

Influencing for change

“There must be public awareness generating real action, and political will expressed, not just in anodyne resolutions, but in priorities, budgets, and personnel”

Sir John Wilson, founder of Sightsavers International.

Simon Clark/Eyebox



Sightsavers believes that, if we are to eliminate avoidable blindness and ensure that all visually impaired people are able to enjoy the same rights and opportunities as other people, we need to influence the policies and practices of decision makers across the world. It's vital our voice gets heard on the global stage, so we believe in the importance of coalitions with other organisations, and also running and backing campaigns which allow our valued supporters the opportunity to get involved. Together, we can make a difference.



Global Campaign for Education - Only 2% of children with disabilities such as blindness go to school. Sightsavers is a member of the Global Campaign for Education which promotes education as a basic human right, and mobilises public pressure on governments and the international community to fulfill their promises to provide free, compulsory public basic education for all; in particular for children, women and all disadvantaged, deprived sections of society.

Global Call to Action against Poverty - Poverty and visual disability in the developing world are inextricably linked. People who are blind are more liable to be unemployed or have lower salaries. Those living in poverty are more susceptible to blindness. Children who are blind in poor households will often miss out on their share of food and education. Sightsavers is a member of the Global Call to Action against Poverty, a worldwide alliance committed to the fight against poverty.

World Sight Day - Celebrated every year on the second Thursday of October, World Sight Day aims to raise awareness of avoidable blindness with key decision makers, other organisations and the general public through a range of diverse events held by Sightsavers partners across Africa, Asia and the Caribbean as well as our supporters in the UK.

Health for all - Everyone should have access to high quality health care. We are working with other non-governmental organisations and unions to promote greater support for health systems in the countries in which we work. We believe that sustainable, comprehensive eye-care services should be part of every national health system.

www.sightsavers.org/campaigns

sightsavers
INTERNATIONAL

Sightsavers' achievements ...so far

1950s

- Sightsavers published the first statistical evaluation of blindness in Africa, which revealed to the world that a large percentage of blindness was preventable.



Adrian Achib/Sightsavers

- Sightsavers' groundbreaking research in West Africa identified the cause of onchocerciasis (river blindness, a term coined by Sightsavers' founder Sir John Wilson) and pioneered a disease control programme.

1960s

- Launched high volume cataract surgery in India through village eye camps, then the most effective means of bringing eye care to rural areas with poor health facilities.



Jenny Matthews/Sightsavers

- Pioneered open education programmes for irreversibly blind children throughout the developing world, so that blind and visually impaired children could have the same educational opportunities and can be accepted by sighted children.

1970s

- Acted as a driving force to establish the World Health Organization's Prevention of Blindness (PBL) programme and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), to raise global awareness of the need to prevent blindness.



- Alerted the international community to the alarming number of blind children in Asia, and collaborated with WHO and UNICEF to mobilise and coordinate international support for the distribution of vitamin A tablets to prevent childhood blindness.

1980s

- Launched a revolutionary Braille production unit in Africa using computer technology to transcribe texts, thereby increasing the availability of Braille texts in schools all over East Africa.
- Introduced in-country training programmes for all levels of eye-care personnel, education and rehabilitation workers. Sightsavers now provides training for over 20,000 health personnel every year.



Jenny Matthews/Sightsavers

1990s

- Piloted a trachoma control programme in The Gambia. As a result, this country will be one of the first developing countries to eliminate trachoma as a blinding disease.
- Revolutionised the affordability of cataract surgery in the developing world with the establishment of a unit in India to produce high quality, low cost intraocular lenses and sutures. The inspirational venture has had a major impact on world markets.
- Promoted social inclusion for blind people by establishing community-based rehabilitation programmes.

Jenny Matthews/Sightsavers



- Developed a model of eye care linking eye education and rehabilitation services with eye care.
- Established an MSc in Community Eye Health in Pakistan, the very first of its kind in the developing world.

21st century



Adrian Achib/Sightsavers

- Sightsavers performed its three millionth cataract operation.
- Sightsavers provided its 50 millionth treatment of Mectizan[®] against river blindness.
- Supported Health for Peace (HFP) – an initiative thought up by four West African governments to promote peace by adopting a cross-border approach to health. In 2006, as part of HFP, a new health centre opened in The Gambia, which will train eye surgeons and nurses to work across West Africa.
- Sightsavers' partner the National Forum of Organisations Working with Disabled People were key in helping get an Action Plan for Disability passed by government in Bangladesh.
- An international treaty that will give greater rights and freedoms to disabled people around the world has been agreed at the United Nations, meaning countries that sign up to it will have to enact laws and other measures to improve disability rights. This will have an enormous impact on our advocacy and rehabilitation work.
- Sightsavers pledges to track down every child in Bangladesh who is needlessly blind due to cataract and restore his or her sight through a simple and inexpensive operation. This means surgery on around 20,000 eyes between now and 2009. The first programme of its kind in the developing world, the campaign will prove an important model for other countries.



Jenny Matthews/Sightsavers