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Seva Wins Critical Impact Award from Council on Foundations
Entrepreneurial breakthrough enables millions of blind people to see

BERKELEY, CA (July 5, 2007) – The Council on Foundations, a Washington DC-based association of more than 2,000 grantmaking foundations and corporations, has named Seva Foundation as a recipient of its Critical Impact Award. Seva is being honored for "...revolutionizing the ability of community based eye care programs to restore eyesight for poor people affected by cataract blindness..." through its work in helping to create Aurolab, the manufacturing division of Aravind Eye Hospital, in India.

"This is like winning a lifetime achievement award at the Oscars," says Dr. Suzanne Gilbert, Director of Seva's Center for Innovation in Eye Care. "We are delighted to be among the first to receive this award, and we're pleased to bring attention to this highly successful model of sustainable entrepreneurship which is bringing affordable eye care to developing countries."

Seva provided funding, technical expertise and operational support that enabled Aurolab to pioneer new methods of manufacturing high quality, low cost intraocular lenses (IOLs), which are essential to fully restore the eyesight of cataract patients.

Previously, IOLs had been too expensive for use in public health eye care programs in developing countries. Today, Aurolab IOLs sell for about \$5 each, compared with \$100 to \$150 at typical market prices — making it possible for millions of poor people around the world to enjoy excellent vision following cataract surgery.

Dr. Bruce Spivey, President of the International Council of Ophthalmology, calls the development "...one of the most important breakthroughs in international ophthalmology in recent decades."

Pamela Hartigan, Executive Director of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship remarks, "Seva has been a pioneer in catalyzing an entirely new business model that combines access and equity with quality and cost efficiency. Seva is a testament to the catalytic role that foundations worldwide can have on supporting innovation and tolerating a level of risk that no business or government is willing to undertake."

With Seva's support, Aurolab has become a self-sustaining enterprise that continues to thrive, carrying on its own research and development work and selling a variety of medical products in most countries of the world. Although Aurolab no longer requires funding from Seva, there continues to be a rich collaboration with Seva volunteer advisors on marketing, new technologies and other needs.

In his letter nominating Seva for the Critical Impact Award, Gregory Miller, Managing Director at Google.org wrote, "The relationship between Seva and Aravind clearly goes far beyond the act of grantmaking and into the realm of true global partnership. This grant exemplifies the highest goals of poverty alleviation, improvement of public health, and development of a new paradigm for international collaboration and innovation."

The Critical Impact Award, in its inaugural year, was created to "...recognize those who truly make a difference in their grantmaking while sharing with the public examples of how philanthropy seeks to enhance the common good."

In a statement announcing the five winners, Steve Gunderson, President and CEO of the Council on Foundations said, "These foundations have demonstrated the commitment and vision needed to

address the important issues affecting society and are helping to advance the common good, not only in our local communities but throughout the world."

In addition to its eye care programs, Seva Foundation also works with indigenous communities in Guatemala and Mexico, along with Native American communities — supporting projects in the area of health and wellness, community development, environmental protection and cultural preservation. Next year, Seva celebrates its 30th anniversary.

For more information about Seva Foundation, please visit: www.seva.org

For more information on the Council on Foundations and the Critical Impact Award, please visit: <http://www.cof.org/Council/prdetail.cfm?ItemNumber=9662>
