

Soor Aur Saptak™ (SAS) Music Group, *a Profile*

Introduction

Soor Aur Saptak™ is a community Bollywood-style music group that gives an annual fundraising performance to support pediatric vision care in India. Our Hindi name means “Notes and Octaves.” This group of talented singers and dancers was founded in 2012 by Sandhiprakash and Anjali Bhide. Our vision is to give vision, literally, to those most in need. Giving vision to a blind or visually impaired child opens tremendous opportunities for a young life. It gives the child the opportunity to get educated, become a productive citizen, and lead a normal family life.

Our purpose: To raise money through benefit concerts to restore eyesight to hundreds of blind, visually impaired, and financially disadvantaged pediatric patients in rural India. We want to make a difference, be of service to others, and make the world a better place. In Ralph Waldo Emerson’s words, “To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived - that is to have succeeded.”

Our differentiation: We have zero overhead. Everyone donates their time and every dollar goes to the end user: the pediatric patient. The tickets and brochures are printed by local businesses owners. The flower bouquets are donated by local grocers. The food and drinks profits are donated by local restaurants. Funds are generated through ticket sales and through business and individual donors. The venues are provided by local businesses and churches. Local companies also donate through employee matching programs and by turning their volunteer hours into donations.

This is all possible because of kind and generous support from so many: the audience, performers, donors, and many dedicated, motivated, selfless volunteers giving their effort and time. The funds raised by Soor Aur Saptak™ go directly into equipment and services to restore sight and alleviate suffering of thousands of children in India. The entire Portland community comes together to support this vision.

Soor Aur Saptak™ Partnership with Seva Foundation, Berkeley, CA.

There were several reasons for our decision to partner with Seva Foundation:

1. We like Seva’s stated vision: “A world free of blindness.” Seva is a global nonprofit eye care organization that transforms lives and strengthens communities by restoring sight and preventing blindness. Restoring sight is one of the most effective ways to relieve suffering and reduce poverty. Seva’s approach is comprehensive: Partner with local institutions, build local capacity, support education and outreach, and promote gender equality. Their work is done through hospitals, rural clinics, school screening, and eye camps.
2. We learned from eye doctors that early intervention is critical. For example, if a blind child with a cataract is not treated within 18-24 months of their birth, and a subsequent operation after that childhood period is performed, the affected eye will still not be able to “see.” Although the lens might be clear, the brain does not know how to process that visual information coming from the optic nerve. The cognition and interpretation is just not there. This is a scary thought.
3. The reason for choosing pediatric patients was straightforward. Intercepting young blind children and babies is crucial because they have a full 70 to 80 years of life ahead of them that can become productive. Although we have five senses, the majority of our information comes from visual input. Helping to restore that dominant sense became our objective.
4. The statistics are eye opening: There are [36M blind/217M visually impaired people on the planet](#). The leading causes are cataract and refractive error. [75% of visual impairment is avoidable](#), 89% of blind live in low and middle income countries, 55% are female, and [1.5 million are children](#). There are 0.5M new cases of childhood blindness every year. We chose India because there are 7.8M blind/63M visually impaired people and 400,000 are blind children. It takes about \$50 to restore sight on the low end and with \$150 you can restore sight to a child with a specialized pediatric surgery, post-op care, glasses, medication and transportation.
5. Whenever there is blind child in the family, not only the child but anywhere from two to seven family members supporting the blind child suffer. Bringing vision to the child removes this family burden.

The Soor Aur Saptak™ Journey

Since 2013, Soor Aur Saptak™ has raised more than \$110K. Portland fundraiser's contribution and impact:

- \$ Growth: 2013: \$6.5K - 2014: \$12.5K - 2015: \$20K - 2016: \$27K - 2017: \$43K+, 2018: 58K+
- Sample results:
 - 2016 - 2017: children screened = 68,928; Schools screened = 258; glasses = 93; surgeries = 71; medical treatment low-vision devices = 240
 - 2013 - 2015: # of surgeries to preserve/restore vision = 322.
- In 2015, we partnered with Vivekananda Mission Ashram, Netra Niramay Niketan (VMANNN) and purchased a GE Medical pediatric anesthesia machine for a hospital in Chandi, West Bengal, India.

People attending our concerts get a feeling throughout the entire evening of great compassion and a strong sense of community. The turnout is always fantastic, as is the desire to help visually impaired and blind Indian children whose families otherwise could not get care for their kids. The events are a lot of fun and a great opportunity to combine something that people thoroughly enjoy with their love for Seva. A lot of effort, preparation and practice go into the event, with a lot of performers singing their favorite songs. Here are some links for the past performances and program announcements:

1. Seva Foundation Site: [2018 Program announcement](#), [2016 Program](#), [2015 Program](#). [2015 Seva Foundation Presentation](#), [2014 Seva Foundation Presentation](#), [2018 video by Dr. SII](#).
2. Past Programs: [2017 Part 1](#), [2017 Part 2](#), [Soor Aur Saptak's donation to Vivekananda Mission Asram Netra Niramay Niketan \(VMANNN\)](#), [All past Programs](#), [FaceBook Page](#).

Call to Action

Let's continue the momentum of the last seven years until every blind person on the earth can see. This is how you can get involved:

1. Come to Soor Aur Saptak™ programs, buy tickets, and support and be part of the effort.
2. Continue to donate on Seva's web site: <http://www.seva.org/site/PageServer?pagename=sas2018>
3. Work with your employer to set up Seva Foundation as a charitable organization and double your donations through employee matching.
4. Convert your volunteer hours into funds for Seva Foundation.
5. Encourage local businesses to donate products, services, and money towards this cause.
6. Replicate the Soor Aur Saptak™ success model in other cities/towns across the US, India, and other countries.
7. If you are a senior leader/business executive, make your company a philanthropic donor to Seva Foundation.
8. Promote awareness of the scale of the global avoidable blindness problem.

2020 Vision for Soor Aur Saptak™

1. Replicate the VMANNN partnership model to five additional locations in India.
 - a. Dr. Shroff's Charity Hospital-Delhi
 - b. HV Desai Eye Hospital-Maharashtra
 - c. Aravind Eye Care System-Tamil Nadu
 - d. LV Prasad Eye Institute-Telangana
 - e. Sadguru Netra Chikitsalaya (SNC)-Madhya Pradesh
2. Achieve goal of \$250,000 to support six hospitals.
3. Begin a fellowship in Pediatric Ophthalmology.
4. Expand school screening program.
5. Support low vision devices, medical treatment, costs for pediatric surgery and travel cost of attendants during surgery and medical treatment for children.

