

Hear the World Foundation

Imagine a world in which everyone gets the chance to enjoy good hearing. The Hear the World Foundation, a non-profit initiative founded by Sonova, contributes towards this ambitious vision by helping disadvantaged people with hearing loss.



Over 90 celebrity ambassadors had their picture taken by musician and photographer Bryan Adams in the Hear the World pose (Copyright: Bryan Adams)



Despite the revolutionary advances made in hearing care, hearing loss remains a neglected problem worldwide. Around one-sixth of the world's adult population is affected by hearing loss¹, while 32 million children live with moderate to profound hearing loss.² The problem is not lack of solutions, but of resources: the vast majority of people with hearing loss live in low or middle-income countries, with little or no access to hearing care.³ As few as one in 40 people with hearing loss in developing countries has a hearing aid.⁴ For children in particular, this can blight lives: untreated hearing loss can lead to problems learning to speak, social isolation, less chance of getting an education, and poor prospects for future employment.

Supporting better hearing worldwide

By providing financial support, hearing aids, and professional expertise through volunteers, the Hear the World Foundation is committed to promoting equal opportunities and quality of life for people with hearing loss all over the world. All donations to the Foundation go directly to its projects, because its administrative expenses are paid by Sonova. The Foundation has contributed to over 70 projects since its launch in 2006, helping thousands of people around the world overcome the disadvantages associated with hearing loss.

Raising awareness to prevent hearing loss

The World Health Organization (WHO), reports that unsafe listening practices are putting 1.1 billion young people worldwide at risk of harming their hearing. Indeed, half of all cases of hearing loss could be avoided simply by taking preventive measures.⁵ Among children, 60% of hearing loss is preventable, more so in low-income countries (75%) than in high-income (49%).⁶ Hear the World actively supports hearing loss prevention through WHO's International World Hearing Day and similar awareness-raising initiatives. The Foundation also conducts its own awareness campaign at concerts in Switzerland, providing free hearing protection to concertgoers and educating them about the risks of over-loud music.

Hear the World Ambassadors

More than 90 celebrity ambassadors have given their support to Hear the World, symbolized in their pictures taken by musician and photographer Bryan Adams in the Hear the World pose, listening with a hand cupped behind the ear. Sting, Tina Turner, Diana Krall, Christoph Waltz, and Kate Moss are just some of the many featured celebrities, all of whom strongly identify with the cause of raising public awareness about the importance of good hearing and the consequences of hearing loss.

Sonova Group employees help Hear the World

Sonova's employees join our celebrity ambassadors in their active support for the Hear the World Foundation. By volunteering their time and specialist expertise, they make a vital positive difference in Foundation projects all over the world,

sharing the latest in hearing care technology with the people who need it most. Those who have not volunteered also make a difference through their active participation in fund-raising events.

The Hear the World Foundation hence contributes actively towards Sonova's vision to create a world in which everyone enjoys the delight of hearing.

Further information can be found at www.hear-the-world.com

- 1 WHO (2008)
- 2, 6 WHO (2016)
- 3, 4 WHO (2012)
- 5 WHO (2015)



GERMANY'S COMMITMENT TO ARMENIA

Christiane Schubert and Nazan Yakar could hardly close their suitcases. They were only able to pack a few clothes because the rest of the space was taken up by technical equipment destined for Armenia: there were large numbers of hearing aids and even Leo – the Phonak mascot – was on board the flight. These two young women make up the Phonak pediatric audiology team at Sonova's headquarters in Germany, located near Stuttgart. They have traveled together to Yerevan as volunteer helpers for the Hear the World Foundation. "This is a fantastic experience," Schubert enthuses. "The audiologists on the ground here only have very modest equipment, but they achieve so much with it. They give high priority to speech and music therapy. We're getting to know children who have developed very well in spite of profound hearing loss."

The Arabkir Hospital in Yerevan, the Armenian capital, cares for children with hearing loss. The basis for the services offered here is a longstanding clinical partnership with the Children's Hospital Zurich that has been supported by the Hear the World Foundation since 2010. As well as financial assistance, the partnership includes the provision of hearing aids and technical support in the form of deployments by Sonova experts such as Christiane Schubert and Nazan Yakar. In 2015, the project partner in Yerevan received the John Bamford Award, bestowed by the Hear the World Foundation each year on an especially deserving project. Through the partnership, audiologists at the Arabkir Hospital learn about the latest technologies and pass this knowledge on to five facilities spread across the whole country. This support is urgently needed: 20 percent of Armenians live on less than two dollars a day, and there is no adequate medical infrastructure.

Schubert and Yakar answer many questions from their Armenian colleagues: What is the procedure for changing a housing? What tips are there on working

with the Junior mode in the fitting software? The team in Yerevan is particularly enthusiastic about the new Roger systems – and their ease of handling. Schubert and Yakar also come into close contact with the hospital's young patients. They became especially fond of two-year-old Hasmik, who has already made enormous progress with her Phonak Naída™ hearing aids – even though she has only been wearing them for a month. "I was very moved to see the strong sense of unity within families here," Yakar comments. Two-year-old Daniel has come along to a check-up appointment with his mother. While he is absorbed in playing with brightly-colored building blocks, his mother explains how lucky and grateful she is: "Daniel was fitted with his hearing instruments when he was six months old. When he started to react to acoustic signals, I finally saw some light at the end of the tunnel. Now I'm full of confidence about his future."



Although she has only been wearing them for a month, two-year-old Hasmik has already made enormous progress with her Phonak Naída™ hearing instruments. She is benefiting from a partnership between the Arabkir Hospital in Yerevan, the Armenian capital, and the Children's Hospital Zurich, that is supported by the Hear the World Foundation.