



THE TEJ KOHLI & RUIT  
FOUNDATION

# Our Mission

Bhutan





Patients in Thimphu awaiting eye screening.

# Foreword

In August 2022 the Tej Kohli & Ruit Foundation entered in a partnership with the Ministry of Health in Bhutan to commence a joint mission to eliminate untreated cataract blindness from its population over a five-year period.

A sustained program of outreach and surgical interventions combined with the training of new ophthalmologic surgeons will seek to provide for a program of large-scale treatment.

Bhutan is well-known for its unique approach to sustainable development. The Kingdom is a net exporter of renewable energy and is the world's only carbon sink.

Bhutan's famous use of 'Gross National Happiness' as a measure of progress rather than conventional economic indicators is also well known around the world.

But less well-known is that the Kingdom is also an emerging pioneer when it comes to Global Health issues. In 2021 Bhutan had the fastest COVID-19 vaccination roll-out in the world.

The Tej Kohli & Ruit Foundation is proud to partner with the Kingdom of Bhutan to wipe out untreated cataract blindness.

"Bhutan is already leading the world when it comes to renewable power, environmental conservation and Gross National Happiness. It should come as no surprise that such importance has now been placed onto eliminating untreated blindness."

**– Tej Kohli, co-Founder, Tej Kohli & Ruit Foundation**



Dr Ruit with patients following their surgery.

## Contents

Who We Are	2
Blindness in Bhutan	3-4
Our Goals Under Royal Patronage	5-6
Where We've Been	7-12
Our Patients	13-16
Our Socio-Economic Impact	17
Follow Our Journey	18
Our #2030InSight Mission	19
Our Team	20



Co-founders, Dr Ruit (left) and Tej Kohli (right) in Wangdue Phodrang.

## Who We Are

The Tej Kohli and Ruit Foundation is an NGO co-founded by philanthropist and investor Tej Kohli and renowned eye surgeon Dr Sanduk Ruit.

Together the two men have created an organisation that has led to the creation of a lasting legacy of social and economic change in nations such as Bhutan. As of December 2022, the Tej Kohli and Ruit Foundation had cured 22,218 people of cataract blindness around the world.

# Blindness In Bhutan





Patients in Wangdue Phodrang awaiting eye screening.

Bhutan has achieved a **33%** reduction in blindness since its first Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (RAAB) survey in 2009.

Approximately **1.0%** of Bhutanese are blind in both eyes.

14.2% of the population of Bhutan lives with some form of visual disability.

Approximately **10,460** people in Bhutan are awaiting cataract surgery.



Tej Kohli (left), Her Majesty, the Royal Queen Grandmother (centre) and Dr Ruit (right)

# Our Goals Under Royal Patronage

We began our partnership in Bhutan in August 2022. Our project is a collaboration between the Tej Kohli & Ruit Foundation, the Bhutanese Ministry of Health, and the Royal Government of Bhutan.

We are honoured and most grateful to be operating under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty Gyalyum Kesang Choeden Wangchuck, the Royal Queen Grandmother of Bhutan.



(From left to right) Foreign Minister, Tandi Dorji, Health Minister, Her Excellency, Dechen Wangmo, Tej Kohli, Prime Minister, Dr Lotay Tshering, Isabelle Cave, Dr Sanduk Ruit.

During our 5-year programme, the Tej Kohli & Ruit Foundation will seek to entirely eliminate untreated cataract blindness from the Kingdom of Bhutan by:

Curing at least 5,000 people of cataract blindness throughout the Kingdom.

Training clinicians so that the Ministry of Health can match cure another 5,000 people.

## Our 5 Year Plan

Over 5000 cataract patients will be cured over the next 5 years

We pledge to cure approximately 1000 people each year

August 2022 saw 246 patients cured and 1619 patients screened

# Where We Have Been



# 1619 Screened

# 246 Cured

During our visit to the Kingdom of Bhutan, we visited two areas. The first was Wangdue Phodrang, a district in central Bhutan. The second was Thimphu, the capital and largest city in Bhutan.

The Tej Kohli & Ruit Foundation set up Outreach Microsurgical Eye Camps (OMECs) in both areas and screened 1619 and cured over 240 patients of needless cataract blindness.



Patient in Wangdue being prepped for surgery.



Patient in Wangdue being prepped for surgery.



Dr Ruit and Mr Kohli with patients in Wangdue Phodrang.



# Wangdue

# Phodrang

Wangdue Phodrang is known as one of the most picturesque districts in the country and for its stunning monasteries, impressive fortresses, and rolling hills.

The district is also home to the Dzongchung Lhakhang Temple, a sacred temple that is said to be one of the most important temples in Bhutan.

It was here that we began screening patients from across the district. Within just three days, we screened 1047 people and cured 143 of blindness.



# Thimphu

After three days in Wangdue Phodrang, we moved on to Thimphu.

Thimphu is Bhutan's capital. It occupies a valley in the west of the country and is the official seat of the Bhutanese Government.

In Thimphu, we screened 572 people for cataract blindness and cured 103 people as part of the Tej Kohli & Ruit Foundation's pledge to cure 5000 people over the course of 5 years.

The Bhutanese Health Ministry has also vowed to match our cure rate to eradicate needless cataract blindness across the country, taking the total that will be cured to 10,000.

*View the photos and videos from Thimphu at  
[www.tejkohlrui.com](http://www.tejkohlrui.com)*





Dr Ruit and fellow ophthalmologist in Thimphu.



Dr Ruit trains new eye surgeons during a surgical camp in Thimphu.



Dechen Wangmo awaiting the removal of her eye patches.

## Dechen Wangmo

47-year-old Dechen Wangmo lived a content and peaceful life in rural Bhutan. She is the proud mother of three children and also manages a small shop in her village.

Not having much to worry about, it came as a great shock when she began to lose her vision.

Her sight was deteriorating severely and her children were growing more and more concerned.

In August 2022, a Tej Kohli & Ruit Foundation Outreach Microsurgical Eye Camp (OMEC) visited her village.

It was here that Dechen discovered she had cataracts. Within a few days, she had been cured entirely.

After having her eye patches removed, she was full of joy and gratitude.

Dechen was just one of many who received the gift of sight from the Tej Kohli & Ruit Foundation.



Dechen Wangmo and relatives celebrating after her cure.



Singye after his surgery

## Singye

Singye spent his 81 years happy and fulfilled, living in the picturesque countryside of Bhutan. When his eyesight began to fade, he simply put it down to his old age. But when he was no longer able to go about his daily tasks as he used to, it fell on his family to care for him.

Singye lives with his son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter who spent their free time assisting him as much as they could. His granddaughter sold fresh vegetables in a local market but as Singye's blindness gradually worsened, she cared for him more and as a result, she had less time to earn living.

When the Tej Kohli & Ruit Foundation came to their village, they realised it was not Singye's age that caused his blindness. He was suffering from cataracts.

Singye's surgery was performed by Dr Ruit. Since having surgery, Singye can support himself and is said to be the happiest he's been since his blindness set in.

Singye is now more self-reliant, his family have more time to earn a living and his granddaughter is back selling vegetables in the local market.



Singye after his surgery



Dr Ruit (left) and Tej Kohli (right) with patients after their surgery

# Our Socio-economic Impact

Women make up **64.5%** of the world's visually impaired and **1 in 4** women are at risk of sight loss compared with just **1 in 8** men

RNIB

Curing untreated cataract blindness in low-middle income nations has been proved to improve an individuals economic activity by up to **1500%**

The Lancet

**40%** of children are blind from eye conditions that are easily prevented & could be managed if the child had access to eye care services

The Lancet

Blindness and poverty are inextricably linked. Poverty is a cause of blindness and blindness is also a cause of poverty. Poverty and blindness also perpetuate other socio-economic issues such as gender inequality, a lack of education, unemployment and an increase in social stigma.



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# Follow Our Journey



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Read more on our blog at <https://tejkohlruitfoundation.medium.com/>  
and on our website [www.tejkohlrui.com](http://www.tejkohlrui.com)



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Dr Ruit with trainee doctors in Bhutan

## Our #2030InSight Mission

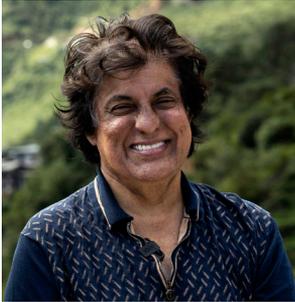
We are targeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of ending extreme poverty, by making large-scale surgical interventions to cure blindness in the developing world.

We have already screened hundreds of thousands of people in the developing world and we have cured tens of thousands of people of cataract blindness. All treatments are given completely free.

The Tej Kohli & Ruit Foundation is determined to continue to take treatments and cures into remote and disenfranchised communities throughout the developing world. By 2030 we plan to have cured between 300,000 and 500,000 of cataract blindness.

# Our Team

## Our Founders



### Mr Tej Kohli

Tej Kohli is an investor and philanthropist with a long track record of helping those in need.

For nearly two decades he has supported grassroots projects to rebuild and improve disenfranchised and underserved communities. He is today best known for his large-scale projects to combat extreme poverty in the developing world by curing blindness.



### Dr Sanduk Ruit

Dr Sanduk Ruit is an ophthalmologist and eye surgeon who has become known as the 'God of Sight' thanks to his lifelong efforts to cure untreated blindness in the most impoverished and remote communities of the developing world. He is a recipient of awards including the Isa Award For Services To Humanity; The Ramon Magsaysay Award and Asian Of The Year.

## Our Honorary Patron



### Sir Ranulph Fiennes

Widely regarded as the world's greatest living explorer, Sir Ranulph Fiennes's prolific career exploring some of the most remote and inhospitable places on the planet is aligned with our work taking treatment into some of the most remote and inaccessible communities in the developing world. We are proud to have Sir Ranulph as our Honorary Patron.



Dr Ruit (left) and Tej Kohli (right) with patients after their surgery



Ophthalmologist with Singye prior to surgery



Singye before his screening



Patients in hospital in Thimphu

# #2030InSight



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