The International Trachoma Initiative (ITI) was founded in 1998 in response to the World Health Organization (WHO) call to achieve Global Elimination of Trachoma by the year 2020 (GET 2020). ITI’s founding partners, Pfizer Inc. and the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, saw the need for an international non-governmental organization (NGO) dedicated solely to the elimination of trachoma as a public health threat. The ITI is currently administered by the Task Force for Global Health, an independent not for profit. ITI collaborates with governmental and NGO agencies as well as donors at the local, national and international levels to implement the WHO-recommended “SAFE” strategy for trachoma control and manage Pfizer-donated antibiotics.

TRACHOMA, THE LEADING INFECTIOUS CAUSE OF BLINDNESS

Trachoma is caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis*, which spreads by transfer of infected secretions from person to person. After repeated infection it can develop into trichiasis—where eyelids turn in and lashes scrape the eyeball, causing great pain, corneal ulcers and irreversible blindness. Trachoma can destroy the economic well-being of entire communities by keeping families in a cycle of poverty.

| 232M+ in 58 countries at risk | >80% of global burden mostly in Africa | 2.2M people have been visually impaired | USD $3-6B lost in productivity per year |

IMPLEMENTING THE “SAFE” STRATEGY TO IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH

The “SAFE” strategy implemented by GET 2020 partners is a WHO-recommended public health approach that combines interventions of:

- **S**urgery to treat the blinding stage of the disease
- **A**ntibiotics to treat infection (Pfizer-donated)
- **F**acial cleanliness to help reduce transmission
- **E**nvironmental improvement, particularly improving access to water and sanitation

ITI and Pfizer deliver on the “A” component of the “SAFE” strategy by supplying the Pfizer-donated antibiotics. ITI is based in Decatur, Georgia, with a regional office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. ITI specifically assists with:

- Developing supply chain capacity where needed and providing logistical assistance to ensure delivery of antibiotics to where it is most needed
- Conducting trachoma control research and monitoring and evaluation of trachoma control programs
- Mobilizing resources for trachoma control programs
- Encouraging the adoption and implementation of all components of the “SAFE” strategy for a comprehensive, sustainable approach
To date, ITI has coordinated the donation of 500 million doses of Pfizer-donated antibiotics to help treat more than one hundred million people across 33 countries globally. This watershed milestone signifies the tremendous progress made since 1998 by global partners to meet GET 2020.

ITI is one of many partners in the WHO-led Alliance for GET 2020, working across the globe to implement the “SAFE” strategy in areas most in need. Members carry out activities essential for trachoma elimination, including epidemiological assessment, project implementation, disease surveillance, project evaluation and resource mobilization with oversight from WHO and endemic countries’ governments.

Commitments and funding for these activities are provided by the United States Agency for International Development, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, and members of the International Coalition for Trachoma Control, a strong and collaborative NGO community that provides critical technical and programmatic support to countries most in need. Alliance members include The Carter Center, The Fred Hollows Foundation, Helen Keller International, ITI, Light for the World, Lions Clubs International Foundation, Orbis International, RTI International, Sightsavers, and many others.

As a result of these global efforts, in 2012, Oman became the first country to achieve WHO validation of trachoma elimination. In addition, China, Gambia, Ghana, Iran, Morocco, Myanmar and Vietnam all have reported the achievement of elimination goals to WHO, and are awaiting the validation process.*

However, it is estimated that 30 percent of trachoma endemic countries still lack support for public health interventions to achieve elimination. While each country may face different barriers and challenges, continued and focused support is needed to ensure that all components of the “SAFE” strategy are implemented and sustained by multiple partners to eliminate trachoma as a public health threat.

For more information and to get involved, please visit www.Trachoma.org.

#500MillionDoses