelming. Our objective is to improve peoples vision so they can be more productive and enjoy a better quality of life. We are committed to this task.

### WHO ARE WE?

We are optometrists, opticians, ophthalmologists, medical personnel and trained lay persons who have no political or religious agenda. Yet, we work with religious or government groups who are committed to tolerance. VOSH/International is the voice of 27 chapters and 17 student chapters in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Honduras and

the Netherlands. Volunteers pay there own way and derive satisfaction from helping others. Many of us return year after year.

### WHAT HAVE WE DONE?

During the year 2001-2002 we completed more than 90 missions serving over 100,000 people. Missions are from one to two weeks. In addition VOSH has helped establish permanent eye clinics in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Haiti and Mexico. Our programs provide recycled eyeglasses, treat eye disease and perform eye surgery. We also set up clinics in disaster areas; as in Bosnia following a war . . . as in El Salvador following an earthquake . . . as in Honduras and Dominican Republic following a hurricane.

To learn more, please visit our website: [www.vosh.org](http://www.vosh.org)

Patti Fuhr, OD, PhD  
Vice President, VOSH International  
Service Organization Liason

## Projects from Ranchi Birsa

The Rotary Clubs of Ranchi Birsa have decided to provide all active support to the Avoidable Blindness Task Force of Rotary International. The Rotary Club of Ranchi Birsa has decided to take following projects for prevention of blindness for the year 2002-2003:

- Education/Awareness Campaigns - 20
- Vision screening - 1000 nos.
- Preventative - 2000 nos.

*The above project will be conducted with collaboration of S.N.S. Institute of Business Management, Ranchi.*

- Interocular lenses surgeries - 400 nos.
- Lid surgery for trachoma - 100 nos.
- Provisions of glasses - 1000 nos.

*The above project will be conducted with collaboration with ST. Barnabas Hospital Ranchi.*

Rtn. Prof. N.P. Singh  
President

## Another Rotarian Volunteering Services

Dear Friends:

I am an Ophthalmologist and a Rotarian, with the Rotary Club of Poona Downtown. My special interest is in Eyebanking. I was briefly in touch with Rob Ketron when he told me of the plans of Rotary International in the field of Eyebanking in India. I am keen to work on developing the Eyebank at the Ruby Hall Clinic, Pune, into a Community eyebank and coordination centre. I would also be happy to contribute in any project related to avoidable blindness.

With regards,

Sangeeta Wagh

My address is as follows:  
'Manikanchan'  
1000/1, Navi Peth  
Pune 411 030  
Tel: Home: 020-433 7841



**Gabriel Minder, ABTF  
Member-at-Large**

*The Avoidable Blindness Task Force wishes to welcome Gabriel Minder, PP, Rotary Club Ferney-Voltaire, France, D. 1710 as a new Member-at-Large. We thank him for his contribution of the lead article for this month's issue. For those who have not yet met him, a brief bio follows:*

Born 1936 in Hungary, Gabriel is a Swiss citizen and French Rotarian, who went to school in Brazil and to University in Zurich, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. He devoted his professional career mainly to management information systems, first as an executive of large multinationals, then as the co-founder of two IT companies in Geneva, Switzerland, where he lives. His wife is a yoga teacher, his son a journalist (at present at Columbia U., New York), his daughter a lawyer in Geneva.

When he retired in 1996, Gabriel became a Rotarian, first as a founder then as a president of his Club in France, just over the Geneva border. In 2000/01 he represented RI President Frank Devlyn at the UN Geneva. He was lucky to contribute worldwide to several international partnerships for Rotary: for wheelchairs (Pakistan and Madagascar), for youth (in the Philippines with the UN/ILO and the Prince of Wales Youth Business International), for microcredits (e.g. in Chile and Hungary) and now for the Avoidable Blindness Task Force, for which he liaises with WHO, Geneva, the UN's World Health Organization.

## Upcoming Avoidable Blindness Projects in Zanzibar and Botswana

*By Helena Hesselmark*

Helena and Bo Hesselmark are planning two Avoidable Blindness Projects for the Rotary Year 2002-2003. Bo is a member of the Rotary Club of Klippan, Rotarian since 1982. Helena is a proud member of Rotary eClub One since September 2002.

The two projects are Zanzibar Vision 2002 in October – November 2002 and Botswana Vision 2003 in April 2003.

**Zanzibar Vision 2002**-- Bo and I will travel to Zanzibar for four weeks as Rotary Volunteers. There we will cooperate with RC of Dar es Salaam North in a New Opportunities Grant. We will travel to the most remote areas of the two main islands Unguja and Pemba to perform eye examinations and dispense 2000 reading glasses and protective glasses for the workers in stone quarries. We cooperate closely with the Eye Department at Mnazi Mmoja Hospital, in Stone Town and with the Ministry of Health, Zanzibar.

At Mnazi Mmoja works Hakika, the optician who was trained at the School of Optometry in the 1980's. 1980-1985 Bo Hesselmark was a teacher at this school as part of a Swedish development project. In Tanzania there are now almost 200 opticians examined from School of Optometry in Moshi on the slopes of Kilimanjaro.

We will also bring a laptop and a small printer to Selim who is visually impaired. In Project Zanzibar 2001 he got a Magnavision. Now with the help of a laptop he

**Selim is quickly learning how to use the Magnavision donated by the Hospital in Helsingborg, Sweden. Now he will get a lap top and a small printer. Rotarian Bo Hesselmark is very pleased.**



will be able to write reports and essays for his school work.

On our home page are reports from our earlier projects in Zanzibar 2000 and 2001, Zambia 2001 and Samoa 2002. ([www.hesselmark.just.nu](http://www.hesselmark.just.nu))

I will report more as the projects advance. We are leaving for Zanzibar on October 14<sup>th</sup> to spend a month on The Spice Islands.

**The two project countries are marked on the Globe**



**VISIT THE TASK FORCE WEBSITE OFTEN!**  
[www.rotarytaskforces.org/avoidable\\_blindness](http://www.rotarytaskforces.org/avoidable_blindness)

