Dear Friends of VisionSpring,

Much has happened in our world since my last update to you, including for all of us at VisionSpring. Over the past two weeks, we have fully pivoted our capacities to help protect health workers, distribute food, and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in communities we serve.

We couldn't have done this without the encouragement and flexible support that so many of you have graced us with!

**Our COVID-19 Pivot**

The pandemic has separated the VisionSpring teams from each other physically, but we are united in spirit and purpose!

We transitioned to work from home – starting with our Vietnam team, then the New York support office, followed by the India and Bangladesh offices, and most recently all five Sub-Saharan Africa teams. And, we have never been busier!

With nationwide lockdowns in place, we are temporarily unable to execute on our vision mission. But our mandate to “help others to do well” is in full effect. Taking stock of our capabilities and partner needs, we have reimagined the assistance that we can provide to people living in the communities we serve.

*We have pivoted the deployment of our people power and our capabilities to COVID-19 emergency response.*
BUILDING ON OUR CAPABILITIES & ASSETS

The unique capabilities, skills and people that have enabled VisionSpring to deliver on our eye health and livelihoods mission are now relevant and needed for the COVID-19 response, to protect health workers and help prevent the spread of the virus. These include:

- **A network of 350 health care organizations** on the frontline of COVID-19 response in Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Vietnam, and Zambia;

- **Supply chain centers** in Noida and Pune India, and third-party logistics providers in each key market, with procurement, warehousing, pick-pack and dispatch capabilities, including from China;

- **A 200 person community-based team** practiced in community health service delivery, education and awareness-raising;

- **Emergency response experience** among five members of VisionSpring’s leadership, including our global CEO and chairman of the India board.

VISIONSPRING’S COVID RESPONSE GOALS

To shape our response, we have set specific goals around interventions that build on a growing public health consensus on how to slow the spread of the virus, particularly in low-income communities where social distancing is thwarted by population density.

These interventions are also relevant to the new normal that awaits us on the backside of this crisis, when heightened infections, prevention and control will be required in all of our vision services.

Our goals are to provide:

- **1 million units of Personal Protective Equipment for health workers in our network**: Leveraging VisionSpring’s procurement and supply chain capacity, we are sourcing personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, face shields, goggles, coveralls and gowns) to ensure frontline health workers have the supplies they need to safely provide care. By pooling the requirements of multiple government and mission hospitals we can drive costs down, and delivering these essential items on a subsidized basis.

- **50,000 cloth Masks for All to reduce community-spread of the virus**: Cloth masks stop asymptomatic people from accidentally spreading the virus. Mask wearing in public is now required by many governments, and is especially important in densely populated slum communities. Through our Clear Vision Workplace program, VisionSpring has relationships with large garment manufacturers, as well as artisan groups. We have commissioned them to make re-usable cloth masks for distribution in low-income communities and for health centers to provide to all patients who enter the facility.

- **20,000 community COVID-19 hygiene and food kits**: Lockdowns and business disruptions are disproportionately affecting the extremely poor. VisionSpring has redeployed our vision camp teams to provide food relief and hygiene items, coupled with public health information in the communities we serve, particularly for migrant workers, drivers and transportation workers, and others uniquely affected by or contributing to the response.

- **1,000 handwashing and health information stations**: Following the example of effective infection prevention during outbreaks of cholera and Ebola, we will set up handwashing stations and COVID-19 messaging in high visibility, public areas associated with VisionSpring’s core customer groups.
OUR EMERGENCY RESPONSE WORK HAS ALREADY BEGUN

Last Friday, 87 of our Indian staff received special curfew passes permitting them to move during the nationwide lockdown.

We have re-opened our Noida supply chain center which is serving as our emergency operations hub in India. To safely resume work together, team members participated in a 3-hour training covering safe distancing, hand washing, mask wearing, daily temperature taking and other infection prevention procedures.

In our warehouse, we have already taken in stock of masks, protective glasses, gloves, and infrared thermometers and have dispatched our first shipment with several more slated for hospitals next week.

Our Vision Access Project teams are working in transportation hubs and slum communities, distributing food aid and hygiene kits.

Click here for more about our response plan.

Over the Easter weekend, VisionSpring began distributing food aid to vulnerable families in Delhi

In India over this past Easter weekend, eight VisionSpring team members formed a convoy to deliver food kits to 100 vulnerable families living in a Delhi slum near our old warehouse. As soon as the team arrived at the settlement, the residents’ need for assistance was immediately apparent.

 Asking residents what their primary concern was during the COVID-19 crisis, all responded that they were worried about finding and buying food. A rickshaw driver had no work or income since the lockdown, and he told the team he was worried about feeding his family. Similarly, a house keeper told the team that the family who she worked for told her to stop coming to their home for fear of the virus, and no longer took her calls. A trash picker said that he was prohibited from making his daily trek to the garbage pile. No income, no food. Even if they had a few rupees, shops were closed, and the ones that remained open had empty shelves. The team’s distribution of food was essential.

Building on lessons learned – about crowd control, maintaining distancing and establishing a human connection through masks and goggles – during this test distribution and others conducted this week, VisionSpring India is distributing 7,000 kits of food over the course of this week and next.

Read the full story here.
More than 130 team training sessions conducted while working from home

Aligned with our value to “relentlessly Improve”, we are using our work-from-home time to build our capacity and professional skills through virtual trainings.

Our newly formed Learn Together Committee has organized 40 training modules, which are developed and delivered by team members and cover a diverse set of subjects.

Training themes and topics include:
- Refreshers on eyecare and eyeglasses
- Vision camp know-how and the customer experience
- Integrity selling and client success
- Teamwork, communication and living into our values
- Selfcare, wellness and COVID-19
- Organizational development and leading through change

These skill-building sessions have been both informative and heart-warming. They are preparing us to be more effective than ever and are building our sense of community during a time of social isolation.

Already, VisionSpring team members have led **135 (and counting!) training sessions for more than 300 coworkers in eight countries**, with trainings planned into the next month.

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**Thank you**

Our COVID response would not be possible without you, VisionSpring’s partners and friends. You have come alongside us with incredible generosity, urgency and a spirit of solidarity.

Many of our philanthropic investors have made bold decisions and are leading the donor community by example. VisionSpring is blessed to have funders who have:

- Converted restricted funds to unrestricted
- Fast tracked grant renewals and leaned out processes
- Committed to maintain funding levels despite your own financial losses
- Issued new funding to back our COVID-19 response, and
- Shared insights for surviving and thriving through crisis.

We are grateful for the opportunity to stand with you against the devastating effects that this pandemic is having on the communities we serve and love. We will keep you updated on our progress.

Please stay safe and healthy.

Onward together!
Ella
CEO