New York, NY (September 10, 2013) – The ORBIS Flying Eye hospital (FEH) is visiting Kolkata for the fourth time to conduct an intensive and comprehensive training and skills exchange program aimed at strengthening ophthalmic services in Eastern and Northeast India. Alongside its longtime sponsors, Alcon and FedEx, the ORBIS program is focused on improving the delivery of pediatric ophthalmic services in the region, including the development of a retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) referral system. The program will also help raise public attention on the eye care conditions and challenges faced in India.

The India Childhood Blindness Initiative (ICBI), a flagship program of ORBIS in India, was launched in 2002 to help ensure that India’s children have access to quality eye care for generations to come. In the last 10 years, 30 pediatric ophthalmology centers have been established across 17 states.

“Through projects like the India Childhood Blindness Initiative and Save Your Sight campaign, ORBIS has been working to help improve the quality of ophthalmic services, influence policies and raise awareness around eye care conditions in India,” said Dr. Rahul Ali, the ORBIS India Country Director. “ORBIS is grateful for the generous support of our sponsors Alcon and FedEx, and we thank them for helping us continue the work to eliminate avoidable blindness and deliver the highest standards of training.”

In partnership with the Regional Institute of Ophthalmology, Susrut Eye Foundation and Research Center, Disha Eye Hospital and Sankara Nethralaya, the program will provide Indian eye care professionals including optometrists, nurses, anesthesiologists and biomedical engineers with continued medical education. Ophthalmologists will benefit from advanced subspecialty training in the areas of pediatric ophthalmology, glaucoma, neuro ophthalmology, uveitis, cornea and surgical and medical retina.

As part of a global initiative to combat preventable and treatable blindness, and in support of ORBIS’s skills exchange program approach, Alcon has been a longtime sponsor of the Flying Eye Hospital programs and donates medical equipment, pharmaceuticals and supplies. In addition, Alcon biomedical engineers volunteer their time in India to provide technical assistance by working side-by-side with Indian biomedical technicians to share their skills on managing and maintaining the much needed ophthalmic equipment.

“For more than 30 years, Alcon has been a proud sponsor of the ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital medical programs. Our partnership with ORBIS is grounded in our shared vision of providing access to quality eye care around the world,” said Bettina Maunz, President of the Alcon Foundation. “Our support includes product and cash donations to perform cataract procedures as well as provide other much needed eye treatments, as well as Alcon volunteers who provide technical assistance on the ORBIS plane. The India program gives us the opportunity to partner with ORBIS and help deliver sustainable eye care solutions that can make a long-term impact and help prevent and treat blindness in West Bengal.”
Since the India Childhood Blindness Initiative was launched in 2002 more than 5.9 million children have been screened for eye problems, over 1 million have received ophthalmic treatment and over, 84,000 pediatric surgeries have been performed. The FEH program, will complement the ongoing work of ORBIS India by helping to lay the foundations for the development of a retinopathy of prematurity (ROP) referral system in Kolkata.

“FedEx is proud to be associated with ORBIS to continue its delivery of quality eye care training programs in India and beyond,” said David Canavan, vice president, Operations, FedEx India. “While this is the 18th time that the Flying Eye Hospital will be in India, FedEx has been a sponsor of the Flying Eye Hospital for more than 30 years. FedEx is the sole sponsor of “Delivering Sight Worldwide”, a global initiative that provides direct support for ORBIS programs. To support ORBIS in fighting avoidable blindness worldwide, our pilots volunteer to fly the ORBIS Flying Eye Hospital, our mechanics provide complimentary maintenance support and we transport medicines to hospital based programs.”

About ORBIS
ORBIS is a nonprofit, humanitarian organization dedicated to saving sight worldwide. ORBIS prevents and treats blindness through hands-on training, public health education, improved access to quality eye care, and partnerships with local health care organizations. By building long-term capabilities, ORBIS helps its partner institutions take action to reach a state where they can provide, on their own, quality eye care services that are affordable, accessible, and sustainable. To learn more about ORBIS, please visit www.ORBIS.org.

About Alcon
Alcon, the global leader in eye care, provides innovative products that enhance quality of life by helping people worldwide see better. The three Alcon businesses – Surgical, Pharmaceutical and Vision Care – offer the widest spectrum of eye care products in the world. Alcon is the second-largest division of the Novartis Group, with pro-forma sales of USD 10.2 billion in 2012. Headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas, USA, Alcon has more than 24,000 employees worldwide, operations in 75 countries and products available in 180 markets. For more information, visit www.alcon.com. The Alcon Foundation partners with leading non profit organizations on a global and local level to provide access to sustainable eye care where it is needed most.

About FedEx Corp.
FedEx Corp. (NYSE: FDX) provides customers and businesses worldwide with a broad portfolio of transportation, e-commerce and business services. With annual revenues of $44 billion, the company offers integrated business applications through operating companies competing collectively and managed collaboratively, under the respected FedEx brand. Consistently ranked among the world’s most admired and trusted employers, FedEx inspires its more than 300,000 team members to remain "absolutely, positively" focused on safety, the highest ethical and professional standards and the needs of their customers and communities. For more information, visit www.fedex.com.

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