

With RIBI club donations exceeding £11,500, the Rotary Club of Stevenage Grange's "Rotarian Ophthalmoscope Initiative" (ROI) with the award winning Optyse™ ophthalmoscope, featured in our April issue, is already helping international eye-care charities to save and improve sight, life and livelihoods for many people in over 30 developing countries.

SIGHT

the sense we most fear losing

A child that goes blind is twice as likely to die before his or her 13th birthday. Staggeringly, there are already 37 million blind people and this will increase by some two million this year, unless action is taken now to help the 90 percent of the world's blind community living in the poorest countries. Frighteningly, someone goes needlessly blind every five seconds and yet 75 percent of impending blindness is treatable, or curable, if diagnosed and treated in good time.

ROI can and will make a difference. The potential of ROI to help save sight, life and livelihoods for millions is progressively being acknowledged by eye-care charities and Rotarians alike. In just six months since its launch at District 1260's Annual Conference, and two months since its international debut, it is exciting eye-care charities operating in developing countries. Phil Hoare, Sightsavers Procurement Manager is typical of many who have commented on the Initiative.

Phil told Rotary Today, "We are confident that the donation programme will make a difference to saving sight in the world's poorest communities. One of the biggest challenges facing international charities is the procurement of equipment that is both cost effective and appropriate for less developed countries. We tested 80 units in 5

countries and the results were very positive. Sightsavers looks forward to receiving the ophthalmoscopes via the initiative."

Rotarians around the world, including PRIP Frank Devlyn, founder of the Rotary Action Group for Blindness Prevention, are equally enthused about this project. Keith Paver, RIBI International Service Chairman comments "This is a splendid example of the kind of international project

that can be developed by a Rotary Club if they have the vision and determination to carry it through. It has the virtue of simplicity, and fulfils a real need in the field of humanitarian service. I would recommend this as an example of how to set up a new service project, and I hope it receives the support from Rotarians in GB and Ireland which it deserves."

ROI operates under the umbrella of VISION 2020: The Right to Sight. ROI also wishes to thank the team at Sightsavers International. Not only has Sightsavers distributed copies of the ROI Information leaflet throughout RIBI but they are also promoting ROI both at District and Inner Wheel Conferences, as well as providing volunteer speakers for clubs.

This is a Rotarian Initiative - A donation to ROI will do more than detect sight disorders. Retinal examination also detects early signs of diabetes, heart disease, brain tumours and cerebral malaria. The Optyse™ enables less trained personnel to screen patients in the field. So, each donation you make frees up scarce resources that would otherwise need to be spent by eye-care charities on training and more expensive equipment purchase.

Put in context, your donation of £25 per unit will also enable another cataract operation to be undertaken at an average cost per adult patient of £17, alleviate unnecessary suffering for many





and reduce the loss of productivity in developing countries by a significant multiple.

This humanitarian Initiative touches on a number of Rotary Programmes. These include Poverty, Preventable Blindness, Peace and Fellowship.

A Donation form, a toolkit for Club use and other downloadable information is available on www.roisight.org This includes the latest joint ROI/Sightsavers information leaflet, and the DVD/ PowerPoint presentation featuring Sir John Major and international author Ken Follett.

This initial phase focuses on creating awareness about preventable blindness in the developing world, the role that Rotarians might play to help support that, and the contribution that ROI can have

in making a difference.

“We ask simply that you and your club take action now and consider making a donation to help provide 25,000 donated units. That might sound a lot, but will be easily achieved if each Club helps promote the Initiative in their local Press and donates just 14 units or £350”, says Stephen Sypula, ROI Secretary. “Perhaps we can encourage you to help others to see the light”.

Photos:

Above - Ground-breaking but not budget-breaking, the Optyse™ ‘scope at the heart of ROI.

Below and lower left - Typical eye conditions in India that can be easily diagnosed and treated with the aid of this equipment. (Photos courtesy of Jamshyd Masud of SightSavers).



New RI internet media launch

From September, you have been able to see another side of Rotary in a new electronic publication, *Rotary International Interactive*. Each month, you can now experience the mission and fellowship of Rotarians and young adults involved in programs such as Rotaract, Interact and Ambassadorial Scholarships.

The publication goes beyond words to tell Rotary’s story using photo essays, videos, and other media. In the first issue, a narrated photo essay depicts a woman in Turkey who was born without arms and learned to read and write at age 18 through a Rotary program. Other articles feature Rotarians in Ohio who encourage the children of migrant workers to read as well as Rotaractors in Kentucky who tutor grade-school students. If you’re wondering how to start a literacy project or want to take your current project to the next level, you can e-mail a literacy expert for advice. You’ll also find a profile of Rotary’s Indiana Jones, a Rotarian whose job as an archaeologist takes him far and wide in search of answers about the mysteries of ancient religions. The October issue spotlights disaster relief. In every issue of *Interactive*, you’ll be able to read advice from the RI president and send in your own questions.

Delve deeper into the many sides of Rotary by getting *Interactive* e-mailed to you or by reading it online.