

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024





# Contents

ECP Activity Areas	2
Message From The Chief Adviser	3
Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Vision, Mission, Objectives & Impact of ECP	6
Milestones Attained	7
A. Crosses 200,000 Patients Screening	7
B. Crosses 20,000 Surgery Milestone	8
Program Activities	9
List of Partner Hospitals	13
Donors	13
Case Stories	14
Case Story	15
Feedback and Comments from Schools for SSTP	16
Awareness Activities	17
Eye Problem Pointers Placard	17
Other Activities	19
Challenges	20
Conclusion	20



## ECP ACTIVITY AREAS

Geographical Coverage: 2014 – June 2024			
SL#	Division	District	Upazila
1	<b>Dhaka</b>	Narayanganj	Sadar, Bondor, Sonargaon, Rupganj
		Gazipur	Sadar, Kaliakair
		Manikganj	Ghior
		Tangail	Kalihati
		Narshingdi	Sadar
		Dhaka	Metropolitan - Jatrabari, Gulshan, Uttara, Lalbagh, Khilgaon, Pallabi, Badda, Sobujbagh, Gendaria, Mirpur, Kamrangichor; Keraniganj, Tejgaon
2	<b>Rangpur</b>	Panchagarh	Sadar, Debiganj, Atwari, Boda, Tetulia
		Dinajpur	Birganj, Parbotipur, Khanshama
		Lalmonirhat	Sadar, Hatibandha, Aditmari, Kaliganj, Patgram
		Nilphamari	Sadar, Saidpur, Domar, Dimla, Joldhaka, Kishorganj
		Gaibandha	Sadar, Sundorganj, Shadullapur, Gobindoganj
		Thakurgaon	Sadar, Pirganj, Ranisonkoil, Horipur, Baliadangi
		Rangpur	Sadar, Taraganj, Gongachora, Kaunia, Mithapukur, Pirgacha, Bodorganj
		Kurigram	Sadar, Rajarhat, Rowmari
3	<b>Rajshahi</b>	Sirajganj	Tarash, Ullapara
		Pabna	Sadar, Ishwardi, Bhangura, Bera, Atghoria, Chatmohor, Shathia, Foridpur, Sujanagar
		Bogura	Sadar, Kahalu, Dhunot, Sherpur, Sariakandi
		Rajshahi	Sadar, Bagha, Bagmara
		Natore	Sadar, Shingra, Boraigram, Lalpur, Noldanga, Bagatipara
		Joypurhat	Kalai
		Chapainobabganj	Sadar, Gomostapur, Shibganj, Nachol, Bholahat, Chotrajitpur
		Noagoan	Mohadebpur, Manda, Raninagar
4	<b>Chittagong</b>	Chandpur	Sadar, Foridganj
		Feni	Sonagazi, Porshuram, Dagonbhuiya
5	<b>Khulna</b>	Kushtia	Bheramara
6	<b>Mymensingh</b>	Jamalpur	Sadar, Shorisabari, Madarganj

● Division - 6

● Districts - 26

● Upazila - 104

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF ADVISER

**Dear Stakeholders, Partners, Supporters and Well-wishers!**

I am privileged to present the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Eye Care Program (ECP) of Manabik Shahajya Sangstha (MSS). This year has been one of progress, collaboration, and impact as we strive to ensure accessible eye-care services for the underserved.

This year's core focus has been expanding our reach to underserved communities, enhancing early diagnosis and treatment, and raising awareness about preventable blindness and basic eye care. Through the collective efforts of our donors, dedicated staff, healthcare professionals, and our valued partners, we have made significant strides in addressing vision impairment, which remains a critical public health issue affecting millions.

Key highlights of the year include expanded reach, vision restoration initiatives, capacity building, and awareness-raising activities.

As we reflect on these accomplishments, I also want to recognize the challenges we continue to face, including the growing burden of eye disease due to aging populations, prolonged periods of political turmoil, and inclement weather. The need for sustained funding, innovative solutions, and stronger partnerships will be crucial in overcoming these barriers.

While celebrating these achievements, we recognize that our work is far from over. Millions of individuals are still at risk of avoidable vision loss. Our focus in the coming year will be on scaling our efforts, fostering even stronger partnerships, and ensuring no one is left behind in accessing essential eye care services.

I look forward to working with all of you as we continue on this journey towards eliminating preventable blindness and improving the quality of life for countless individuals.

We are committed to scaling our efforts to ensure no one suffers from preventable vision loss. Our goals for the upcoming year include integrating eye care into primary healthcare and advocating for policies prioritizing eye health as part of our broader healthcare agenda.

On behalf of the ECP team, I extend my deepest gratitude to all our donors, partners, stakeholders, and the communities we serve for their unwavering support. Together, we can achieve our goal of a future where every individual has the right to see clearly and live a life of dignity.

Thank you for your ongoing support, commitment to this vital cause, and continued trust in us.

Sincerely,

**Feroz M Hassan**  
Chief Adviser,  
**Manabik Shahajya Sangstha (MSS)**





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023-24 fiscal year has marked a period of impactful growth for the Eye Care Program (ECP) of Manabik Shahajya Sangstha (MSS), a program dedicated to combating preventable blindness and enhancing eye health across underserved regions of Bangladesh. By extending quality, accessible, and affordable eye care services to marginalized communities, ECP has continued its mission to prevent blindness, restore vision, and transform lives.

During this reporting period, key achievements include surpassing three significant milestones: screening over 200,000 patients, conducting over 20,000 surgeries, and working in the enclaves. Through a network of eye camps, School Sight Testing Programs (SSTP), and specialized initiatives such as mobile eye clinics and partnerships with local healthcare providers, ECP has addressed various eye health needs across demographics, mainly focusing on women, children, and the elderly. This year alone, ECP organized 54 public eye camps, screened 18,758 patients, and performed 3,719 surgeries. Additionally, 20 SSTPs screened 2,548 children, supplying glasses and medications where needed, further strengthening early diagnosis and prevention.

Collaborations with 25 partner hospitals and local institutions have been crucial in scaling these services. Partner hospitals provide discounted surgeries and essential follow-up care, while partnerships with local government bodies and educational institutions enable broader community engagement and accessibility in remote areas. Public eye camps conducted with these partners provide essential services, including eye exams, reading and prescription glasses, and medication, significantly reducing the rate of preventable blindness in the country.

ECP has conducted awareness campaigns in schools and among general populations, distributing educational materials to promote preventative eye health practices. The Noyon Tori mobile clinics further enhance ECP's outreach, making eye care accessible in hard-to-reach areas and ensuring patients in remote communities receive timely and appropriate care.

Despite these advancements, ECP faced several challenges, including political instability, weather-related disruptions, and rising operational costs, all of which have impacted service delivery and reach. These obstacles underscore the necessity for flexible funding models, resilient partnerships, and adaptive strategies to sustain and expand eye care services effectively.

As we advance, ECP remains committed to its mission, focusing on continuous innovation and collaboration. By overcoming systemic challenges and harnessing the support of donors, volunteers, and community stakeholders, ECP is poised to build on its success and move closer to a Bangladesh where every individual has access to essential eye care and the opportunity for a sighted future.

In summary, ECP's 2023-24 accomplishments reflect the dedication of a broad coalition working toward a future free from preventable blindness. Continued support from donors and partners will be critical as ECP strives to fulfill this vision.

## INTRODUCTION

The 2023-24 fiscal year has been a transformative period for the Eye Care Program (ECP) of Manabik Shahajya Sangstha (MSS). Rooted in our commitment to providing accessible, affordable, and quality eye care to underserved communities, we have continued to advance our mission of preventing blindness and restoring vision across Bangladesh.

With millions of people still vulnerable to preventable vision loss, ECP has strengthened its reach through expanded services, innovative partnerships, and community-driven interventions. This year's program has provided essential medical care and empowered individuals to regain independence, improve productivity, and enhance their quality of life.

Through a network of eye camps and awareness campaigns, we have extended our support to some of the most marginalized populations, including children, the elderly, and those in remote regions. Our services—eye examinations, cataract surgeries, spectacle and medicine distribution, and health education—continue to be delivered with a focus on compassion and sustainability.

The 2023-24 Annual Report highlights the ECP's achievements, challenges, and key initiatives during the reporting period. It reflects our unwavering dedication to tackling preventable blindness while offering insights into the strategic direction for the future. We are proud of the progress made and grateful for the ongoing support of our donors, partners, and the dedicated team of ECP, who have made these accomplishments possible.

Together, we are moving closer to a world where everyone can access the gift of vision regardless of circumstances.



*A doctor examines the eyes of a primary school student at Thakurgaon*

# VISION, MISSION & IMPACT OF ECP

## Vision

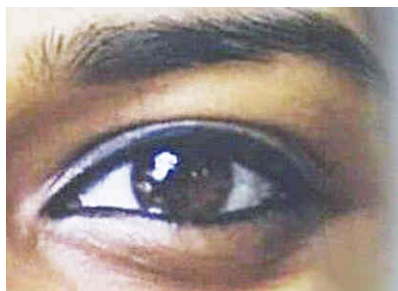
The Eye Care Program's vision is a Bangladesh where every individual, regardless of their socio-economic status, has access to the eye care services they need to lead a healthy and productive life. ECP-MSS envisions a future where preventable blindness is eradicated and all communities are educated about the importance of eye health. Through its efforts, the program aims to build a sustainable healthcare infrastructure that can meet the population's ongoing and future eye care needs, particularly in underserved areas.

## Mission

Eye Care Program (ECP) under Manabik Shahajya Sangstha (MSS) aims to eliminate preventable blindness and improve eye health among underprivileged and marginalized communities in Bangladesh. The program is dedicated to providing accessible, affordable, and high-quality eye care services, focusing on women, children, and rural populations. ECP-MSS strives to promote community awareness about eye health, ensure early detection and treatment of eye conditions, and enhance the capacity of local healthcare systems to address eye care needs effectively.

## Impact

The impact of the ECP has been profound, particularly in reaching marginalized and underserved populations across Bangladesh. Through initiatives such as eye camps, School Sight Testing Programs, and specialized interventions like the Industrial Sight Testing Program (ISTP) and Healthy Eyes for Road Safety (HERS), ECP-MSS has provided critical eye care services to over 200,000 individuals. The program has successfully identified and operated over 20,000 cases of cataracts and other eye surgeries, significantly improving the quality of life for many. Overall, ECP has made a lasting impact by enhancing access to essential eye care services, raising awareness of eye health, and preventing blindness among some of the most vulnerable communities in Bangladesh.

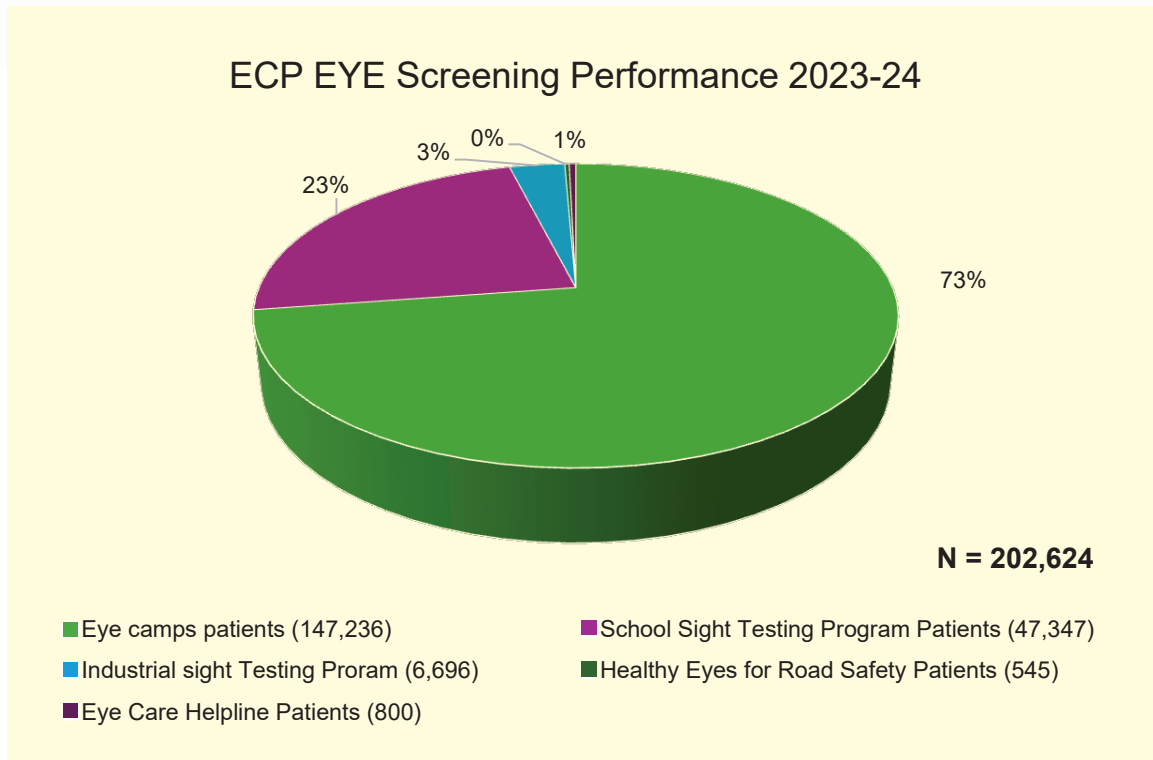


**“ECP has made a lasting impact by enhancing access to essential eye care services, raising awareness of eye health, and preventing blindness among some of the most vulnerable communities in Bangladesh.”**



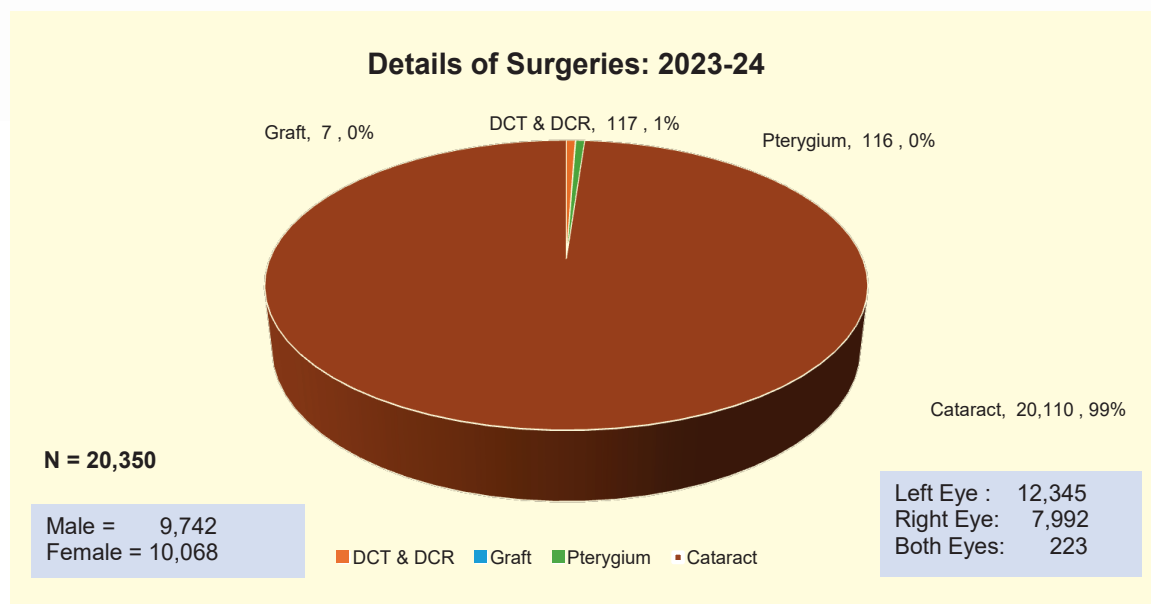
## MILESTONES ATTAINED: (2014-2024)

### A. CROSSES 200,000 PATIENTS SCREENING:



*Many underserved patients receive awareness flyers and register for eye screening.*

## B. SURGERIES PERFORMED: [Crosses 20,000 Surgery Milestone]



*Eye Surgery in progress at the Partner Hospital*



*Counseling post-surgery patients at our partner hospital.*



## PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

ECP provides various types of eye care services for the underserved population. Thus, ECP conducts free public eye camps for underserved communities, the School Sight Testing Program (SSTP) for underserved school children, the Industrial Sight Testing Program (ISTP) for industrial workers at their factory sites, and the Healthy Eyes for Road Safety (HERS) to cater to the eye care needs of transport workers at their terminals, among other things.

### OUR PRIORITIES

The emphasis of ECP program activities continues to be on marginalized groups, particularly women, children, and the elderly. ECP program activities also enhance access to free or affordable, high-quality eye care through active community engagement and comprehensive eye health services for long-term benefits.

#### A. PUBLIC EYE CAMPS

A free public eye camp is a community-driven health initiative to provide essential eye care services to people with limited access to such care. ECP organizes these camps with partner hospitals, usually in underserved or rural areas. The services typically include vision screenings, eye examinations, reading and prescription glasses, treatment for common eye ailments, and surgical interventions for conditions like cataracts. The primary goal of these camps is to detect early signs of eye problems, offer preventive care, and ensure that people have access to necessary treatments without the financial burden that might otherwise prevent them from seeking care.

The benefits of these eye camps are numerous. First and foremost, they help reduce preventable blindness by offering timely interventions, particularly in areas with limited access to ophthalmic care. Many eye conditions, like cataracts and glaucoma, can be easily treated if diagnosed early, and eye camps provide the opportunity for such early diagnosis. Secondly, vision improvement through corrective lenses can significantly enhance an individual's quality of life, allowing them to be more productive in their daily activities, work, and education. In addition, these camps routinely raise awareness about eye health, promoting preventive measures such as regular check-ups and protective eyewear. By making eye care accessible and affordable, free public eye camps play a vital role in



*Patients eye examination is underway at a public eye camp*



improving public health and enhancing the well-being of entire communities.

During this reporting period, ECP conducted 54 public eye camps, during which 18,758 patients (female 9,891; male 8,867) were screened, and 5,180 surgery patients were identified. A total of 3,965 reading glasses and 198 medicines were distributed among the patients for free.

### A.1 SCHOOL SIGHT TESTING PROGRAM

Thousands of children experience preventable blindness and other eye issues, including refractive errors, so the ECP focuses heavily on its SSTP. Launched in October 2017, the SSTP aims to deliver essential eye care services to disadvantaged schoolchildren. To enhance its efficiency, the program has seen several modifications in its execution.

The SSTP is structured to detect nearsightedness and visual impairments in school-going children, offering thorough eye screening services. Beyond diagnosis, the program provides students with corrective eyeglasses, medications, and referrals for further treatment when needed. Additionally, the SSTP is vital in promoting awareness about primary eye care among students and teachers, especially in rural and remote areas, ensuring that even the most underserved communities gain access to the eye care they require.

#### Services Provided



Manual Refraction for Error Correction



Free medicine distribution



Custom-made spectacles distribution among the students



Awareness among students to prevent avoidable eye diseases

During the reporting period, in addition to the public eye camps, 20 SSTPs were conducted at Khaga Khari Bari Union (13 schools) of Dimla Upazila of Nilphamari district, Dahagram Union (6 schools) of Patgram Upazila of Lalmonirhat district, and Dhaka district (01 school). At these SSTPs, 2,548 students (girls—1422 and boys—1126) were screened. A total of 147 custom-made eyeglasses and 333 medicines were given to the students.

## A.2 NOYONTORI EYE CAMPS

Of these public eye camps and SSTPs, 15 SSTPs and one eye camp were conducted using the services of our self-contained mobile eye clinics, Noyontori 1. At these eye camps, 2,171 patients were screened, 348 eyeglasses were given (reading glasses -201; custom-made glasses—147), and 333 medicines were given.

Using Noyontori—2, thirty-seven (37) public eye camps were conducted, during which 6,263 patients were screened. Reading glasses were given out to 1,580 patients, 1,272 cataract patients were identified, and 1,111 surgeries were performed at our partner hospital, the Shafiuddin Ahmed Foundation (SAF) Hospital in Thakurgaon.

## A.3 ECP SERVICES ENCLAVES

Dahagram-Angurpota is a 22.68 sq.km Bangladeshi enclave surrounded by India, with a population of 16,955. According to an agreement signed on 16 May 1974, Bangladesh exchanged ‘enclaves’ with neighboring India. Bangladesh agreed to give away Berubari of 2.64 square miles in exchange for ‘an area of 178 meters × 85 meters at ‘Tin Bigha’ to connect Dahagram with Patgram upazila, Lalmonirhat district. It is now connected to mainland Bangladesh via the Tin Bigha Corridor. Little development had occurred in Dahagram-Angurpota. People in the area are highly deprived of healthcare facilities to a large extent.

UAE-BANGLADESH INVESTMENT COMPANY (UBICO) and ECP—MSS agreed to extend eye care services to the children of all five primary schools in the enclave. Thus, from 02 to 06 June 2024, ECP—MSS conducted a series of SSTPs in Dahagram—Angurpota Union of Patgram upazila, Lalmonirhat district. It was a logistical nightmare, but it was completed successfully.



## B. CATARACT SURGERIES

Cataract surgeries are crucial in reducing preventable blindness, especially in regions with limited access to eye care services. Cataracts, the clouding of the eye’s natural lens, are the leading cause of blindness worldwide, particularly among older adults. Left untreated, cataracts can significantly impair vision, leading to blindness that often affects individuals’ quality of life and independence. Conducting cataract surgeries is a highly effective and



proven intervention, as the procedure involves removing the clouded lens and replacing it with an artificial one, restoring vision and enabling patients to regain their functional abilities.

In partnership with its partner hospitals, ECP conducts community outreach and awareness campaigns to maximize the impact of cataract surgeries, particularly in underserved areas where access to eye care is limited. ECP uses Mobile eye clinics and partnerships with local healthcare providers, which helps increase the reach of our cataract surgery programs. By making these surgeries accessible and affordable, ECP reduces the burden of blindness, improves the quality of life for individuals, and enhances economic productivity as more people regain their sight and independence.

During the reporting period, 5,180 surgery patients were identified, and 3,719 surgeries were performed (female—2,111; male—1,608) at our partner hospitals. One thousand four hundred sixty-one (1,461) or 28.20% of patients dropped out due to health conditions, fear of surgery, and other family reasons.



*Post-surgery patients at our partner hospital.*

### **C. PARTNERSHIPS**

Collaboration with hospitals and healthcare providers has been central to the success of our eye care program. These partnerships allow us to extend specialized services to underserved populations, such as cataract surgeries, correcting refractive errors, addressing eye conditions, and advanced diagnostic assessments. By working closely with local hospitals, we ensure that patients receive quality care and access follow-up treatments and long-term management of chronic eye conditions. Our alliances with these institutions help maintain a high standard of care and build sustainable healthcare capacity in regions where it is most needed.

Local government and educational institutions have been equally vital in our efforts. Their support enabled us to streamline operations and expand our reach to remote areas. Our collaboration with these institutions has allowed us to enhance awareness, provide preventive eye health education, and use their infrastructure to conduct public eye camps. Schools, colleges, and universities are also sources of volunteers who provide support services to our public eye camps and SSTP.

Partner hospitals significantly contribute to our program by providing technical teams of doctors and optometrists to our eye camps, hospitalizing patients, and performing surgeries at discounted rates.

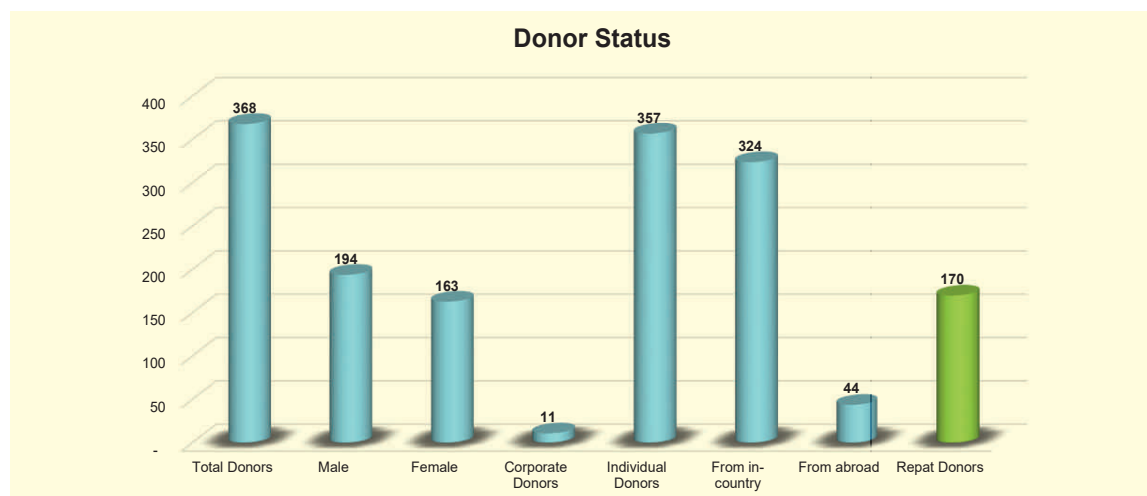


## LIST OF PARTNER HOSPITALS

1	Safiuddin Ahmed Foundation Thakurgaon	14	Bhuapur Eye Hospital Tangail
2	Sohitun Nesa Eye Hospital Narayanganj	15	Pangsha Eye Hospital Pangsha, Rajbari
3	Prof. M. A Matin Memorial BNSB Base Eye Hospital, Kalibari, Sirajganj	16	Prime Bank Eye Hospital Satmosjid road, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209
4	Shahajadpur Eye Hospital Shahajadpur, Sirajganj	17	Majharul Houque BNSB Eye Hospital Cumilla Road, Chandpur
5	Tarash Eye Hospital Tarash, Sirajganj	18	Al-Noor Eye Hospital Satmasjid Road, Lalmatia, Dhaka
6	Bera Eye Hospital Bera, Pabna	19	Makka Eye Hospital Uttara, Dhaka
7	Ishwardi Eye Hospital Ishwardi, Pabna	20	Makka Eye Hospital Tangail
8	Talim Nagar Eye Hospital Pabna	21	Makka Eye Hospital 76 Sagarpara, Boalia, Rajshahi
9	Gurudaspur Eye Hospital Natore	22	Makka Eye Hospital Rangpur
10	Rajshahi Eye Hospital Malopara, Rajshahi	23	Rangpur Eye Hospital Rangpur
11	Nougaon Eye Hospital Muktir Mor, Nougaon	24	Dhaka Progressive Lion's Eye Hospital Narsingdi
12	Ispahani Islamia Eye Institute & Hospital, Dhaka	25	Bangladesh Jatio Andha Kalyan Somiti (BJAKS), Cumilla
13	Katrasin Eye Hospital Shibaloy, Manikganj		

## DONORS

Our esteemed donors constitute the lifeline of our program. They make significant financial contributions to run our activities. Every year during the holy month of Ramadan, our donors give a portion of their zakat to continue our work of serving the underprivileged people.



## CASE STORIES

### Ahsan Habib's Cataract Surgery Changed His Life

**Name:** Ahsan Habib

**Age:** 67

Ahsan Habib's (Age 67) journey is a remarkable testament to resilience and the transformative power of healthcare. Living in Pramanik Para - Thakurgaon, a rural community heavily reliant on agriculture, Ahsan faced immense challenges due to his deteriorating eyesight caused by cataracts. This condition not only hindered his ability to work effectively as a day laborer but also placed a significant strain on his family's finances and emotional well-being.

The turning point in Ahsan's life came when he learned about a free cataract surgery eye camp organized by MSS. Ahsan attended the camp and received the surgery he desperately needed. The operation was a success, and his vision was restored.

With his newfound clarity, Ahsan recognized the opportunity to change his circumstances. Instead of returning to day labor, he decided to open a small shop in his village. This decision provided him with a steady income and allowed him to serve his community by offering essential goods that were previously hard to come by.

Ahsan's transition from day laborer to shopkeeper marked a significant shift in his life. He was thriving and contributing positively to his community. His shop became a hub for neighbors, fostering a sense of connection and support among residents.

Ahsan's journey from struggling with poor vision to becoming a successful shopkeeper serves as an inspiring example of how access to healthcare can empower individuals to pursue their dreams and improve their quality of life. Today, Ahsan not only supports his family but inspires others to seek help and embrace new opportunities, proving that a brighter future is possible with determination and the right support.



## CASE STORY

### From Darkness To Light: Nirota Bala's Journey To Independence

**Name:** Nirota Bala,

**Age:** 64 Years



Nirota Bala's story is one of transformation, reflecting the profound impact of access to eye care. As a widow living in Kholishakuri, Thakurgaon, Nirota faced significant challenges, relying on her day laborer son for support. She could not even manage her food until someone gave her something to eat. Her deteriorating eyesight due to cataracts made daily tasks difficult, limiting her ability to contribute to her family's well-being.



Her life changed when she learned about the free eye camp organized by ECP-MSS. One day, her niece heard the announcement of the eye camp, and she brought her aunt to the camp. ECP was then responsible for facilitating her eye surgery and successfully restoring her vision. With her restored eyesight, Nirota became empowered to take on more responsibilities. She started working as a house helper, giving her a sense of purpose and allowing her to contribute to her family's finances. Her ability to assist her son as day labor further stabilized their income, fostering a sense of independence and self-worth.

Nirota's renewed vision enhanced her quality of life and strengthened the bond within her family. Her journey inspires us by reminding us that it is possible to overcome adversity and build a brighter future with determination and support.



## FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS FROM SCHOOLS FOR SSTP:

The head teacher of the schools gave their valuable comments about our SSTP program in the Program Acknowledgement form, which we bring from the school. Their comments are below:

Md. Hamidul Hoq  
Head Teacher  
Bongobari Govt. Primary  
School, Dahagram



“The program is beneficial for the students. We are satisfied with the program's quality. The healthcare facilitators are skilled and cooperative. This program should be conducted annually at our school. We are happy with the ECP doctor and team members' behavior”.

Merina Akter  
Head Teacher  
Kisamot Chatnai Govt.  
Primary School, Dimla



“I extend my gratitude for the free sight testing program. It has positively impacted our students, especially those with limited healthcare access, by identifying vision issues early. Your team's professionalism and advanced equipment have been invaluable. I appreciate your dedication to our students' well-being. This initiative has greatly benefited our community, and we look forward to more opportunities like this in the future.”



*Students are excited to learn about basic eye care and ready to share with family and friends.*

## AWARENESS ACTIVITIES

Surrounding the SSTP, awareness campaigns are conducted among the eye camp patients at all our programs using the following materials:

- ➡ Posters – depicting essential eye care tips.
- ➡ Flyers – highlighting basic eye care tips.
- ➡ Awareness placards for school children showing indicators of problematic eyes



## EYE PROBLEM POINTERS PLACARD

The placard highlights pointers indicating that a child requires an eye examination by a professional eye specialist. After explaining the pointers to the teachers, we gave them to each school to hang in the teachers' room, where students could see them. Forty placards were given to the 20 schools.

ECP Team members used posters and flyers to make 100 interactive presentations on primary eye care. The students were given flyers highlighting essential eye care tips to distribute among their friends and families. The students expressed Interest in the presentation and asked questions.

### THE POINTERS ARE –

1. Cannot see the text clearly written on the blackboard
2. Holding books close to the eyes when reading
3. Skipping lines or repeating the same lines while reading
4. Make eyes smaller while seeing something
5. To keep one eye closed while reading the book
6. Sometimes suffer from headaches
7. Lean the head on one side
8. Complain eye irritation, watering and pain
9. Frequently blink the eyelids
10. Frequently rub the eyes with hands





Eye Problem Pointer placards are given to the schools so they know when to visit an eye doctor.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Healthy Eye for Road Safety (HERS)

Concerned about the unsafe state of road safety, in 2019, the ECP surveyed drivers of public road transports, revealing that a staggering 70% of them faced vision impairments. In response, the ECP decided to bring affordable, high-quality eye care services directly to these transport workers at their terminals. Teaming up with Al-Noor Eye Hospital in Dhaka, the ECP organized a sight screening program for public transport drivers at the Tejgaon truck stand and the Syedabad bus terminal on February 24–25 and March 11–12, 2019. A total of 545 public transport workers underwent screening, with 155 receiving prescriptions for spectacles and 291 being provided with medications. Among the 148 drivers screened, 101 were diagnosed with refractive errors and were prescribed spectacles. Additionally, 24 cataract patients were identified, 11 of whom were drivers. The ECP subsidized the costs of eye examinations, spectacles, medications, and surgeries, although the workers bore most of the expenses.

### Eye Care Helpline (ECH)

The Eye Care Helpline was introduced on June 7, 2020, to offer accessible eye care services to individuals, thereby minimizing the need for hospital or clinic visits and reducing the risk of COVID-19 exposure. This initiative was launched in collaboration with our network of partner hospitals across the country. To inform people about the Helpline's availability for eye care services via phone and/or video calls, promotional efforts were carried out through scrolls on various TV channels. Notably, the Women's Credit Program – MSS played a crucial role in disseminating information about the program, reaching out to over a million underserved individuals, predominantly from rural areas.

The Eye Care Helpline served a total of 800 patients, comprising 403 males and 397 females, with diverse occupations including housewives (341), jobholders (167), farmers (24), students (84), businesspersons (113), children (25), teachers (7), drivers (4), and retirees (35). These patients hailed from 39 districts across the country, with the highest number originating from Dhaka (374).

### Industrial Sight Testing Program (ISTP)

The aim of the Industrial Sight Testing Program (ISTP) is to deliver comprehensive eye care services at an affordable rate to workers, addressing refractive errors and other eye ailments to ensure their eye health and enhance productivity. Since the program's inception in 2018, ECP has conducted ISTP, serving eight (8) factories. The program has provided eye care services to 6696 workers/staff, dispensed 1687 custom-made eyeglasses, and distributed 2125 medications. Fifty (50) patients requiring cataract surgery were identified, with 24 surgeries successfully performed. Factory owners subsidized some of the expenses, while workers partially contributed.



## CHALLENGES

Running an eye care program for underserved populations comes with a unique set of challenges, many of which significantly impact the delivery of services. One of the primary obstacles we face is the instability caused by prolonged periods of political turmoil. In regions where governance is unstable, the disruption of essential services, including healthcare, becomes a pressing issue. Political unrest can delay program implementation, limit access to necessary resources, and make it challenging to maintain partnerships with local governments and healthcare institutions. These disruptions often lead to gaps in care, making it harder to provide consistent and timely interventions for vision impairments.

Inclement weather conditions are another significant challenge, particularly in rural or remote areas. Extreme weather events such as heavy rainfall, cold and dense fog, floods, or storms severely restrict access to these regions, delaying mobile clinics and outreach programs. Poor road infrastructure, compounded by adverse weather, makes transporting medical equipment and personnel a logistical challenge. As a result, patients in need of urgent care are left waiting, and preventive services like screenings and follow-ups are often postponed, leading to a higher risk of untreated conditions progressing to blindness.

Escalating costs present a financial burden that further complicates our ability to serve the underserved effectively. Rising costs of medical supplies, transportation, and advanced eye care technologies stretch already limited resources. This often forces us to decide which services to prioritize, primarily when operating on a tight budget. Moreover, inflation and economic instability reduce funding availability from both public and private sectors, limiting the scale of our operations and the number of people we can reach.

Political instability, weather-related disruptions, and financial constraints highlight the need for adaptive strategies, strong partnerships, and sustainable funding models to ensure the continued success and expansion of eye care programs for underserved communities.

## CONCLUSION

As we conclude the 2023-2024 reporting year, we pride ourselves on the significant progress in advancing eye care services and reducing preventable blindness. Our journey has been driven by our donors and the tireless efforts of our dedicated team, partners, and community members, whose collective vision has enabled us to reach new heights in providing life-changing care. While much has been achieved, more work remains to ensure every individual has access to quality eye care, regardless of location or circumstance.

Together, with continued collaboration and innovation, we are confident that we will move closer to a future where preventable blindness is eradicated, and healthy vision is a reality for all.

Thank you for being a part of this transformative mission.



*For information, please contact:*

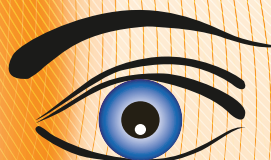
**Executive Director**

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