

# Hear the World Foundation

Sonova's vision is to create a world in which every person has the chance to enjoy good hearing. Through its charitable projects, the Hear the World Foundation contributes towards achieving this goal by helping disadvantaged people with hearing loss.



Over 80 celebrity ambassadors had their picture taken by musician and photographer Bryan Adams in the Hear the World Pose (Copyright: Bryan Adams)



Hearing loss is still an underrated issue, even though the figures speak volumes: more than 15% of the world's adult population is affected by hearing loss<sup>1</sup>, and around half of these cases could have been avoided by taking preventive measures.<sup>2</sup> Some 665,000 children with significant hearing loss are born every year.<sup>3</sup> One of the biggest challenges is that 80% of people with hearing loss live in low or middle-income countries; they often have no access to audiological or medical care.<sup>4</sup> In developing countries, for example, only one in 40 people with hearing loss wears a hearing aid.<sup>5</sup> This has serious consequences: children with untreated hearing loss, particularly those living in these regions, have few prospects for the future as they have difficulty learning to speak, which reduces their chances of receiving an education and developing at an appropriate rate for their age.

## A global commitment to better hearing

Against this backdrop, the Hear the World Foundation, an initiative by the Sonova Group, is committed to working for equal opportunities and a better quality of life for people with hearing loss all over the world, by providing both financial support and hearing aids. Sonova bears all of the Foundation's administrative costs so that 100% of the donations can be channeled directly into its projects. Since 2006, the Hear the World Foundation has been involved in over 60 projects on all five continents. In doing so, it has already given thousands of people with hearing loss the chance to live a better life.

## Seizing every opportunity to prevent hearing loss is essential

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 1.1 billion young people worldwide are at risk of harming their hearing because of unsafe listening practices. Hear the World is therefore actively engaged in preventing hearing loss through initiatives such as WHO's International Ear Care Day. In Switzerland, the Foundation also runs an awareness campaign at concerts, where it hands out free ear protection to audience members and informs them about the risks of listening to excessively loud music.

### The Hear the World ambassadors

Hear the World is now supported by more than 80 celebrity ambassadors, all of whom have had their photographs taken by musician and photographer Bryan Adams in the Hear the World Pose: with one hand behind the ear to symbolize conscious hearing. Sting, Annie Lennox, Julianne Moore, Ben Kingsley, and Kate Moss are just some of the many celebrities featured in these impressive photos. They all contribute toward raising public awareness of the importance of good hearing and the consequences of hearing loss.

### Hear the World – Active dedication from the entire Sonova Group

Along with our celebrity ambassadors, Sonova’s employees actively support the Hear the World Foundation, representing the third pillar of its activities alongside its financial and technological contributions. Through their personal voluntary engagement and specialist expertise, they play a key role in

training and educating our project partners all over the world, bringing information on the latest technological developments and passing on their knowledge of – for example – how to fit hearing aids properly. Another important aspect of Hear the World’s work is fundraising, where employees have the opportunity to actively support the Foundation through their own initiatives.

Further information can be found at [www.hear-the-world.com](http://www.hear-the-world.com)

Become a fan of Hear the World at [www.facebook.com/CanYouHearTheWorld](http://www.facebook.com/CanYouHearTheWorld)

- 1 WHO (2008)
- 2 WHO (2006)
- 3 UNICEF (2004)
- 4, 5 WHO (2012)



## COMMITMENT IN HAITI

Improvisation is the order of the day in Lévéque, Haiti. When a workspace for audiological examinations is needed, for example, wooden benches in a church are put to use without further ado. Marisa Breslin gets along very well under these conditions. Breslin, a trained audiologist and employee of Phonak USA, is already making her second visit here. She sits on one of the wooden benches with Fabie, a 14-year-old girl who is to be given new hearing aids. Breslin shows Fabie the silicon compound that she will shortly use to take molds of the girl’s ear canals.

The Hear the World Foundation has been involved with a residential community for people affected by hearing loss in Lévéque since 2012. Several times each year, a team of volunteers – all of whom work for the Sonova Group in the USA and Canada – travels to the Haiti Deaf Children’s Academy.

They conduct hearing exams, and fit new technology hearing instruments as well as repairing faulty instruments and checking up on children who have already been fitted with hearing aids. Last but not least, they train local staff so that long-term local hearing care will be ensured and local jobs are created.

This technical assistance is welcomed in Haiti, and is desperately needed: only 11% of the population have jobs, and poverty is evident. Children with untreated hearing loss have virtually no chance of developing as others do in their country due to the lack of services. Some of them did not even know their own names when they arrived in the Haiti Deaf Children’s Academy. Some are given up by their families because of their hearing loss. “There’s an endless amount of work to be done here,” audiologist Breslin notes.

The aim of the foundation’s project in Haiti is to offer long-term audiological support and speech training for these hearing impaired children. Volunteer assignments for Sonova employees each last for one week in a program headed

by Cathy Jones, former Managing Director of Phonak USA. Jones, whose commitment in Haiti dates back several years, points out: “When you give someone the gift of hearing, you’re not only helping that one individual and their family – you are helping an entire community – for a lifetime!” Every volunteer comes equipped with important knowledge that can be used to fit hearing aids in Haiti: technical skills, compassion, and flexibility and part of the team needs a command of French or Creole and sign language – vital for communication.

“Ever since my first visit to the Haiti Deaf Children’s Academy, I’ve never been able to stop thinking about this project,” Marisa Breslin explains. “It’s changed my way of thinking. I’m so glad that the Hear the World Foundation gave me the opportunity to take on this commitment.”



Hearing exams, fittings, check-ups, repairs and trainings of local staff: The Hear the World Foundation supports people with hearing loss in Lévéque, Haiti. Several times each year, a team of Sonova volunteers travel to the island.

