

Focus

Your magazine from  Sightsavers Autumn 2018

**A MILLION
MIRACLES**

Special edition

You did it! You've made a million miracles happen, freeing people like Winesi from blindness

Thanks a million!

In this issue of Focus we're celebrating you, our incredible sight-savers, and your miracle achievement

Every day, you inspire us with your compassion and commitment to saving sight and changing lives. But your support of our Million Miracles campaign has been extraordinary. In just four years, you helped raise £32 million to fund over one million cataract operations – freeing hundreds of thousands of people from blindness and giving them a new start in life. This is nothing short of a miracle for those such as 72-year-old Wineshi March.

You may remember Wineshi. He's a grandfather, who lives with his family in rural Malawi. Cataracts had blinded him for two years, but thanks to you he received a sight-restoring miracle.

To mark the start of our Million Miracles campaign, Wineshi kindly allowed us to broadcast his surgery live. It was a privilege to watch the life-changing operation. Yet for me, the real miracle came the following day when Wineshi's bandages were removed and he saw his grandson Luca for the very first time. I'll never forget that joyful moment. It moved me to tears.

Wineshi is now growing his crops, looking after his cows and providing for his family again. As you'll see on page four, this means everything to him – and he's not alone. On page six, we share the stories of other people whose lives you've transformed, including four-year-old Baraka who we first introduced in our Christmas 2016 appeal. Your kind donations have given him and many more children the chance to enjoy their childhoods, go to school and get an education.

As well as restoring sight, you've helped train more eye care professionals. On page eight, you can meet Madalitso Nyangulu, who found Wineshi through an outreach clinic, and Dr Gerald Msukwa, who performed his cataract surgery. They and their colleagues are doing everything they can to cope with the huge demand for eye care in Malawi. But with just eight surgeons covering a population of more than 14 million people, they're under enormous pressure. With your help we can train more miracle workers, and you can find out how on page 10.

I really hope you'll enjoy reading about some of the wonderful sight-saving miracles you've made possible. They couldn't have happened without you, and we really can't thank you enough.



Caroline Harper

Dr Caroline Harper
CEO, Sightsavers

See
the smiles

Watch more joyful
moments at:
[sightsavers.org/
miracles](https://sightsavers.org/miracles)





My Sightsavers

Get the latest on life-changing work you support, share your fantastic fundraising stories, join our community of like-minded sight-savers and much more. Whatever you want to see, say or share, stay connected your way:



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See Sightsavers

Thanks for your support!



“I feel like a king”

After years of fear and struggle, you've given Winesi and his family happiness and hope for the future

Winesi is feeling on top of the world. He and his wife Namaleta have planted an extra crop of maize, and he's managed to save enough money to fix the roof of their house and buy timber for a wooden door. Life is good, and it's a far cry from when we first met him over three years ago.

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Living in fear

Back then, cataracts had robbed Winesi of his sight. This once proud and independent man was scared to move very far in case he fell and hurt himself or got bitten by a snake. He couldn't farm his land and had to sit helplessly while Namaleta and his children did all the work. He worried that Namaleta would get fed up and leave him, and often couldn't hold back his tears.

“I remember losing my sight as if it were yesterday,” Winesi recalls. “It was so painful, I will never forget. I understood for the first time why people commit suicide and at one point I even stood above a big rubbish pit, ready to throw myself in.”

Thanks to you, Winesi got the help he desperately needed. The turning point came when Ophthalmic Clinical Officer, Madalitso Nyangulu, carried out eye screening in the

village, supported by you. Madalitso examined Winesi's eyes and told him he could have free treatment through Sightsavers.

Sharing the vision

Little did he know, but Winesi was about to play an important role in our biggest-ever fundraising campaign – A Million Miracles. We asked him if we could film his operation as it happened and stream it live. We wanted to show the world that a straightforward, 10-minute operation costing just £30 could be a sight-saving miracle for a person with cataracts.

Winesi said yes, and tens of thousands of you watched his miracle happen. You responded magnificently, and went on to help fund over a million more life-changing cataract operations – freeing hundreds of thousands of men, women and children from blindness.

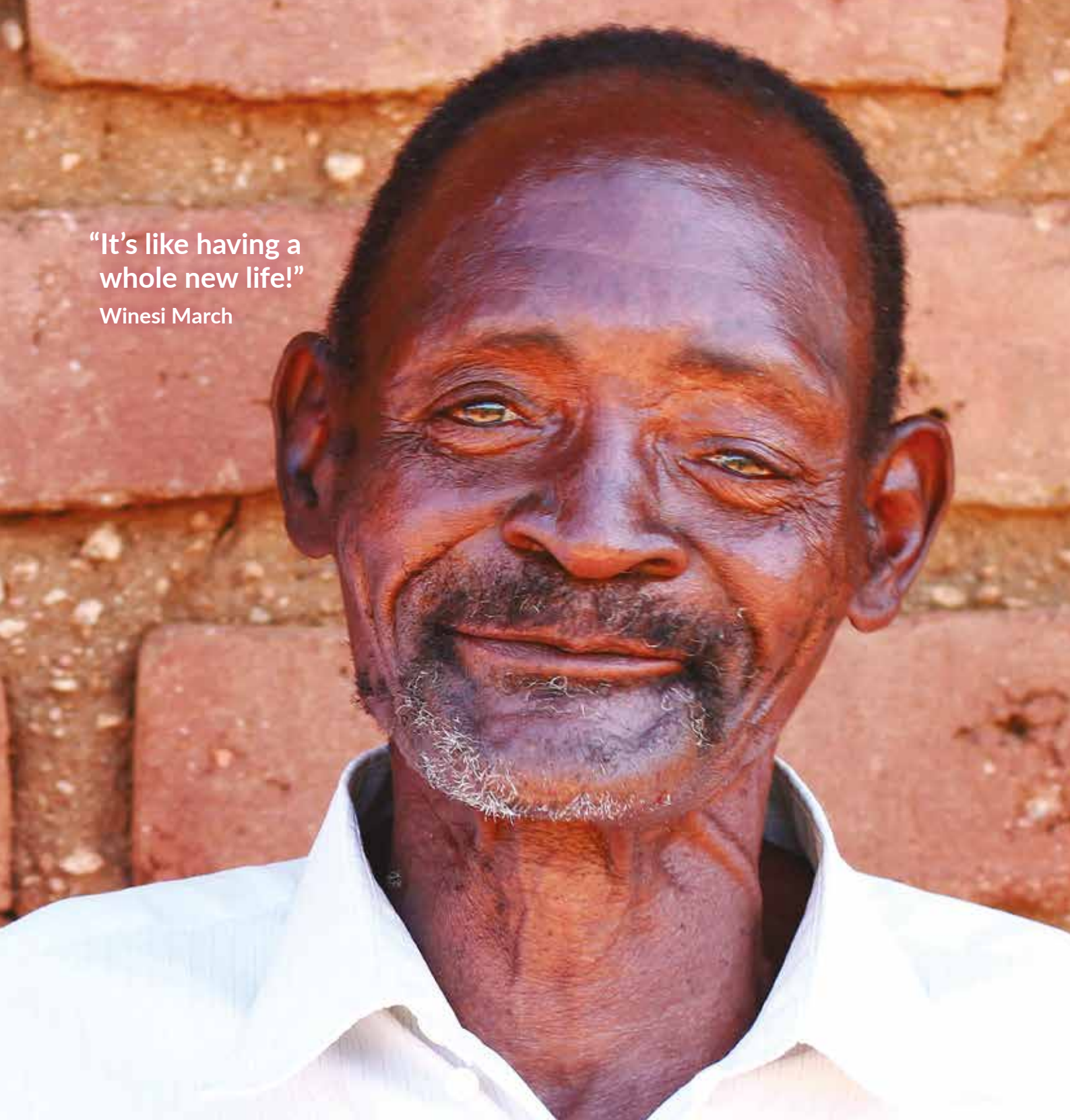


© Sightsavers/Rachel Palmer

Since his operation was broadcast, not only is Winesi enjoying a new lease of life, he's become a bit of a local celebrity – and he's putting his fame to good use.

“People regularly come to my house to see whether I really can see again,” he explains. “I tell them my story, hoping this will encourage them to have their own operation.”

“It’s like having a whole new life!”
Winesi March



©Sightsavers/Rachel Palmer



See Winesi’s miracle happen

If you haven’t already seen it, then please don’t miss the miracle moment when Winesi’s bandages are removed. It’s truly joyful, and you can watch it now, at: sightsavers.org/winesi

More miracle moments!

Kulsum, Zamurrad and Baraka are all free from blindness, thanks to your outstanding generosity

©Sightsavers/Tommy Trenchard



Renewed independence

When Kulsum's husband died, she got a job and worked hard to raise her three daughters. Even when they married and left home she remained fiercely independent. But cataracts changed everything.

"When I realised I couldn't even see to pour water into a glass I cried," Kulsum explains. "I lost my job and became a burden to others."

Thankfully, one of her daughters heard that Sightsavers was offering free eye screening in a nearby village, and took Kulsum there. Tests confirmed she had cataracts, and that surgery could save her sight. When her bandages were removed and she could see again, the first thing Kulsum wanted to do was make a big meal for her family. Back to her old self again, Kulsum couldn't be any happier.

"I thought I would be blind forever. Now I feel peace in my heart"

Kulsum Begum

Escape from poverty

As Zamurrad's sight worsened due to cataracts, her husband Tariq had to give up his job to look after her and their daughter, Rania. With no money coming in, the family was destitute.

Free treatment was available at a Sightsavers-supported hospital, but getting there was far beyond the family's reach. "The return fare to hospital is about 300 rupees (around £3) each," Tariq explains. "But we just didn't have the money."

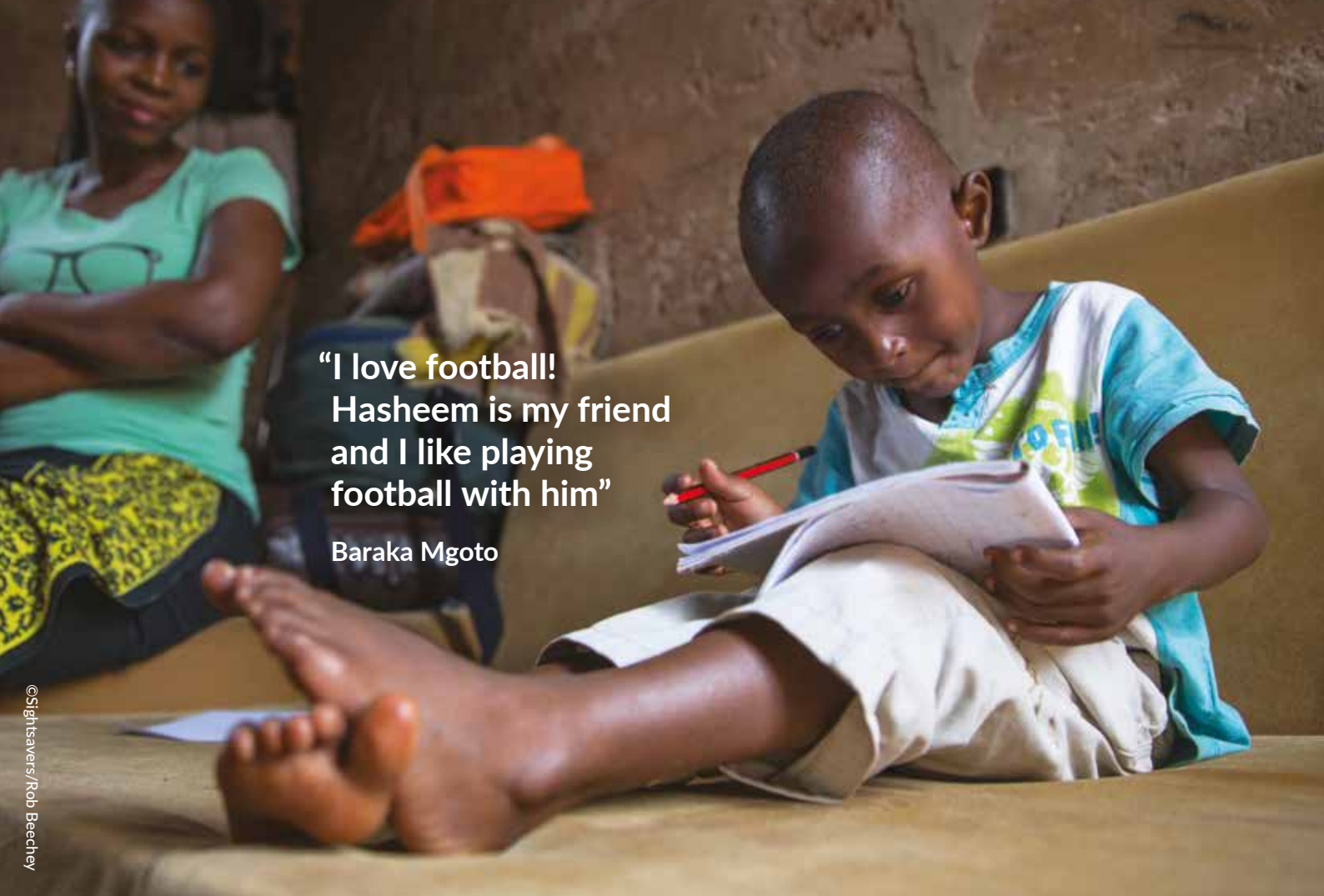
After months of deteriorating sight, Zamurrad persuaded Tariq to work for a few days. He agreed, and managed to scrape together the fare for the journey. Zamurrad was amazed at how quick and painless her cataract operation was, and she was thrilled to see her loved ones. "I saw a very beautiful face – Rania," Zamurrad recalls. "Tariq looked older because of all the worry, but now there's relief, and we're satisfied and happy."

"My husband has helped me a lot. But now I will look after him and he can go to work"

Zamurrad Bibi



©Sightsavers/Andrew McConnell



**“I love football!
Hasheem is my friend
and I like playing
football with him”**

Baraka Mgoto

©Sightsavers/Rob Beechey

A brighter future

Remember Baraka? Two Christmases ago you helped make his sight-saving miracle possible

Baraka was a happy toddler, not yet aware that he couldn't see properly. He wanted to run and play like the other children, but could only feel his way unsteadily round the yard. His mother, Zena, didn't have the money to get him to hospital, let alone pay for the surgery itself. "I felt there was no hope for Baraka's future," she told us sadly. Then we shared his story with you.

Thanks to you, Baraka got his sight-saving operation, and now there's no stopping him! He likes playing with his toys and especially loves a game of football with best friend Hasheem. Baraka recently started nursery

and is learning to read and write. He says he wants to be a teacher when he grows up.

Zena's life is getting easier too. Now Baraka's at nursery she's looking for a job to improve the family's income. "I'm so thankful to Sightsavers' supporters," she says. "Without them, Baraka wouldn't be able to see today."

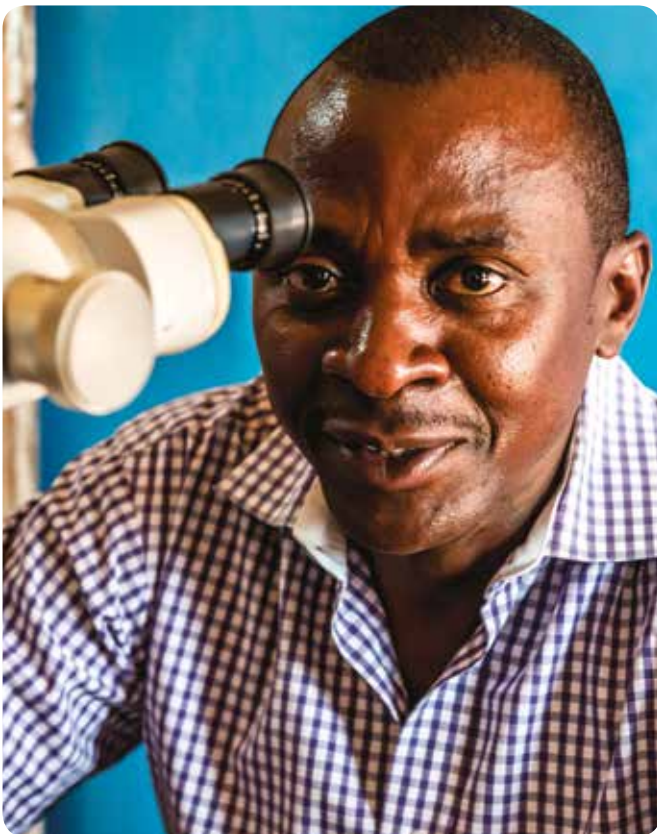
What a difference!

When a person gets their sight back it's like a miracle – for them and for their families. Read Baraka's full story now at: sightsavers.org/baraka

Making miracles together

You're part of our team of miracle-workers, along with Dr Gerald Msukwa and Madalitso Nyangulu

The dedicated surgeons and eye care workers you support are working flat out in often challenging conditions, to reach and treat as many people as they can. They're passionate about saving sight and building strong long-term eye health services in their home countries.



Inspiring others

Dr Gerald performed Winesi's live cataract operation at the start of A Million Miracles. He's determined to attract more trained eye surgeons to Malawi.

"The challenges are enormous," he explains. "At the moment there are only eight surgeons in Malawi for a population of more than 14 million

people, and I'm the only paediatric specialist." Dr Gerald did his training in the UK, but returned to Malawi as soon as he'd qualified, and set up the Queen Elizabeth Hospital eye unit. He wants more surgeons to follow suit.

"In addition to my adult patients I operate on more than 400 children each year, but that's just the tip of the iceberg. People are going needlessly blind and we desperately need to carry out more sight-saving surgery."

Reaching out

Madalitso's name means 'blessings' and to the thousands of people he helps in Mwanza district, Malawi, it couldn't be more apt.

In his role as an Ophthalmic Clinical Officer, Madalitso – or Mada, as his friends call him – made the long, tiring journey to Winesi's village. After climbing steep hills, walking across acres of farmland and wading through a river, Mada finally reached Winesi and examined his eyes – beginning the journey to Winesi's sight-saving operation, featured on page four.

Mada has an incredibly tough workload. He's the only ophthalmic clinician in an area covering more than 45,000 people and, as well as conducting regular outreach visits, he works four days a week at the local hospital. He balances his long hours and list of responsibilities with supporting a young family. And he still finds his work rewarding.

"It feels good to celebrate, in your heart, with someone who had very little sight, but then has it restored to them," says Mada. "It makes me feel good to know that I contributed to that."



“I go to the most remote places, even if a car or bike can’t get there and I have to walk. I go to where the patients live, not where a vehicle can get to”

Madalitso Nyangulu

Help us train more miracle-workers

By the end of 2018, we aim to train nine cataract surgeons and seven ophthalmologists across Senegal, Guinea, Uganda and South Sudan.

If you’d like to give a gift to help us, please visit sightsavers.org/focus





Let's make more miracles!

Together we've achieved incredible success. But with millions still needlessly blind through cataract, we can't stop now

Words just can't express how grateful we are for your fantastic support of A Million Miracles. You've helped to give hundreds of thousands of people the miracle of having their sight restored and their lives transformed – and that's amazing. We couldn't have done it without you and, with your help, the work continues. It has to.

Still waiting

Sadly, cataract remains the leading cause of avoidable blindness globally, with an estimated 18 million children and adults still needlessly blind. One of them is Ibrahim from Sierra Leone.

When Ibrahim's mother heard that a Sightsavers-supported eye care team was visiting a neighbour she didn't hesitate. Concerned about her baby son's eyesight, she carried him to the house and asked the team to examine him. They could immediately tell that he had sight loss.

Ibrahim kept moving his head, trying to catch the light to help him see, but it was no use. He was totally dependent on his mother, clinging to her constantly. And she was extremely watchful and protective of him.

Ibrahim had cataracts in both eyes and the team organised free surgery for him. But at hospital he was found to be suffering from malaria and the procedure couldn't take place. Like so many other children, Ibrahim is still living in darkness, waiting for his sight-saving miracle to happen. With your help we can make sure it does.

Next steps

Since Sightsavers began, we've supported 6.6 million cataract operations and trained more than 1,000 surgeons to perform them. In order to match the scale of existing cataract cases, we need to keep thinking big. That's why this year we want to train more miracle-workers and provide over 300,000 operations across 18 countries. Please continue to help us.

It costs just £30 for an adult's cataract surgery or £90 for a child's, and we'd really appreciate any extra gift you could give.

Thank you once again.



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Some of the amazing miracle-workers you support at Makeni Regional Hospital's eye unit in Sierra Leone

**A MILLION
MIRACLES**

A legacy of miracles

Including Sightsavers in your Will means you can go on saving sight and transforming lives long into the future



©Sightsavers/Tommy Trenchard

A gift to Sightsavers in your Will is a really kind and meaningful way of ensuring the life-changing work you care so deeply about can continue for years to come. You'll know that people won't be forgotten, and that children like Asha can live their lives free from blindness and the threat of blinding diseases.

Asha was just six when we found her, and on the verge of losing her sight from cataracts. Her family were struggling to care for her and the stigma surrounding sight loss meant she was bullied mercilessly by other children. With no friends and no hope of a cure, Asha needed a miracle. Thanks to your compassion and support she got it. With her sight restored, Asha has also regained her childhood. She can play, go to school and live a fulfilling, independent life.

You've helped make sight-saving miracles happen for millions of people around the world. Please, if you can, remember Sightsavers in your Will, and leave a lasting legacy of sight for future generations. For a friendly, no-obligation chat or for your free copy of Sightsavers' Will-making guide, just call **01444 446 600** or email **info@sightsavers.org**.

Looking to make your Will?

November is Will Aid month, when participating solicitors waive their fee for writing a basic Will. Instead, they ask clients to make a voluntary donation to Will Aid, supporting their nine partner charities, including Sightsavers.



Find out more
at willaid.org.uk

30 years of
changing lives



Registered charity numbers 207544 and SC038110

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