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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sherpur Will Be the First District in Bangladesh With Access to Affordable Eyeglasses and Vision Care for All

Sherpur, Bangladesh, 14 Jan 2019—Today in Sherpur, Hon. Prof. A H M Enayet Hossain, Additional Director General, Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MHFW), launched Project DRESTI – *District Refractive Error and Eye Care Search and Treat Initiative*. Over the next two years, the MHFW and a group of 10 organizations, known as the Clear Vision Collective, will work to correct the vision of 58,000 adults and children in the district so that they can see clearly to work and care for their families, succeed in school, drive safely on the roads, and enjoy a higher quality of life.

Through Project DRESTI, the *Clear Vision Collective* will open and operate four vision centers; make reading glasses available for the first time through 100 Rural Medical Providers; open 25 Eye Mitra optical shops; train 400 health workers to conduct community vision camps; provide children’s eyeglasses through schools and perform 4,000 cataract surgeries. In addition to low-cost paid services, the initiative will provide free eyeglasses to children and the ultra-poor.

Project DRESTI is a precedent setting collective action to accelerate the uptake of eyeglasses and create widespread access to vision care. It will help boost productivity, income earning potential, and academic performance across the district.

The *Clear Vision Collective* is comprised of organizations from the non-profit, social enterprise, health, business and government sectors. Members are BRAC, Essilor, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Jeeon, Dr. K. Zaman BNSB Eye Hospital, National Vision (USA), National Eye Care (NEC), National Institute of Ophthalmology, OneSight, Orbis, RestoringVision, and VisionSpring.

Speaking at the launch event, Prof. Dr. A H M Enayet shared “*When we can all see clearly, the future of our families and of our nation is brighter. The Ministry of Health*

and Family Welfare is proud to partner with the Clear Vision Collective to help achieve National Eye Care goals. As the CVC members make it possible for many more people to wear eyeglasses, they also will identify and treat conditions like cataracts, infection and diabetic retinopathy.”

The Clear Vision Collective expects that over 80% of people who acquire glasses through Project DRESTI will be getting their very first pair ever of glasses. The two-year program will serve as a test for potential replication in other districts.

“Project DRESTI is a coordinated, ecosystem approach. CVC members are implementing their unique business models and charitable programs side by side for the first time,” says Ella Gudwin, President of VisionSpring, which serves as the Clear Vision Collective coordinator. “In creating hundreds of new points of sale, care, and information, our goal is for the 1.4 million people of Sherpur to know about the life changing benefits of vision correction and to be able to get affordable glasses and eye care near to where they live, work and study.”

Uncorrected poor vision remains the world's number one unaddressed disability, affecting 2.5 billion people globally. Studies show that glasses help students perform better in schools. A 2018 study (PROSPER) published in the *Lancet Global Health* revealed that wearing reading glasses increased worker productivity on average by 22%. This is the largest recorded productivity increase in a trial resulting from a health intervention.

