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VisionSpring Pivots From Eye Care to COVID-19 Response and Prevention With Team Members in Eight Countries

NY-based Social Enterprise Deploys Global Team to Procure Protective Equipment and Manufacture of Masks in Race to Prevent Spread Among Vulnerable Poor

(New York, NY) April 13, 2020 - [VisionSpring](#), known for delivering vision screenings and eyeglasses to people living on less than \$4 per day, has pivoted its operations in the race to save lives and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in India, Bangladesh, and five countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Working to support their more than 350 health care partners including hospitals, clinics, and networks of community health workers who are on the frontlines of COVID-19, VisionSpring has shifted its operations from conducting vision camps and dispensing eyeglasses to emergency response.

Rooted in its vision access programs and core values, starting with “help others to do well,” the organization is undertaking interventions in four key areas to prevent the spread of the global pandemic: 1) the procurement and delivery of personal protective equipment (PPE) for healthcare workers; 2) the manufacturing and distribution of ‘masks for all’ with garment and artisan sector partners; 3) public hand washing stations, and 4) the delivery of health education and information with hygiene and food kits for drivers, transportation workers, stranded laborers and slum communities.

“Four of our senior team members, including me, come from backgrounds in global emergency response,” said Ella Gudwin, VisionSpring CEO. “As we headed into lockdowns, we looked at our supply chain which is connected directly to health facilities, and our incredible teams trained in delivering community-based health services. Immediately we knew we could help; we had to help, and our amazing donors have backed us,” she added. “Every day, I am inspired by my colleagues who we are leaning into our core values—to constantly adapt, and to relentlessly improve—to stem the spread of this pandemic, and to emerge ready to execute on our core mission with the heightened infection prevention measures that we’ll need for the foreseeable future,” she commented.

More information about the VisionSpring's COVID response and call for additional support can be found at www.COVID19.visionspring.org.

As CEO, Gudwin holds daily, virtual meetings with VisionSpring's COVID response group, at the end of the day for team members in South Asia and at the start of the day for team member in the US, working around the clock. In under 2 weeks, VisionSpring has stood up a pooled procurement facility for PPE, sourcing from manufacturers in India and China, combining orders from multiple health providers in eight countries to keep prices down, and delivering essential supplies at-cost only.

Additionally, VisionSpring has initiated distributions of food and hygiene kits for vulnerable communities in India, and expects to reach 7,000 families in the next week. The day before Easter Sunday, a Delhi-based team of eight formed a convoy to reach migrant workers in Dwarka, bringing essential food kits for 100 families. A rickshaw driver who hadn't worked since the start of the lockdown 18 days ago, informed them that the food was essential to his family's survival.

Supporters of VisionSpring's COVID-19 response include long-time contributors and brand partners including the Levi Strauss Foundation, the Skoll Foundation, Cartier Philanthropy, the Peery Foundation, the John P and Anne Welsh McNulty Foundation, Shell India, and GMR Varalakshmi Group. These financial partners have supported VisionSpring's delivery of clear vision to millions on farms, in factories, schools, villages and transportation hubs. In dialogue, they were quick to support VisionSpring's request to shift from eyeglasses operations to providing for the needs of their healthcare partners and poor customer communities.

As soon as possible, and with new infection control measures in place, VisionSpring will resume its core mission of delivering vision screenings and seeding markets for radically affordable eyeglasses for the 2.7 billion people worldwide with uncorrected blurry vision. In the interim, VisionSpring is rising to the COVID-19 challenge.

About VisionSpring

VisionSpring is the pioneering, international social enterprise accelerating the uptake of affordable eyewear among people who earn less than \$4 per day in emerging and frontier markets. Founded in 2001, VisionSpring uncovers latent demand for vision correction; conducts community, workplace and school vision screenings; trains others to do the same; and supplies radically affordable, durable eyeglasses. VisionSpring has delivered more than 6.8 million pairs of eyeglasses, providing vision correction in 43 countries with over 385 NGO, corporate, government and health partners. They have been recognized for their innovative work, receiving multiple awards including the Skoll Award; social entrepreneur fellowships from Draper Richards Kaplan, the Aspen Institute, and the Schwab Foundation; and honors from World Bank, Duke University, Fast Company, and Tribeca Film Festival, among others. www.visionspring.org

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