

# Focus

Your magazine from  Sightsavers Spring 2018



## **Transforming lives**

Thanks to you, we've provided  
one billion treatments against  
neglected tropical diseases

# Focus

Spring 2018

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## Keep in touch

We always like to hear from you, so please get in touch with your news, thoughts and feedback:

email **info@sightsavers.org**

telephone **0800 466 1111**

write to **FREEPOST Sightsavers**

**Thanks for your support!**

## Welcome



## You're achieving the incredible

Thanks to you, 2017 was another outstanding year of sight-saving successes, including the milestone one billionth treatment against neglected tropical diseases. On pages 4 and 5, you can meet Dorcas, featured on our cover, who received it. You also helped us reach our Million Miracles goal, which you can read about on page 10.

So what's in store for this year? Well, on page 6, there's the innovative eye health programme you're supporting to help India's truck drivers. On page 8, find out how you're empowering people with disabilities. And don't miss your own fantastic fundraising endeavours on page 3. You're amazing. Thank you again for your unstinting support.

Becki Jupp  
Global Director of Fundraising

# Making a difference

Your superb fundraising feats never cease to amaze us, saving sight and transforming more lives every day

## Vision and vitality

We were bowled over by the awesome efforts of the intrepid Welsh Ophthalmic Trainees Society

Most society members are junior doctors and consultants working at various Welsh eye clinics. In just five months, they raised an outstanding **£1,540.71** to support our work through a wide range of activities, including a charity bike ride, a tennis match, sponsored climbs and cake sales. Congratulations you wonderful sight-savers!

## Spectacular success

Full marks to best friends Josie and Alice, for their eye-catching way of helping people with trachoma

After reading one of our leaflets about the suffering trachoma causes, 9-year-old Josie and 10-year-old Alice came up with a spectacular fundraising idea! They asked fellow students at Poplar Primary School to decorate and wear a pair of cardboard glasses, and donate £1 to Sightsavers. Thank you Josie and Alice. We think your creativity is really top class, and we're extremely grateful for the brilliant **£464** you raised.



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“When we saw the photos of the children with trachoma, we felt very sorry for them and wanted to help”

## Get involved

If these stories have inspired you to organise your own fundraising feat for Sightsavers we'd love to hear from you. Just email: [events@sightsavers.org](mailto:events@sightsavers.org)



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## Eye-opening event

A huge thank you to the wonderful staff at Victoria Eye Unit, Hereford County Hospital, for their thought-provoking blindfolded walk

As well as raising funds, the walk organisers wanted to let people experience what it's like to be visually impaired. They did an excellent job.

Participants walked in pairs over a mile-long route, with one person wearing a blindfold or simulation glasses and the other acting as a guide. This really helped them appreciate the reality of living with sight loss, and the need to give people support to help them live independently. We're super impressed with your efforts!



“I love my grandfather very much and don’t want other people to suffer like him. I hope that one day, all children will be free from these diseases”

Dorcas

**1,000,000,000**

We’re celebrating the one billion treatments we’ve given to individuals and whole communities at risk of NTDs

Photos: ©Sightsavers/Craeme Robertson

# Billionth breakthrough

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## Together we've achieved the milestone of one billion treatments against neglected tropical diseases

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a group of painful and debilitating infections that affect around 1.2 billion people across the globe. They include onchocerciasis (river blindness), which causes excruciating itching and eventual sight loss, and lymphatic filariasis (lymphedema), the world's leading cause of physical disability. NTDs affect the most poverty-stricken and vulnerable. Yet today, thanks to you and those billion treatments, millions of people are being protected. You've made history, and you should be really proud!

### Community champions

We're also extremely grateful to the incredible volunteers who distribute the NTD treatments donated by global pharmaceutical companies. Known as Community Directed Distributors (CDDs), these dedicated people are nominated by their local communities and play a huge role in enabling us to reach those in desperate need.

CDDs have first-hand experience of the devastating impact NTDs have on people's lives, and take on the huge responsibility of administering treatments to often remote, hard-to-reach communities. Sightsavers and partners have trained hundreds of thousands of CDDs across Africa. This community-run approach to mass drug administration has been cited by the World Health Organization as being one of Africa's most successful strategies in reducing disease at low cost. We couldn't have done it without you.

### Please help us do more

**We're working hard to not only control NTDs, but to eliminate them completely in the countries where we work. It costs just 7p to protect a person from river blindness for a year, and if a community is treated for 16 to 18 years, the risk of catching the disease is eliminated. Please give an extra gift today to help us wipe out NTDs for good.**



### Milestone moment

**Last November, seven-year-old Dorcas from Kaduna State, Nigeria, received our billionth treatment against NTDs.**

Dorcas's grandfather, Simon, was infected with river blindness almost 30 years ago. He's now completely blind and has never seen Dorcas or her brothers and sisters. Thankfully, their future looks much brighter.

Today, Simon is the only person in the village to have lost his sight through river blindness. Following mass administration of preventative drugs, supported by you, there are no new cases of the infection. It means that Dorcas and children like her can go to school and live their lives without the constant threat of NTDs.

### See it happen

You can watch Dorcas receive the billionth treatment for NTDs at: [sightsavers.org/billionthvideo](https://sightsavers.org/billionthvideo)



Truck driver, Mohammad Islam Ansari, who works at a fleet on the periphery of New Delhi

# Driving change

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## You're supporting our crucial eye health programme to detect and treat eye problems among India's truck drivers

India's roads are extremely congested and the country has the highest number of road accidents and traffic-related deaths in the world. But although good vision is essential for safe driving, there's currently no international standard eye test within the country's driving licensing process, and no compulsory eye checks for commercial drivers.

### Warning signs

In 2015 alone, trucks, vans and other heavy commercial vehicles accounted for almost 100,000 road accidents in India, killing over

37,000 people and injuring over 92,000. Our studies have shown that eye conditions such as long and short-sightedness are unusually high in truck drivers. Yet awareness about the dangers of driving with impaired vision is very low – both among the truckers themselves and the fleet companies that hire them.

Lack of free, fast and accessible eye care services is another obstacle. Heavy workloads prevent many truckers from getting the help they need, so they just carry on as best they can, desperate to avoid losing their jobs and income. It's a huge problem but, thanks to you, we're working hard to improve the situation.

## Safety route

In 2014, you enabled us to launch our Road Safety and Assurance by Healthy Eyes programme, one of India's biggest eye health initiatives. Through it, we're reaching out to 400,000 truckers and support staff across the country, with the aim of detecting and treating vision-related problems. We want to see a significant reduction in the number of road accidents and subsequent deaths.

To make it easier for the truckers to get help, we've set up fully equipped eye health camps in truck stops and other places on their routes. There, the truckers can have their eyes screened by an optometrist, receive glasses if they need them, or be referred for further treatment for conditions such as cataracts.

**In the first seven months of 2017 you helped us set up 317 eye health camps, screen 26,500 truckers, and provide more than 11,000 of them with glasses – proof that this service is desperately needed. With your support we'll go on working to help the truckers see more clearly, so India's roads are safer for all who use them.**



## Delighted driver

**Having his eyes screened at one of the camps you support improved Bharat's sight and helped safeguard his future.**

Bharat, aged 36, has been a long-distance truck driver for 18 years, and his family of four depends on the Rs.12,000 (around £140) he makes each month. But in the last few months, his sight deteriorated and he found it difficult to see faraway objects.

Thankfully Bharat knew about the Sightsavers eye camp and went for eye tests. He was found to be short-sighted and was fitted with free glasses. Now Bharat can see clearly and he can carry on driving and supporting his family. With your help, we can reach thousands more people like him.

**"I can see everything now, even faraway objects" Bharat**



Photos: ©Sightsavers

## 5 million

**India has 5 million truck drivers, who cover more than 3.3 million kilometres over a vast network of roads**

# Flourishing futures

## With your help, we're working hard to ensure people with disabilities have the same chances in life as everyone else

Everyone deserves an education, employment, good health, and to be treated equally in their community. Yet too many people with disabilities in developing countries are missing out. Fighting for their rights is an important part of the work you help support, and together we're making real progress.

### A good start in life

When children with disabilities are denied an education, they can be locked into a cycle of isolation, poverty and being dependent on their families. You're supporting inclusive education programmes to help visually impaired youngsters, like 11-year-old Mafoune from Mali, learn alongside other children.

Mafoune's teacher received special training and equipment. She now uses the skills she's gained to teach all the students together, for example by writing in large print and making sure visually impaired children sit where they can see the blackboard. The programme also gives the children visual aids, including glasses and reading stands. Mafoune is thriving and is one of the top students in her class. When she grows up she wants to be a bank manager.

### The chance to earn a living

Stigma, discrimination and a lack of suitable workplaces can all hold people with disabilities back. You're empowering young people like Kesimire from Uganda to earn money, be part of society and stand on their own two feet.

Kesimire has cerebral palsy. Sadly, her parents abandoned her because of her disability, leaving her in the care of her grandmother. She's been insulted, underestimated and excluded. Now she's admired and independent. Through our

'Connecting the Dots' programme, Kesimire has gone from having no skills to being the only knitting expert in her community. She now has a job and can meet her basic needs instead of relying on her grandmother to provide for her.



©Sightsavers/Joseph Malinga

**“If it wasn't for Sightsavers, I think I would still be badly off. The project gave me skills plus a knitting machine and I now knit sweaters”**

**Kesimire**

### Enjoying better health and wellbeing

There's growing evidence that people with disabilities experience poorer health than others, often due to lack of accessible health facilities and information. You're supporting crucial initiatives to ensure everyone can enjoy good-quality, affordable health care. We're also testing new ways of collecting data for some of our health programmes to find out how to best evaluate their accessibility. We'll use the evidence we collect to make all of our health programmes more inclusive.

**Find out more** You can read more about work you support to fight for disability rights at: [sightsavers.org/inclusioninsenegal](https://sightsavers.org/inclusioninsenegal)

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**“I like geography,  
arithmetic and science.  
But my favourite  
subject is history”**

**Mafoune (left) and her teacher**

## **IRO achievement**

Sightsavers has been awarded  
Independent Research Organisation  
(IRO) status by Research Councils  
UK – acknowledging our role  
in research

# Miracle success

**A MILLION  
MIRACLES**

Your outstanding support means we've reached our target to fund one million sight-saving cataract operations

In October 2014, we launched our biggest ever campaign to fund one million cataract surgeries in some of the poorest parts of the world. You responded magnificently, and many of your wonderful donations were generously matched pound for pound through the UK government's Aid Match scheme.

In January, we reached our ambitious fundraising goal. Tens of thousands of people, including Suborna, pictured below, now have the chance of a brighter future, thanks to you. And for the Yadav family in India, receiving sight-restoring surgery has been nothing short of a miracle.



©Sightsavers/Nousuf Tushar



©Sightsavers/Tim Fransham

## From despair to hope

**Imagine having blinding cataracts and trying to work and bring up seven children, most of whom have cataracts too. That's what Chandrakala and Sanjesh Yadav were up against when we met them.**

Both Chandrakala and Sanjesh had cataracts from childhood, and were devastated when six of their children were found to have them too. Chandrakala was desperately worried about their future, but the family's previous attempts at getting help had all been unsuccessful.

Happily, a visiting health worker referred the Yadavs for treatment at a Sightsavers-supported hospital. Chandrakala is still considering an operation, but the rest of the family received theirs, and the transformation is remarkable. The children are already back at school and doing well, and it's as if a huge weight has been lifted from everyone. They, and we, can't thank you enough.

**A family transformed** Read the Yadavs' full story at [sightsavers.org/familymiracle](https://sightsavers.org/familymiracle)

# The miracle workers

A special blog by Ciara Smullen, Kate McCoy and Megan McElwee from our fundraising team

Last October, we were lucky enough to visit the new eye care unit at Makeni Regional Hospital in Sierra Leone. We met some of the small but mighty eye care team your donations are helping to support and got to see them in action. Their efforts are exceptional.

## New era of eye health

Makeni Regional Hospital only began providing cataract surgeries in September 2017. Before then, eye health services were limited, leaving serious conditions untreated. We saw the passion and energy of the eye care team as soon as we arrived. Abubakar, the optometrist technician, greeted us with a big smile and quickly introduced us to the rest of the team. A typically busy day was just beginning and they were eager to get started.



The eye health unit is limited to two small screening rooms and a ward for overnight patients. Lots of people were already squeezed up on long benches in the corridors, waiting their turn. There was a constant stream of movement as they were called in and out to receive eye tests, glasses and treatment. It made us appreciate the huge scale of eye-related issues in Makeni, and how much people need these services.

## Taking care to people's homes

As well as working flat out at the hospital, the eye care team also runs outreach clinics in local communities, and sometimes screens people in their homes. We accompanied Abubakar on one of his home visits, and met 27-year-old Haja.



Haja has two daughters and a baby on the way. She explained that she's lost most of the sight in one eye, and has had to give up her job in the market. We watched as Abubakar carefully examined Haja's eyes, and we could see her relief when he said she could have surgery that very same week.

We caught up with Haja a couple of days after her surgery, and could hardly believe the difference in her. With her sight restored, she was much more confident and talked proudly about being able to provide for her family again.

## A humbling experience

It was really moving to see how much the surgery meant to Haja, and we were incredibly inspired by the eye care team's commitment and care. They truly are miracle workers. So are you – because you've helped to make all this possible.

**Thank you.**

# Join our online community

You're a big part of our sight-saving team, and we love keeping you up to date with the vital work you support – and receiving your feedback. There are lots of ways to connect with us via social media and see what your fellow sight-savers are posting. You can also read our latest blogs, news reports and updates on our work. So come and say hello!

## Here's what got you talking in 2017



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