



# Visions

*The gift of sight . . . Protect it, Save it, Restore it*

December 2004

the newsletter of the  
**International Eye Care Fellowship of Rotarians**

Volume 1, Issue 3



## Celebrate Christmas 2004

As we approach the festive Christmas season we are reminded that President Glenn E. Estess Sr. has asked us to CELEBRATE Rotary's Centennial. At Christmas we want to celebrate the real meaning of Christmas of Peace and Goodwill On Earth. God sent His Son to show us how to serve others which is what Rotary inspires us to do.

**C....hristmas is the happiest time of the year as we pause to celebrate**

**The birth of the Christ child—Glory to God in the highest and on**

**E....arth peace and good will toward men. Christmas is a time for**

**Sharing of our good fortune with those who are in need of**

**L....ove and caring. This is what we as Rotarians seek to do all year**

**Round as we "REACH OUT"to share with the needy, and**

**E....very person less fortunate around our earth. We are reminded**

**That "MANKIND IS OUR**

**B....USINESS". We should "SOW THE SEEDS OF LOVE"every**

**Where we go. We should "LOOK BEYOND YOURSELF" as**

**R....otarians seek to "LEND A HAND"wherever there is need for**

**Water, food, health care, sight restoration, resolution of conflict.**

**A....ll Rotarians should be involved in their club's local projects and**

**we should be "UNITED IN SERVICE-DEDICATED**

**T....O PEACE" as we reach toward our goal of the elimination of**

**Polio as we "CELEBRATE ROTARY" in Chicago next year! To**

**E....ach of you, we wish a MERRY CHRISTMAS and a Blessed new**

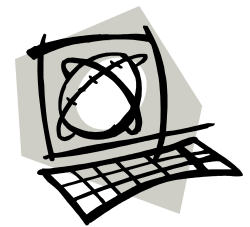
**Year.**

*"Dear Friends: As we approach the birthday of the Christ Child our thoughts turn once again to all of you who have enriched our lives. We thank God for the privilege of knowing you. May He give to each of you His peace and love as you CELEBRATE Christmas!"*

O. Doyle Dannenberg, O.D.  
Chaiman IECFR

### Inside this issue:

<i>Eye Surgical Camp at Bujumbura (Burundi, Central Africa) and Nairobi (Kenya)</i>	2-3
<i>Board Update</i>	4
<i>Eye Light 04—District Seminar on Avoidable Blindness, Held at Dindigul (RID 3000) Tamilnad, South India</i>	4
<i>An Excerpt from 'Trev's Topics'</i>	5
<i>Bits and Pieces from the Fellowship</i>	5



**Be sure to check out all the information on the Eye Care Fellowship website!**

[www.rotarianseyecarefellowship.org](http://www.rotarianseyecarefellowship.org)

## Eye Surgical Camp at Bujumbura (Burundi, Central Africa) and Nairobi (Kenya)

Burundi in Central Africa is the famous conflict area where the world's largest genocide had occurred and thousands of people had lost their eyesight because of the lack of suitable medical facilities.

For a population of nearly seven million there are only TWO Ophthalmologists!

Kenya has better infrastructural facilities but with 2.5 million people needing Eye Care and the country still needs assistance in this field.

In April 2003 an eye camp was organized at Bujumbura in Burundi where over 309 cataract surgeries were performed in 11 days in a country where this many surgeries are normally done *in a year !!* Unfortunately, due to an outbreak of civil war the project had to be terminated prematurely.

The overwhelming response to last year's camp gave an impetus to organize a similar project in June 2004 in both Burundi as well as

Nairobi / Kenya.

A 16 member team of Doctors, Ophthalmic assistants and Social Workers along with more than 1 tonne of equipment and medicines was flown from India on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June 2004 for a 13 day camp at Bujumbura and a 5 day camp at Nairobi.

The team received tremendous support from the local residents. Their enthusiasm was great and free boarding, lodging and traveling was made available to the Indian team. A number of volunteers also helped in the smooth execution of the project.

This group expressed their gratitude for the projects and the local Government and the population also became aware of the help the Rotarians Indians have given for their welfare. They have requested for such projects in future also and have also sought help in the procurement of hospital equipment and other facilities, which

could help in building a medical infrastructure there.

The team of doctors and others from India worked nearly 14 hours a day from 7am to 9pm and were able to perform 631 cataract surgeries in Bujumbura and 136 in Nairobi with a 100% success rate. The worsening political situation in Nairobi prevented patients from coming from nearby villages and therefore, against a target of 300 only 136 surgeries could be performed.

The medicines and other supplies for these camps was given by Indian Partners and distributed totally free to the beneficiaries. The doctors contributed by giving totally free services to the project.

It was a tremendous contribution from India to Africa and we could all be proud of the same.

Following are a few of the personal stories from the camp.

For information, contact:

Rtn. Mahendra G. Mehta

E mail: [mgmehta@rediffmail.com](mailto:mgmehta@rediffmail.com)

*My name is HARERIMANA Fabiola. I came here with my baby of 6 months; he is a twin. When I gave birth my twin one of them had a strange white print in the eye. They call them 'beans' at Cibitoke, in the north west of the country where I live. I have 9 children. By God's benediction we were informed that these Indians doctors were coming to operate on people freely. I was told he would only be operated from one eye but at the*



*end of the operation I saw the two eyes were covered and protected. I realised they did a miracle for my baby; how wonderful it was. As you see tears are falling from my eyes, I am so happy. There is nothing I could do to thank them; only God knows. My kid will be able to have a normal life like my other children. I would have liked to have a picture with the doctors so when he will become older I can show him what they've done. I will never forget the faces of those who saved my baby.*



*My name is NTUNTU Claude; I am an old man and live in Cibitoke, in the north west of Burundi. In 1996 I began to lose my vision and became completely blind in 1998. When my wife died things became worse day by day. I had no one to help me, and since I could not do anything by myself I started to beg because I had no choice. It was very hard for me as I used to be a representative in my community and played a role of wise man. When I beg they help me because they know me and respect me despite my misadventure.*

*Last year, I knew the Indians were coming to operate on blind people but I did not have money and the roads were unsafe because of the war and attacks of rebels on the way coming in Bujumbura. Fortunately, my son-in-law brought me to see the doctor and paid all the fees. I have been operated on and while the nurse was changing the dressing, I was able to see just after they took of the bandages. It is unbelievable for me.*

*I thank God. Now I know I am going to be a man again. I mean that I will be able to live by myself and work to feed my family. God gave me a new future and may He bless all the members of Rotary Club and particularly these doctors.*



*My name is NIZIGIYIMANA I am 8 years old. I live in Butezi, at Ruyigi, in the far east of Burundi close the frontier of Tanzania. It started this year in the second term of school year, I was in the third year. I began to have troubles of vision when looking on the blackboard. I couldn't understand what was happening to me, my vision became worse and worse. Before my blindness, I could go to school, help my mother at home like every young girl but now I kept sitting outside my house, my parents do everything for me, I can no more play with other children.*

*When my mother and my father realised I was losing my vision they were very sad and upset. They wondered what they have or have not done for me. They went to see the white priest of our catholic church. They needed him to bring me to a hospital. He decided with my parents to take me at Gitega, in the centre of the country, at AKAMURI CENTRE (akamuri: light in kirundi). It is a school for blind children.*

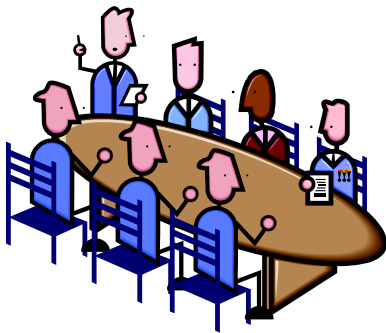
*The responsible of the Centre decided to take me with 12 others children to this program of healing eyes. God help me they operated me on the second day. My pleasure is that I can see once again. When they took me to the surgery I asked if they can operate the other eye. I would like to return at my house completely cured. I never loose faith in God during that hard period. My wish is to go back home, return at school, play with other children and help my mother as I used to do. They gave me a second chance. I will always be grateful to Rotary Club and the doctors.*

## Board Update

The IECFR is in the process of updating the composition and information of our IECFR Board. Following is the most current information as we have it:

### Central Function:

Frank Devlyn, Honorary Chairman  
O. Doyle Dannenberg, O.D. Chairman  
Kenneth D. Tuck M.D. Vice Chairman  
Jack Aaron, M. D. Past Chairman  
Harriett Schloer, Secretary and Webmaster  
Lori Bende Johnson, O.D., Treasurer  
Kelly Crates, Newsletter Editor



### Americas:

Herbert G. Brown, Past R.I. President  
Steve Brown (DAF/AB management)  
Robert G. Ketron  
Tom Kwako.  
Patrick Devlyn

### Asia:

Kula (Malaysia and SE Asia)  
Rekha Shetty, M.D. (Southern India)  
Prithvi Raval, O.D. (Zones 5/6 Coordinator)  
John Tan (Singapore and SE Asia)

### Europe:

Samar Das, M.D. (UK and Northern India)  
Fabio Dossi, M.D. (Italy and Southern Europe)  
Gabriel Mindesr, PhD (Northern Europe and liaison to WHO, Geneva for all regions, including Africa)  
Trevor Powell (UK and European Newsletter)

### Africa:

Yusuf Kodwawwala, M.D.

## Eye Light 04—District Seminar on Avoidable Blindness, Held at Dindigul (RID 3000) Tamilnad, South India

In one of most comprehensively conducted seminars, Rotary Dindigul West played the hosts in organizing the event on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2004. Under the leadership of district Governor Rtn. Elangovan and AB Chair Rtn. Nicholas Francis, as many as 500 Rotarians of the district benefited from this program.

While inaugurating the seminar, AB Committee chair (Zone 5 and 6a) PDG.Rtn.Dr.Prithvi Raval stressed the need of Rotary Clubs in the zone working in a consorted way to obtain the maximum results in assisting the visually impaired. As and when the twinning zone Centennial project with Zone 22 would get materialized, it would assist in returning vision to about 50,000 patients by way of cataract surgeries with IOL implants. Priority issues of Cataract surgery, correction of refractive errors amongst children remained as high as 70 – 80 % of the population.

The seminar addressed issues on corneal transplants and motivation of family members of the deceased. Ms. Bakavathy spoke on conducting efficient Eye camps for screening of patients and its proper documentation. Dr.Ramamurthy who spoke on 'Childhood blindness' informed that in its category, as much as 7% of children suffered from visual problems, which could be corrected.

An Eye Exhibition was organized by the Arvind Eye Hospital, which was kept open to the public the whole day. As many as 1000 persons passed through this exhibition. Continuous video presentations and a film on cataract surgery were being shown. All of these were very useful in creating awareness.

The mobile satellite van (below) was kept available for screening of patients for diabetic retinopathy. Typically the van is used in the rural areas where the staff keeps in touch with the Arvind Eye hospital via satellite and doctors are able to manage the data sent to them.

The program concluded with a dance program / entertainment by the blind students of the Ramana Maharishi Academy for the blind. It was heartening to see these children perform in a very professional manner.





## An Excerpt from 'Trev's Topics'

### The Retirement of Dr. Sam Das

By now, many of you have heard the name of Sam Das, more correctly named Samar Das, who for many years was a consultant Ophthalmologist to the Guildford County Hospital in Surrey, England. District 1250. Sam was born in Calcutta and for many years has visited Calcutta every year, as part of his annual holiday, to visit India and take part in helping organise Rotary sponsored eye hospital clinics, train young Indian eye surgeons, both in India and through GSE visits to the UK and play a practical part in teaching the latest techniques in ophthalmic surgery on the spot in Calcutta.

Sam has decided to hang up his

scalpel in the UK in November and spend his considerable skill and expertise in assisting Rotary projects in his native India and for a start will be spending the first two months of his retirement in India, involving himself in this work, before returning to this country to carry on with his work in promoting Matching Grants, through the Rotary club of Guildford Eye Appeal of which Sam was the instigator and a principal benefactor.

Through the Rotary club of Mukono, Uganda, District 9200, Sam is donating half of all his ophthalmic equipment including a slit



Sam at work in Calcutta

lamp microscope to the Kawolo Hospital in Uganda for use in surgical and ophthalmic procedures in their eye clinic. The rest of his equipment, including another slit lamp microscope will be donated to one of the village hospital eye clinics in India, that he helped create.

## Bits and Pieces from the Fellowship

### From: PRIP Frank Devlyn

It gives me great satisfaction to reconfirm the Good News that a major Avoidable Blindness Project where Rotary India has partnered with Operation Eyesight & Rotary Canada has been approved. 55,000 persons will have their sight restored thanks to Cataract Surgeries.

It is good to see that thanks to those Rotary Districts in India clearing up some pending reports, humanitarian matching grants are being approved by our Rotary Foundation for those districts.

### From: Yusuf Kodwawwala (Africa Board Member)

In my capacity as Centennial Coordinator, I would like to let you know that my Committee is planning amongst other things, an Eye Camp to carry out 5000 cataract operations in Kenya and very likely in Somalia as well. PRIP Frank was here when we did the same thing on a smaller scale when PRIP Bhichai came here to preside over

his Africa Presidential Conference last year. We are using Kikuyu Eye Hospital, a missionary institution serving the rural area and also hope to involve the Lion's Eye Hospital. Also a team of eye surgeons is coming from India to help us under the leadership of veteran Rotarian Mahendra G Mehta from Mumbai.

In this connection I am appealing to you all for any assistance you can offer. We are trying to reduce the cost but it seems that the minimum cost will be US\$ 30 per one cataract operation. On that basis we are budgeting for US\$150,000, a colossal amount for Africa. But with everybody's help, especially yours, we shall make it before the Rotary year is out.

Contact information:

Postal address; Nairobi Hospital, P.O. Box 30026, Nairobi Kenya.  
Phone Office 254 - 20 - 2717723  
House 3763932

### From: Mani Nabavi, RID 5280

My name is Mani NABAVI and I am a board member of the Rancho

Park ROTARY Club 5280 of California. Our club consists of Iranian members residing in the area, and as of late we have become aware of the problems with Blindness in IRAN and would like to help. I would like to help the cause of avoidable blindness in IRAN by doing a fundraiser in our club for this cause and also try and get this to become a regular yearly event for our club. We just sent a container of wheelchairs to IRAN and it would be great to be able to do the same for the Blind.

Since we would like the funds raised for our group help an organization battling this problem in IRAN, I was hoping that you could point me in the direction of a few groups in IRAN that you may be aware of that are involved with avoidable blindness.

Contact Information:

Email: [mani@nabavi.com](mailto:mani@nabavi.com)