

# Hear the World Foundation

The Hear the World Foundation contributes towards Sonova's vision – a world in which everyone gets the chance to enjoy good hearing – by helping disadvantaged people, particularly children, with hearing loss around the world.



Over 100 celebrity ambassadors had their picture taken by musician and photographer Bryan Adams in the Hear the World pose (Copyright: Bryan Adams)

About a sixth of adults and 32 million children have significant hearing loss.<sup>1</sup> The vast majority of these live in low or middle-income countries with little or no access to hearing care.<sup>2</sup> Particularly for children, hearing loss can have a strong impact on the development of language skills and educational as well as job opportunities.

## Worldwide support since 2006

The Hear the World Foundation, a Sonova initiative, helps disadvantaged people with hearing loss around the world by providing financial support, hearing aid technology, and expertise. Since its launch in 2006, the Foundation has supported over 80 projects in 39 countries, making a difference for thousands of people worldwide.

## Preventing hearing loss

Approximately half of all hearing loss could be prevented if measures are taken early enough.<sup>3</sup> For children, 60 percent of hearing loss is preventable, and in low-income countries the figure rises to 75 percent.<sup>4</sup> A total of more a billion young people are currently at risk of hearing loss, simply through unsafe listening practices. The Hear the World Foundation actively supports hearing loss prevention through WHO's International World Hearing Day and awareness-raising initiatives, such as by distributing free earplugs and information about the risks of over-loud music at concerts.

## Over 100 celebrity ambassadors

More than 100 celebrity ambassadors have supported the Foundation, posing for portraits taken by musician and photographer Bryan Adams with one hand cupped behind the ear in the Hear the World pose, a symbol of conscious hearing. Plácido Domingo, Sting, Tina Turner, Christoph Waltz, Cindy Crawford 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.



### Volunteering by Sonova employees

Many of Sonova's over 14,000 employees actively support the Hear the World Foundation by contributing their time, skills and knowledge to its worldwide projects. Most remark that the experience of volunteering confirms the dedication to changing lives that made them choose a career in hearing care. Since 2013, more than 1,000 employees have performed over 10,000 hours of voluntary work in projects or through active participation in fundraising events.

### Anyone can give the gift of hearing

If you want to help disadvantaged children with hearing loss around the world, you can make your contribution with a donation. The full amount of the donation goes directly to the Foundation's project work: Sonova covers all administrative costs and provides hearing equipment and professional support free of charge. All donations are tax deductible, within the laws and regulations of your country of residency.

For more information: [www.hear-the-world.com](http://www.hear-the-world.com)

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



## Commitment in India

When Crystal Variava first set foot in Rangammal School in the southern Indian city of Tiruvanmalai, she was astonished: 200 children were sitting in the bright classrooms of the spacious building and lessons were in full swing; but there was hardly a sound to be heard.

On Variava's second business visit, just a few months later, the Sonova audiologist heard cheery children's voices from the classrooms; the new digital hearing aids provided by the Hear the World Foundation had made a radical difference and the children were now using their voices. "Thinking back, I still find it moving," recalls Variava – the Sonova employee from company headquarters

in Mumbai, who is attached to the project as a volunteer, has long since taken the children straight to her heart.

While India's economy is growing rapidly, this progress is rarely felt out in the country, where infrastructure and medical provision are in short supply. This state of affairs prompted Silvia Wright, a British citizen, to sell all her worldly possessions 35 years ago and found the Rangammal Memorial Rehabilitation Society. The Hear the World Foundation has been supporting this charitable project with digital hearing aids and funding for speech therapy and teacher training since 2014. To ensure that everything runs smoothly over the long term, Sonova India staff visit the school four times a year to check the hearing aids, which suffer in the damp climate, and to show the teachers how to carry out small repair jobs themselves – as well as how best to support the children's language development.

Sonova audiologist Crystal Variava was particularly taken with six-year-old Gurumoorthy, known as Guru: "He only got hearing aids when he was four years old, but he already speaks very well and wants to become a teacher!" His favorite sound is crows calling outside his window. Variava wants to stay involved with the project, and regular visits to Tiruvanmalai are planned: "The school is a magical place where children who barely had any prospects in their lives are offered new opportunities."



Crystal Variava has taken the children at Rangammal School straight to her heart – the Sonova employee volunteers as a helper for the Hear the World Foundation, which provides the children at this South Indian school with digital hearing aids and supports their language development.

