

Social inclusion

The issue

People who are blind or have low vision can easily become isolated from the rest of their community. This is because the systems and resources are often not in place to give them the support they need to find employment, attend school, or take part in day-to-day community activities. Lack of income, education and access to appropriate healthcare make people who are blind vulnerable to abuse, poverty and even early death.

With the help of low vision devices Adolf, who has albinism, can learn alongside his friend Kilfod at his local primary school in the Iringa district, Tanzania

Sightsavers solution

Rehabilitation - Working with local partners we provide people who are blind with the skills they need to lead independent lives. Rehabilitation workers support people within their community counselling them and teaching them basic daily living skills, including using a white cane and preparing food. More advanced rehabilitation focuses on working with the person to learn a suitable vocational skill.

Education for all - We believe that children who are blind or visually impaired should go to their local school. Together with our partners we support the training of itinerant teachers, who visit a number of schools in their local area teaching blind children skills such as Braille, as well as supporting teachers to help these children in the classroom. Visual aids such as magnifying glasses are also provided to assist learning.

Supporting groups - With our partners we work to build the capacity of organisations of and for people who are blind. This is achieved by supporting leadership, fundraising and technical training for such organisations, at national and regional levels. We also aim to increase the skills and confidence of individuals to participate fully in their communities, as well as advocating for the rights of blind people and combating discrimination.

Advocacy - A key part of our work is lobbying policy makers to adopt inclusive policies and practices. For example, our partners in Bangladesh were central to the adoption of the National Action Plan on Disability in 2006. We are members of international disability organisations such as the International Disability and Development Consortium, which advocates for the equal rights and opportunities of disabled people, as well as the Global Campaign for Education.

www.sightsavers.org

FACT FILES

Social inclusion

- Social inclusion for people who are blind or have low vision means working to help them gain equal rights in society, as well as helping society understand their needs and respect those rights.
- It also means providing training and opportunities for people affected by blindness, and making sure that education does not discriminate against or exclude children who are blind.

Education

- Only 2 per cent of disabled children go to school.
- Education is far more than schooling. Mixing and playing with sighted children breaks down stigmas and builds friends and relationships far beyond the classroom.

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INTERNATIONAL

24-year-old Ramesh has been blind from birth. With no education and lacking in confidence he was doing very little with his life.

The eye care team from Dharmtari Christian Hospital, a Sightsavers partner, met him while they were travelling around identifying people with visual impairments in the central Indian state of Chattisgarh. With their support Ramesh raised the money to set up a small village shop, and learnt valuable skills.

Now he spends his days serving in his shop and talking with the villagers. He uses touch to identify all the different notes and goods.

Ramesh sets up shop



Vicky Astbury/Sightsavers

Fatuma goes to school



Kerstin Hadler/Sightsavers

Life changed for 14-year-old Fatuma Nagayi from southeast Uganda when Sightsavers' local government partner enabled her to go to her local school.

Every morning her friends call for her, and they all walk to school together. Specialist teacher Mr Samuel helps her to keep up in class and learn Braille.

"Teaching blind children alongside sighted children is better than sending children to blind schools," Mr Samuel says. "Blind children can learn things from their sighted friends that they wouldn't learn in a blind school."