British Council for Prevention of Blindness

BCPB is a registered charity that funds research and training to prevent blindness in children and adults in low and lower middle-income countries. Our pioneering projects empower local professionals and communities to undertake preventative sight saving programmes. The results are changing thousands of lives for the better, relieving communities of the burden that blindness places upon them, reducing poverty, and boosting economic growth.

Blindness facts

- 89% of the blind people in the world live in poor countries.
- Three quarters of this blindness is avoidable.
- With adequate funding and research, most blind people in the world could have their visual impairment treated or prevented.

Our key achievements over the past 40 years

- Making ground-breaking discoveries leading directly to a breakthrough in the eye medication Ivermectin. This is now widely used in Africa to prevent ‘river blindness’ (onchocerciasis) – a condition that once blinded millions of people.
- Supporting the development of an eye health care training module to be delivered within the World Health Organization’s Integrated Management of Childhood Illness programme. The Tanzania Ministry of Health have now agreed that this training can be delivered to over 800 frontline child health care workers, thereby detecting eye problems early and avoiding childhood blindness.
- Validating the use of smartphones for the diagnosis of eye diseases in Kenya by research-based social enterprise Peek Vision, leading to the sight of thousands of people in the region being saved. Peek technology is now being used throughout Africa and Asia for millions of people who do not live near eye health facilities or cannot access treatment.
- Supporting over 160 eye care professionals from the world’s poorest countries to train and undertake research, developing their expertise in planning and managing blindness prevention programmes, as well as leadership and advocacy skills.
- Each of these new eye care leaders will save the sight of up to 40,000 people in the course of their career, and will on average train a further 200 people to save sight.
- Forty years of funding innovative research leading to greater understanding and better treatment of diseases including glaucoma, age related macular degeneration, trachoma, and childhood cataract.
- Over 150 scientific papers have been published in the last nine years as a result of BCPB funded research.

Case study:

BCPB funded Dr Ciku Mathenge to undertake a survey of blindness in Kenya. Examining and treating 5,000 people, she gained her doctorate in the process, becoming Africa’s first female ophthalmologist with a PhD. She is now a Professor; leading vision screening projects and training other eye care workers in Rwanda, passing on her knowledge and skills. This ‘skills cascade’ is what our work is all about.

All of BCPB’s work is funded through voluntary donations including gifts in Wills.