

RURAL EYE HEALTH PROGRAMME

COOCH BEHAR DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT

PERIOD: JANUARY - MARCH 2026



Supported by:

APRAZER

Implemented by:

 Sightsavers
India

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PROGRAMME BACKGROUND

Sightsavers India, in partnership with Aprazer Healthcare Pvt Ltd., implemented the Rural Eye Health Programme in Cooch Behar District, West Bengal. The programme aimed to improve the eye health status of the rural population by ensuring access to quality, affordable, and inclusive eye care services. The project was implemented with the support of clinical partners in the district, along with government health facilities such as the District Hospital, strengthening service delivery mechanisms and enhancing utilisation of eye care services at the community level. The implementation period for this project was three months, from January 2026 to March 2026.

Cooch Behar district, located in the northern part of West Bengal and sharing international borders with Assam and Bangladesh, is predominantly rural in nature with a population largely dependent on agriculture and daily wage-based livelihoods. The district comprises remote and scattered settlements, where access to specialised healthcare services, including eye care, remains limited. The population often faces barriers such as low awareness of eye health conditions, financial constraints, and geographical distance from secondary and tertiary care facilities, resulting in delayed diagnosis and treatment of avoidable visual impairment such as cataract and refractive errors.

The programme addressed these challenges through a comprehensive approach, including Vision Centre-based screening services, outreach screening camps in remote areas, awareness generation activities, and strengthened referral linkages for advanced treatment. With support from Aprazer Healthcare Pvt Ltd., the programme focused on reaching underserved populations including elderly individuals, women, and economically weaker sections, ensuring improved access to essential eye care services.

Goal:

To improve the eye health of the rural population, particularly underserved and economically vulnerable communities in Cooch Behar district, through accessible and inclusive eye care services.

Objectives:

- To strengthen health systems and deliver quality eye care services to communities, improving vision-related quality of life in the intervention district.
- To increase awareness and uptake of eye health services among rural populations in the district.

ACTIVITIES PERFORMED JANUARY – MARCH 2026

During the reporting period, the Rural Eye Health Programme implemented multiple interventions to improve access to eye care services in Cooch Behar district. A structured service delivery model was followed, integrating Vision Centres, outreach camps, and referral support through base hospitals



Screening at the Vision Centre Integrated under Govt Set-Up

A total of **2,263 individuals** were screened at Vision Centres Integrated under Govt Set-Up during the reporting period. Among them, **1,626 individuals** were refracted and provided appropriate refractive services. A total of **1,610 individuals** were identified with refractive errors (RE) and managed accordingly. **Spectacles** were dispensed to **1,339 individuals** based on clinical need. Patients requiring advanced care were referred for cataract evaluation and surgical management. Vision Centres served as a key first point of contact for primary eye care services.

Screening at Outreach Camp

A total of **84 outreach camps** were conducted in remote and underserved areas of Cooch Behar district. These camps provided eye screening services to **4,205 individuals**, ensuring last-mile delivery of care. Among those screened, **3,271 individuals** were refracted, and **2,965 individuals** were identified with refractive errors (RE). Cataract cases identified during camps were referred for surgical treatment. These camps significantly improved access to eye care for populations with limited access to fixed health facilities.

Cataract Services (Referral and Surgery Linkage)

Across Vision Centres and outreach camps, identified cataract cases were systematically referred to the government District Hospital for further evaluation and surgical management. A total of **1,097 cataract surgeries** were performed during the

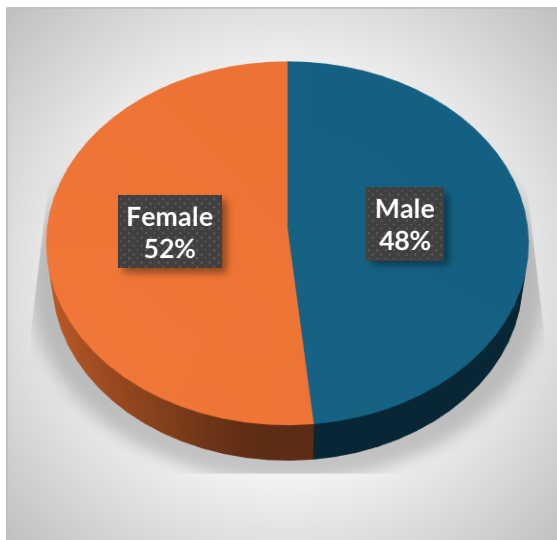
reporting period, reflecting effective coordination between community-level screening services and hospital-based surgical care. This ensured timely referral, continuity of treatment, and improved access to sight-restoring interventions.

AWARENESS GENERATION IN THE RURAL COMMUNITY

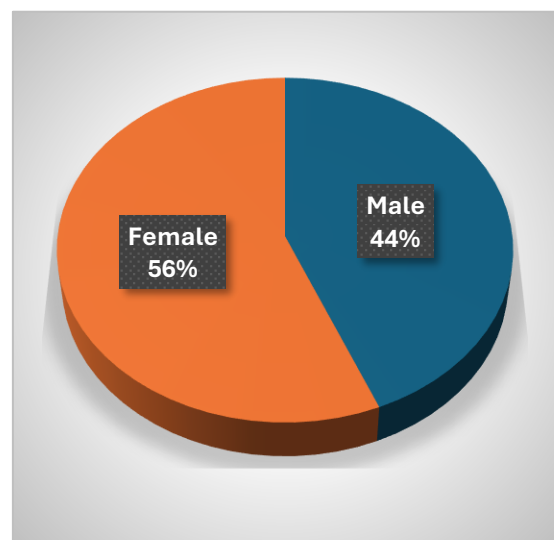
Awareness activities were conducted to strengthen community participation and promote uptake of eye care services. Field teams engaged communities through interpersonal communication and local mobilisation, highlighting the importance of regular eye check-ups, early detection of vision problems, and timely access to services under the programme. Special focus was given to elderly individuals and women, which helped improve awareness and increase utilisation of eye care services across the intervention areas.

PROJECT PERFORMANCE: TARGETS VS ACHIEVEMENTS

Indicators	Target	Achievement (Jan-Mar 26)
Total Screenings	3360	6,468
Total Cataract Surgeries	446	1097



Female Participation- Cataract Surgery



Female Participation- Screening

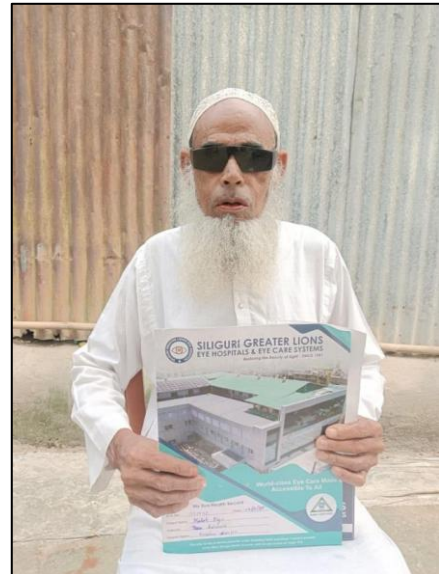
CONCLUSION

The Rural Eye Health Programme in Cooch Behar demonstrated strong performance during the implementation period, exceeding key targets and significantly expanding access to eye care services across rural communities. Overall, the programme

strengthened eye care delivery systems in the district, improved service reach among underserved populations, and contributed to early detection and management of avoidable visual impairment, thereby reducing the burden of avoidable blindness in the district.

CASE STORY:

Mr. Malek Miya, a 72-year-old farmer from Bara Natabari village in Dinhata block of Cooch Behar district, lives with his wife and children in a modest household. He depended entirely on agriculture for his livelihood, with a limited and unstable income, making access to healthcare services a significant challenge for his family. Over time, he experienced a gradual decline in vision, which progressively worsened and severely affected his ability to continue farming and carry out daily activities. His visual impairment led to a loss of independence and reduced social interaction, creating both economic and emotional distress for the family.



During this period, he was identified through an outreach eye-screening activity conducted under the programme by Sightsavers India in partnership with Aprazer Healthcare Pvt. Ltd. On examination, he was diagnosed with a mature cataract and was referred for surgical management.

He underwent cataract surgery at Siliguri Greater Lions Eye Hospital on 29 January 2026. Following the procedure, his vision improved significantly, enabling him to resume daily activities independently and re-engage with his community with confidence.

He expressed his gratitude for the timely intervention, which restored his vision, independence, and quality of life. His family also acknowledged the support provided through the programme, which helped relieve their long-standing burden.

*****THE END*****